

YEDİTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

**REPRODUCTION OF
THE WARRIOR WOMAN ARCHETYPE IN FILMS AND TV
SERIES**

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REPRODUCTION OF THE WARRIOR WOMAN ARCHETYPE IN FILMS AND
TV SERIES

by

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

REPRODUCTION OF THE WARRIOR WOMAN ARCHETYPE IN FILMS AND TV SERIES

The topics covered in media texts such as TV series and movies change according to the spirit of the age. The most striking example is the increasing prominence of feminist elements in TV series and movies. Drawing on Carl Gustav Jung's notion of archetype, the warrior archetype has been quite widespread in popular TV series and movies for a long time. On the other hand, the warrior archetype, traditionally portrayed as a male figure, has recently been articulated within a new narrative structure in which women protagonists come to the forefront. While superheroine warrior characters have been popular since very early times in American productions in parallel to the long-established culture of comics there, the warrior woman archetype, which was found in some comic books and classical Yeşilçam movies, albeit in a very limited fashion in the past, has recently become a frequent figure of popular culture in Turkey, especially in popular historical films and TV series. This thesis will analyse characters that could be said to represent the warrior woman archetype in Turkish TV series and films shot after 2000 to understand how feminism is appropriated by these cultural texts. The central point of this study is to examine how the warrior woman archetype is represented through relatively diverse representations in popular films and TV series through critical discourse analysis. The series and films to be included in this study were selected according to the historical periods they cover. In addition, care was taken to include media texts with different ideological orientations in the sample. Accordingly, the following films and TV series are analysed in the thesis: *Destan* (Bozdağ, 2021-2022), *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019), *Kuruluş Osman* (Bozdağ, 2019-present), *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu* (Konuk, 2020-2021), *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014), *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem* (Savcı, 2015-2017), *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009), *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018), *Hacivat Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü?* (Akay, 2006), *Fetih 1453* (Aksoy, 2012), *Malazgirt 1071* (Bakar & Kalyoncu, 2022). The thesis aims to show how and to what extent popular media texts that incorporate different ideological attitudes negotiate and employ feminist elements. For this reason, the fundamental questions that will be asked

in the thesis are about the impact of ideological attitudes on the portrayal of warrior women in TV series and films and the extent to which commercial concerns that characterize the consumer society affect the representations of these women warrior characters.

Keywords: Feminism, Warrior Women, Archetype, Media, Gender, TV Series, Movies, Popular Culture, Ideology



ÖZET

SAVAŞÇI KADIN ARKETİPİNİN FİMLERDE VE TV DİZİLERİNDE YENİDEN ÜRETİMİ

Dizi ve film gibi medya metinlerinde işlenen konular çağın ruhuna göre değişmektedir. Bunun en çarpıcı örneği, dizi ve filmlerde feminist öğelerin giderek öne çıkmasıdır. Carl Gustav Jung'un arketip kavramından hareketle savaşçı arketipi uzun bir süredir popüler dizi ve filmlerde oldukça yaygındır. Öte yandan son dönemde, geleneksel olarak erkek figürü olarak resmedilen savaşçı arketipinin, kadın kahramanların ön plana çıktığı yeni bir anlatı yapısı içinde eklenmektedir. Süper kahraman savaşçı karakterler Amerikan yapımlarında, köklü bir çizgi roman kültürüne paralel olarak çok eskiden beri popülerken, Türkiye'de geçmişte sınırlı bir şekilde de olsa çizgi romanlarda ve klasik Yeşilçam filmlerinde mevcut olan savaşçı kadın arketipi son dönemde popüler tarihi film ve dizilerde sıkça rastlanan bir popüler kültür sembolü haline gelmiştir. Bu tez, feminizmin bu kültürel metinlerde nasıl kullanıldığını anlamak için 2000'den sonra çekilen Türk dizileri ve filmlerdeki savaşçı kadın arketipini temsil ettiği söylenebilecek karakterleri analiz edecektir. Bu çalışmanın merkez noktası, savaşçı kadın arketipinin film ve dizilerdeki görece farklı temsiller üzerinden nasıl yeniden üretildiğini eleştirel söylem analizi yoluyla incelemektir. Bu çalışmaya dahil edilecek dizi ve filmler, kapsadıkları tarihsel dönemlere göre seçilmiştir. Ayrıca, farklı ideolojik yönelimlere sahip medya metinlerinin örnekleme dahil edilmesine özen gösterilmiştir. Dolayısıyla tezde analiz edilen dizi ve filmler şunlardır: *Destan* (Bozdağ, 2021-2022), *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019), *Kuruluş Osman* (Bozdağ, 2019-present), *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu* (Konuk, 2020-2021), *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014), *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem* (Savcı, 2015-2017), *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009), *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018), *Hacivat Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü?* (Akay, 2006), *Fetih 1453* (Aksoy, 2012), *Malazgirt 1071* (Bakar & Kalyoncu, 2022). Tez, farklı ideolojik tutumları bünyesinde barındıran popüler medya metinlerinin feminist unsurları nasıl müzakere ettiğini ve kullandığını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu nedenle tezde sorulacak temel sorular, ideolojik tutumların dizi ve filmlerdeki savaşçı kadın tasvirleri üzerindeki etkisi ve tüketim toplumunu karakterize eden ticari kaygıların bu savaşçı kadın karakter temsillerini ne ölçüde etkilediğidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Feminizm, Savaşçı Kadın, Arketip, Medya, Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Dizi, Film, Popüler Kültür, Ideoloji



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Finally, I dedicate this thesis to the resilient spirit of women in past, present, and future generations. This work is a tribute to women who face challenges, strive for success, and continue to move forward. My hope is that this thesis can contribute to empowering and inspiring the next generation of women.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Stories have had a significant place in shaping societies and building civilizations. These stories, often categorized as folk tales, mythologies, or epics, have supported the formation of the cultural identity and memory of societies. Carl Gustav Jung (1959/1991) was influenced by Freud's work. Giving it a new form, he put forward the concept of "archetype" to explain the existence of the collective unconscious in society. According to Jung, archetypes form behaviors, thoughts, emotions, and characteristic human reactions.

From a Jungian perspective, these cultural thought patterns called archetypes can also be said to be influential in the emergence and persistence of certain stereotypes associated with gender. While men are often presented as strong heroes in patriarchal myths, women are often portrayed as needy and passive. However, despite the long-standing dominance of male supremacy, "strong female heroes" have also found a place in myths. Many women are described as "goddesses" or "brave warriors" in the myths and legends of different civilizations.

There are various theories about the origins of patriarchy. According to a common theory, women were gatherers, and men were hunters, working within a certain division of labour. Women's childbearing biology and their proximity to children have affected the division of labour between men and women. However, according to some theorists, in the primitive period, women were in leadership positions, directing men, giving them tasks, and exercising power over them (Bebel, 1980, p. 40).

According to Gordon Marshall (2003), matriarchy refers to a type of social organization or a society in which mothers were the heads of families or held the main positions of power. This theory was notably one of the main themes of Friedrich Engels' (1884/1942) book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, published in the nineteenth century. In this book, Engels explained that the first hunter-gatherer societies, where there was no property, might have been ruled by women because of their reproductive power. However, with the transition to settled life and agriculture, men began to control women's reproductive power by legitimizing the inheritance of land and property belonging

to children (p. 22). This event can be considered a historical turning point that strengthened the patriarchal power.

Even though archaeological excavations have rendered the reality of this claim controversial, archaeological evidence shows that the belief in the "Mother Goddess" was accepted in most parts of Anatolia. It is a strong view that the replacement of pagan beliefs with monotheistic religions and the change in property relations also eliminated matriarchal beliefs. It can also be stated that gender discrimination has changed and transformed in the context of property relations throughout history. According to the Marxist approach, the determining factor in the emergence of the patriarchal structure was the change in the mode of production. As economic activities such as hunting-gathering lost their importance, the matriarchal structure disappeared. However, it cannot be argued that there was a definite type of matriarchal family in primitive periods. Instead, it would be more accurate to say that researchers working in this field are in a dilemma (Demirdağ, 2017, p. 15-16).

The development of patriarchal culture has directly influenced storytelling as well. In folk tales and legends that evolved in a patriarchal direction, the goddess women of the past were replaced with so-called evil and ugly witches. In contrast, brave female warriors were replaced by passive female characters who stood by their men. The portrayal of women as passive, helpless, or submissive and as seductive beings alongside men was deeply ingrained in the cultural memory. This situation often found its place in many popular literary works.

One of the greatest storytelling tools of the modern era is mass media. Nowadays, the media, which allows us to share our common archetypes, creates an increasingly homogeneous world. It also manages our minds while creating this homogeneous world. Representations in media, an ideological apparatus, shape our minds both individually and collectively. With the advent of cinema, representations of drama characters began to shape the audience's understanding of themselves and the world around them. As radio, television, and the internet became widespread in social life and greatly influenced the masses, new storytellers emerged. Television and digital internet series, which have an increasing number of viewers lately, continue to meet people's story requests on broadcast platforms as a consumer product and invite them to the fictional world. This situation allows our cultural identity and collective memory to continue being shaped through various cultural industries within capitalist production and consumption relations.

The messages we receive from media include implicit assumptions about what is natural or normal. The content shown in the media is laden with ideological meanings. In the media, the production and reproduction of various ideological meanings, such as nationalism, conservatism, liberalism, feminism, and the like, occur.

Superhero stories have long held significant sway in the cultural memory of American society. These superhero stories, adorned with nationalist values, create modern myths for American society. Nowadays, the prominence of women is not only evident in superhero movies but also in many other TV series and films. Female heroes play an active role, not merely complementing men but being as effective as men themselves. In the construction of the superhero myth, as Roland Barthes (1957/1991) stated in his theory of modern myths, the emphasis on heroism is fed by references to America's liberal values. In this sense, feminism and liberalism intertwine in the representation of female superheroes.

As media becomes an integral part of everyday life, it has been the subject of many studies, particularly in social sciences. In the extant literature, there are both positive and negative approaches to media and its impacts on the individual and society. Until the 1940s, especially during World War I and II, the media was defined as a propaganda tool. Depending on the devastating experience of World War I, Harold Lasswell (1927/2013) suggested that media could be used as a propaganda tool, injecting propaganda into society like a hypodermic needle. Subsequently, however, Paul Lazarsfeld's studies highlighted the mediating role of interpersonal communication in the influence of media on audiences (Yaylagül, 2006, p. 49). Overall, liberal approaches, such as the uses and gratifications theory, suggest that society determines the relationship between media and society and has a democratic process. In contrast, critical approaches argue that media is a tool under the control of political power and capital.

George Gerbner's work on American television in the 1970s allows such examples to be better grounded. Gerbner, known for his cultivation theory, says that the violence shown on American television is quite different from reality. Gerbner's (1973) cultivation theory initially focused on television. However, it is thought that his suggestions can also be applied to other media (Gerbner et al., 1982). Gerbner states that people communicate under the guidance of complex symbols. It also states that one lives in a world constructed and experienced through particular forms and styles of storytelling (Gerbner, 1990). In short, media is a kind of ideological tool that changes and controls the audience's perception of

reality and perspective on events, which makes TV series and movies that reach such broad audiences an important research topic.

Patriarchal and conservative ideologies have long dominated Turkish historical TV series and films. On the other hand, it is observed that the ideology of popular narratives worldwide, which were largely patriarchal, nationalist, and conservative in the past, has changed over time. It is also a fact that the spread of feminist movements was effective in this change. In today's world, where women are becoming increasingly stronger politically, economically, and socially, it is inevitable that popular narratives in cinema and television will change gradually.

This study will examine historical TV series and films that have played an important role in Turkish popular culture since 2000. This choice was made because the warrior woman archetype is common in historical TV series and movies. Before going into the details of this discussion, Carl Gustav Jung's concept of the archetype will be explained, and how female characters are generally depicted in fairy tales, myths, and legends will be discussed. This discussion will follow a brief overview of how theorists from the critical studies paradigm have discussed concepts such as ideology and popular culture. Then, the development of feminism and feminist media theories will be discussed to understand better how the warrior woman archetype is portrayed in popular culture. The role of the warrior woman archetype in American popular culture, particularly in comics, creates a modern mythology, and its influence on TV series and movies will be compared with how the warrior archetype inspired by comics is represented in Turkish popular culture.

This study will use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a qualitative content analysis method. CDA is an approach that assumes that language is used not only to communicate but also to construct and maintain ideologies and power relations. Focusing on social problems, CDA works on texts and speeches (as well as objects, gestures, photographs, images, and so on) to reveal the discursive sources of social phenomena such as power, hegemony, inequality, and prejudice. It investigates how these discursive sources are sustained and reproduced in specific social, political, and historical contexts (Van Dijk, 2001).

The main research question of the thesis is how the warrior woman archetype has been represented in Turkish TV series and movies since 2000. The thesis analyses the following

TV series and movies: *Destan* (Bozdağ, 2021-2022), *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019), *Kuruluş Osman* (Bozdağ, 2019-present), *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu* (Konuk, 2020-2021), *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014), *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem* (Savcı, 2015-2017), *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009), *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018), *Hacivat ve Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü?* (Akay, 2006), *Fetih 1453* (Aksoy, 2012), and *Malazgirt 1071* (Bakar & Kalyoncu, 2022). The analysis will be based on the insight that whether TV series and films adopt a relatively secular nationalist or conservative nationalist ideology affects the treatment of the warrior woman archetype in them. In addition, the periods of TV series and movies are also decisive in how the warrior woman archetype is handled.

The study will first provide general information on the notion of TV series and then discuss the symbolic and ideological meanings of warrior woman characters in them. Additionally, the thesis will question the traditional roles assigned to women characters alongside feminist elements in these representations. The thesis contributes to the literature because no study has been conducted in this field. Furthermore, covering popular TV series and movies depicting different periods of Turkish history from a comparative perspective makes this study unique. The increasing popularity of these female representations in recent years and their large fan base further enhances their impact and importance in society; thus, the research topic will remain relevant for many years to come.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will examine the relationship between ideology, media, and symbolism, and how major critical social theorists see this relationship will be discussed. The first part will also focus on how critical media scholars examine and evaluate the notion of popular culture.

In the next part, the importance of the notion of gender and the historical development of feminism as a political movement that threw a fundamental blow to patriarchal ideology and culture will be discussed, followed by an overview of feminist media theory.

These discussions will be followed by an overview of Carl Jung's concept of archetype, with a particular focus on the warrior archetype, which is the main subject of the thesis. The thesis will argue that although the warrior archetype is usually considered a male figure, various female warrior archetypes are found in patriarchal storytelling. Besides, recently, many feminist critics have re-evaluated Jung's notion of archetype in light of modern women's experiences.

Since Jung's warrior archetype appears in fairy tales, myths, and epics, how the warrior woman archetype is historically represented in these cultural texts will be discussed in the next part. The genre of fairy tales that reflect society's cultural norms, beliefs, and values in an entertaining fashion and with morally instructive aspects besides extraordinary elements will be examined under a separate heading. On the other hand, since myths and epics feed each other and are among the essential elements that form society's national and religious identity, they will be discussed together under a single title. In addition, how the warrior woman archetype is incorporated into both the Western culture and Turkish culture will be discussed in this section, and other warrior women archetypes from around the world will also be briefly mentioned.

In order to better understand the warrior woman archetype, which is the main focus of the thesis, it will be necessary to look at how the male-centered perspective in popular culture has changed from the past to the present. For this reason, in the next part of the literature review, historical changes in the representations of women warriors in comic books will be examined. This examination will show how the warrior woman archetype is reproduced within the genre of comics, which is a highly influential component of American popular

culture. Also, the transfer of this archetype from comics to TV series and movies will be reviewed. Then, discussion will be offered about how the archetypal representations of women in popular cinema, inspired by fairy tales, mythologies, and epics, are interpreted from a feminist perspective today and how the representations of warrior women have developed in the superhero cinema, as part of the modern American mythology, which adapts various elements from the comics culture. Then, the development of comic books in Turkey, which became the most significant source of inspiration for the emergence of the warrior archetype in Turkish cinema, will be examined, and information will be given about the representation of women in Turkish films and TV series from the past to the present.

In general, this study will examine how the warrior woman archetype is represented in different TV series and films and discuss how this representation is presented. This study examines the evolution of the warrior woman archetype by scanning a wide range of literature, from Jung's archetype theories to ideology, semiotics, popular culture, and feminist media studies, focusing on Turkish TV series and film popular culture after the 2000s.

2.1. Ideology and the Media

Communication plays a vital role in the formation of societal reality. When discussing communication, talking about concepts like ideology and meaning is inevitable. Media texts constitute an essential intersection of ideology and symbolism. In addition to providing information and entertainment, media texts are a major force in spreading dominant ideologies among the masses and changing the audience's perspectives. In this context, we will examine the relationship between ideology, symbolism, and communication in the media. Understanding this relationship helps us comprehend how social reality is formed and the media's role in it.

According to Marxist theory, which deals with social problems in a class context, the media is a tool the ruling class uses to spread its ideology and control the working class. (Marx and Engels, 1846/1970). Marxist thinkers examine this relationship between ideology and media within different conceptual contexts. For example, Gramsci's concept of hegemony centers on how the dominant class controls other classes through consent and ideological compromise. In this context, the media has a major role in the establishment of hegemony by the ruling powers (Gramsci, 1923-1939/1971). Based on Gramsci's works,

Althusser (1970/1971) examines the relationship between media and ideology within the framework of the "ideological state apparatus."

Indeed, the critique of ideology was addressed by the first-generation theorists of the Frankfurt School within the framework of various concepts, such as science, technology, culture, art, reason, metaphysics, rationalism, ethics, and the like (Gülenç, 2015). The Frankfurt School emerged around the Institute for Social Research, founded in 1923. Following the exile of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno in 1933, it continued its work in the United States until the 1950s and was re-established in Frankfurt then. Friedrich Pollock, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, and Leo Lowenthal can be counted among the school members. There are also more recent intensive philosophical and sociological studies of Jürgen Habermas aimed at re-founding the school's critical theory (Frankfurt Okulu, n.d.).

Adorno's (1967/2003) work on the culture industry, which is considered to solidify capitalist ideologies by controlling the lower class, stands out with its overall impact on the critical tradition. One of the major critical paradigms that were influenced by Adorno's notion of ideology was offered by The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), which was a postgraduate research center founded in 1964 by Richard Hoggart, who later became its pioneering director at the University of Birmingham in England. This school generally argues that the media not only carries ideology but also contributes to meaning production and identity construction (Hall, 1980). A member of this school, Fiske's works on semiotics are noteworthy. Fiske and Hartley (1978/1989) argue that the viewer's interpretation determines the meaning and that viewers. According to them, viewers demonstrate some form of resistance. They suppose that television not only reflects viewers' pre-existing beliefs but also actively participates in shaping and reproducing those beliefs.

After overviewing these critical approaches to the problem of ideology and its relationship with culture and media, this section will argue that through semiotics, which is the study of signs and codes used to communicate (*Introduction to Semiotics*, n.d.), we can understand better how ideology and cultural identity are linked. That is, through semiotic analysis, we can uncover and interpret ideological meanings of symbols within media texts.

One definition of ideology is that it is a form of social or political philosophy in which practical elements are as salient as theoretical ones. In other words, it is a system of ideas that aims to explain and change the world. (Cranston, 2024). The term ideology was coined in 1796 by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy to mean "the science of ideas." (*StudyCorgi*, n.d.). In the 19th century, Karl Marx and Engels (1848/1970) gave this concept

a new meaning, reducing it to the set of ideas that support the class system. Authors such as Talmon (1952) and Arendt (1958) also saw ideology as a means of securing allegiance.

The dominant ideology ensures the obedience and consent of the people by preserving the so-called naturalness of the existing power structure and order. Power provides the tools and resources necessary for disseminating and concretizing ideology. Ideology helps legitimize and stabilize power. Andrew Heywood (2002/2006) defines power as the ability to achieve a desired outcome (p. 29). Another aspect of power is the control of thoughts and perceptions, for which various tools are used. Critical theorists believe the media is essential in controlling thoughts and perceptions. However, before delving into this topic, we must discuss the concepts of state, power, and ideology in classical Marxism.

There are divergent theoretical views on the tools used in constructing and maintaining power in society. Marxist thinkers examine this through class contradictions and approach the issue of the state from the perspective of the base-superstructure relationship. While Hegel considers the ideal state as a fair and ethical adaptation process among all components of society, Marx emphasizes that the state, based on production relations, does not represent the common good and is a class-based political expression instead (Carnoy, 2015, p. 70). The claim in Marxist literature that power relations are based on class antagonisms rejects Hegel's conceptualization of the "rational" state. Marx rejected the ideal of the state representing the whole of society, adopted by many thinkers from Hobbes to Rousseau, and positioned it within the framework of class contradictions instead (Miliband, 1983, p. 61).

Marx argues that the first historical action that distinguished humans from animals was not their thinking ability but their laboring activity, whereby they began to produce their own means of production. As they produced their own means of subsistence, they physically organized themselves, making the production of material life possible (Marx & Engels, 1845/1992, p. 39). In the modern era, some revisionist theories within Marxism, which are referred to as neo-Marxist, do not look at the construction of power merely from the perspective of class contradictions. Gramsci (1929-1935/1971), a neo-Marxist philosopher, viewed the state as a hegemonic structure that legitimizes its power through the production of consent. In the Gramscian framework, the distinction between civil society and political society is crucial. While political society is characterized by coercion, civil society is based on consent or hegemony.

Another key figure among neo-Marxist philosophers, Althusser, posited that the state holds a dominant position within the social whole and in relation to other structural elements.

He identified Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), which include institutions such as education, school, family, culture, politics, law, and unions, as distinct from Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs), such as the military, police, prisons, and courts. Illustratively, Althusser provided an advanced Marxist analysis of education, defining it as an ISA that controls rather than enlightens. Besides, unlike the homogeneity and monopolization of violence observed in the state repression apparatuses, Althusser suggests that such features are rarely found in ISAs. Also, ISAs, including the family, exhibit a characteristic that transcends the boundaries between public and private realms. (Althusser, 1970/1971).

Furthermore, cultural productions such as art and poetry, which Marx identified as being outside the ideological realm, are included in Althusser's category of ideology, thereby expanding ideology into all aspects of life. According to Althusser (1970/1976), ideology is not a distorting lens but a constitutive element of reality. Althusser (1970/2003) argues that it is a practice that produces subjects through interpellation and enables them to move within social structures through various means (p. 76).

Cinema, in general, has played a significant role in modern culture. Due to its powerful and convincing presentation of reality, it has substantially impacted viewers psychopolitically and has become an important apparatus for producing ideology (Arslantepe, 2012, p. 180). Generally, cinema, particularly popular films, represents and embraces the worldview of the dominant classes to a large extent, forms the dominant values that hold society together, and serves as a social cement against the possibility of revolution and, on the other hand, it does all these as a concrete and material practice (Yılmaz, 2008, p. 63).

The film's content and style, including camera movements and angles, shooting scales, framing, light, color arrangements, sound use, motifs, symbols, and metaphors, are designed according to the director's preferences. The filmmaker's narrative style is related to the director's ideological perspective of the world (Güçhan, 1999, p. 226). Besides, since every film is an element of the economic system, it is also a part of the ideological system (Büker & Topçu, 2010, p. 100).

Scholarly studies on the influence of mass communication on societies have gained momentum, especially after the advent of radio and television. While cinema became popular between 1910 and 1920, radio broadcasts became institutionalized in the second half of the 1920s. Since the 1940s, television broadcasting institutions have emerged, and television has become integral to daily life (Yaylagül, 2006, p. 13). After the golden age of television in the 1960s, the impact of television on societies began to be investigated from

various angles. Following the 1980s, with the developments in communication technology enabling satellite transmission, research on the influence of mass communication on societies gained new dimensions (Aziz, 1994, p. 25). The media, especially television, has become a power tool that reproduces, shapes, manages, controls, and even judges and executes (Mora, 2011, p. 192).

Additionally, with the accessibility of the Internet along with television, digital platform tools have emerged, which also have the power to influence the masses. Digital techniques in television broadcasting have eliminated traditional distinctions between telecommunications, information technology, and broadcasting, ensuring that all kinds of services are provided in the same communication environment (Şeker, 2009, p. 28-29). The primary function of digital TV platforms has been to bring together television broadcasting with the Internet. This development has shifted television from being centered around the home. Nowadays, even conventional television channels have started broadcasting their programs over the Internet, and large companies providing Internet-based broadcasting services have also entered the markets (Seçmen, 2019, p. 9). These platforms, offering shorter durations and a wide range of content, are highly influential. We can say that digital platforms, which have become very popular today, are at least as powerful as cinema, radio, and television, or even more effective, in controlling individuals and societies.

Digital platforms provide a personalized media experience by offering content customized to users' preferences. However, these platforms remain ideological state apparatuses (ISA). While digital platforms reproduce the dominant ideology, they can also host alternative perspectives and critical content. For example, documentaries or series criticizing capitalism can find a place on these platforms. Likewise, a media text with feminist content may emerge due to commercial concerns about profit-seeking in an otherwise male-dominated culture. Therefore, from a Marxist perspective, even such critical content should be seen as part of the ISA, as this content tends to remain within the boundaries of the dominant ideology of capitalism. Thus, digital platforms continue to exist as tools that both strengthen the dominant ideology and maintain more effective social consent by appropriating and domesticating any criticism against it.

As a result, both broadcast and digital media have a critical role in establishing social consent and reproducing the dominant ideology as part of the ideological state apparatus. Understanding the ideological structure of media content helps us comprehend how social reality is constructed and how power relations are maintained. For this reason, it is necessary

to interpret the ideological meanings underlying the representations of the warrior woman archetype examined in this thesis.

2.2. Symbolism and the Media

Semiotics, defined as the science of signs, was first developed by the founder of linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure (1916/1998) envisioned semiotics as a social science that would examine the life of signs (p. 46). Semiotics is concerned with examining the elements that play a role in the formation of meaning, which are called signs, and analyzing the connections between these elements to reveal their meanings. Still, Bertrand (2000) argues that the focus of semiotics is not meaning itself but the underlying systems of relations that generate meaning. That is, semiotics does not primarily investigate the nature of meaning but rather the processes by which meaning is constructed (p. 9).

Semiotics shows which laws govern signs and what they consist of (Derrida, 1967/1994, p. 40). The goal of semiotics is to describe the most fundamental principles and distinctions that constitute possible meaning-generating events. According to Culler (2008), semiotics is based on the assumption that since humans understand actions and objects, there must be a conscious or unconscious structure of distinctions and practices that produce this meaning (p. 82). Semiotics examines these structural relationships of signs in generating meaning.

Levi-Strauss explained similarities between cultures using linguistic methods based on Saussure's ideas. He revealed the workings of primitive myths within the framework of semiotic concepts and pioneered the study of contemporary myths. According to Fiske (1990/2003), Levi-Strauss expanded Saussure's theory of language to encompass all cultural processes, such as myths and fairy tales (p. 152).

Stuart Hall also made significant contributions to the study of signs. Hall was one of the most influential theorists of the Birmingham School, mentioned above. In his well-known article "Encoding/Decoding," Hall (1980) explains how messages are produced and disseminated by the encoder, a process known as encoding (production and circulation), and how the message is decoded by the receiver, a process known as decoding (reception and reproduction). He emphasizes that if the message is identifiable and appropriate, the receiver can receive it at some stage, and its code can be deciphered. However, there is a high

probability that the message transmitted by the encoder will be interpreted differently by the receiver. Furthermore, he highlights that when the message is distributed to different audiences, it can generate divergent and even contradictory reactions depending on how they perceive the image in their own socio-historical context.

Hall's emphasis on the relationship between semiotics and culture shows how culture is conveyed and imbued with meanings through symbols and semiotic processes. This perspective emphasizes that culture is constructed and transmitted not only through concrete objects or practices but also through symbols and meanings, which helps us appreciate the complexity and diversity of culture.

Another thinker who approaches the concept of ideology from a critical perspective is Roland Barthes, a French thinker who had significant influences in semiotics, literature, and culture and was considered one of the important intellectuals of the 20th century. In his work, Barthes (1957/1991) mentions that the sign is not only the sum of the signifier and the signified but one formed by their unity. Myth applies this existing sign to a new meaning, creating a second-order sign system. In this system, the original sign turns into the signifier, and the new meaning turns into the signified. The relationship between the two is myth itself. In Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, "connotation" is a key concept that refers to the secondary, cultural, and associative meanings that a sign (such as a word, image, or object) carries beyond its basic meaning. Connotations are shaped by a society's values, beliefs, ideologies, and experiences and, therefore, can be subjective and vary across cultures (Barthes, 1957/1991).

Although Barthes exhibits a similar approach to Levi-Strauss in terms of their focus on the naturalization function of myths, there are differences in their understandings. According to Barthes (1957/2003, as cited in Sepetçi, 2016, p. 493), individuals may be aware of the interconnected concepts within myths but not their mythic/ideological nature. In other words, myths conceal their ideological functioning. As they are class-based, they serve to naturalize the values of the ruling class. At this point, myths serve the ideological function of generalizing and legitimizing the values of the dominant class. While myths are the primary object of analysis in textual semiotics with Levi-Strauss, with Barthes, they are interpreted as a semiotic phenomenon of everyday life culture imbued with power hierarchies (Dağtaş, 1999 as cited in Sepetçi, p. 493). That is, while both Levi-Strauss and Barthes view myth as a form of language and a means of spreading meanings in society,

Barthes sees language as a tool of class domination. He claims that many everyday practices such as eating, drinking, dressing, and advertising are directed by signs and myths, and, that is, by ideology (Sepetçi, 2016, p. 493).

Media plays an essential role as a storytelling tool from a semiotic perspective. Besides, it serves as an ideological tool that reveals the cultural and political structure of the society it is in and shapes our social perceptions. In this sense, today's TV series and movies reproduce myths in a modern sense, with their literal and figurative meanings. This makes media texts a vital resource for researchers working in the field of semiotics, which also contributes significantly to this study. Costumes, dialogues, accessories, stage frames, and even the postures of female characters carry meanings that should deserve critical analysis if one wants to understand the warrior woman archetype. In addition, symbols within popular narratives collectively create ideological myths with the associations they evoke in the audiences. Analyzing these signs and symbols helps us look at what rhetorical figures accompany the warrior woman archetype in promoting or subverting certain ideologies in Turkish TV series and films.

2.3. Popular Culture and the Media

Culture is transmitted through language and signs and passed down between generations. The symbols and signs that carry culture are ideological because culture belongs to the class-based capitalist society. Capitalism has created its own myths and disseminates them to the public through language. These myths naturalize and legitimize the dominant structure. Myths transmit dominant values to society, erase alternatives, and determine whom people will identify with and what they will oppose. Rather than explanations, myths resort to tautologies, preserving conservative ideas. They make critical thinking dull by creating common sense. Roland Barthes particularly emphasizes the ideological aspect of popular culture. Especially in the 1970s, his analytical frameworks influenced media content analysis, including news, advertising, and all forms of popular culture, and became groundbreaking for British Cultural Studies (Yaylagül, 2006, p. 109).

The perspective of Cultural Studies on media is closely related to ideology. It starts from the point that ideology changes the nature of reality within the social structure. In this sense, it considers media texts ideological as they naturalize the existing social structures.

As a result of this nature of the media, especially conflicts in the social sphere are misrepresented, and consequently, questioning the reasons underlying these conflicts is prevented (Smith, 1999/2005, p. 214).

Another discussion that substantially impacts cultural studies is whether culture is understood as a practice or a system of symbols and meanings. Critical scholars view culture as a discursive structure and emphasize individuals' role in enacting culture. Having been inherited from constructivism, this approach emphasizes that culture is something people do rather than something they possess (Piller, 2017).

The widespread appeal of radio, cinema, television, and digital media has given rise to a new culture. This culture, which appeals to numerous groups of people and sometimes transcends national borders, is referred to as popular culture. Initially used to denote culture produced by the people, popular culture began to be defined as culture produced by the media and capable of influencing the masses rapidly due to the rapid development of technology in the 20th century. This culture has been produced by those who control mass communication tools and technology and is offered for the consumption of individuals. Thus, popular culture has become both an economic activity and a powerful tool influencing the masses. In this sense, it can be said that popular culture is a culture created by consumerism. It is thus inserted into the wheels of communication technology and the cultural industry of capitalism, turning it into "content" suitable for consumption.

The historical foundations of popular culture were laid with the advent of mass communication in the 1920s and the 30s, along with the emergence of the commercial dimensions of culture and entertainment. When we look at the debates on popular culture in the 20th century, we often see an emphasis on whether popular culture reflects the interests and experiences of the people as free expression environments or whether it is an imposed form of social control by ruling power centers.

Still being the most popular media across many parts of the world, television, as in the rest of the world, is the foremost source of news, information, and entertainment. Critics argue that the fictional world created by television, one of the central tools of popular culture, provides instant and temporary relief to modern individuals' fears, insecurities, and helplessness. Television broadcasts that tell stories, create myths, and produce fantasies allow viewers to adapt more easily to areas of life they cannot access, problems they cannot

solve, and social realities they cannot change, to some extent enabling them to escape from the overwhelming realities (Güllüoğlu, 2012, p. 84).

The Frankfurt School critically approaches the culture industry and its products. The concept of “culture industry,” which was coined by Adorno and Horkheimer, is related to the commercialization of culture within capitalist production relations, the standardization of cultural products, and the rationalization of distribution techniques. Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/2009), in their essay “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” first used the culture industry interchangeably with mass culture. However, they later abandoned the term mass culture because it was thought to connote the culture arising from the masses or from below. The term culture industry was preferred to refer to the industrialized form of culture imposed from above.

According to Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/2010), enlightenment ideology lies at the beginning of this commercialization of culture. In their work *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, they criticize Enlightenment by emphasizing its coercive aspect, arguing that it ultimately leads to a new domination, which is present in every aspect of culture. The “culture industry” notion was first mentioned in this essay, which briefly explains how the liberating power given to reason by enlightenment actually ends in a new domination and how this domination manifests itself in every aspect of culture.

The culture industry produces various cultural texts as commodities and transmits them to the masses through rationalization (that is, through rational persuasion via logic and morality) within the capitalist system (Kulak, 2017, p. 88). In the culture industry, the weapons of the powerful are no longer swords, bombs, and guns; culture, fashion, advertising, cinema, television, and radio have become the weapons instead. Although the culture industry seems to grant individuals a certain freedom, it fundamentally opposes their individuality. (Sönmeyen, 2012).

In their study titled “Tutan/Tutmayan Dizi Tanımlaması İle Yaratılan Yerli Dizilerin Farklılığı Yanılsamasına Karşı Yerli Dizilerin Aynılığı,” Aksoy and Narmanlı (2019) discuss the views of Adorno and Horkheimer on television within the context of television and the culture industry. Horkheimer and Adorno predicted that television, as a form of “culture industry,” would be a new form of mass culture combining image and sound, image

and narrative, and would become a prototypical product of industrialized culture (Kellner, 2011, as cited in Aksoy & Narmanlı, 2019).

As Theodor W. Adorno argued in his essay “How to Look at Television” (1954), television has a profound psychological impact on its viewers. This effect is achieved through both overt and hidden messages that appeal to the subconscious and that viewers unconsciously adopt. According to Adorno, television programs often tell a simple and understandable story on the surface while carrying messages that reinforce social norms and values in the underlying layers, thereby preserving the existing social order by suppressing individuality and encouraging conformity to the status quo. Additionally, in his book *Critical Models*, Adorno (1963/1999) discusses television as a part of the culture industry¹. Adorno supports the idea that television is used to manipulate and control public consciousness, just like other mass media do. (p, 49). This, he emphasizes, is achieved by skilfully embedding messages that benefit the real world into the replicated world of television.

The studies of the Frankfurt School on the culture industry and popular culture paved the way for the Birmingham School to analyze the ideological functioning of popular culture. The school emerged as a counter-Ecole to the Frankfurt School, observing that the ethnocentrism created by labeling high culture as superior to popular culture resulted in an unhealthy development that marginalized the masses. Thus, the Birmingham School aimed to give voice to the silent masses (Ibe O, 2019).

Stuart Hall's pioneering work at the Birmingham School, along with the works of Paul Willis, Dick Hebdige, David Morley, Charlotte Brunsdon, John Clarke, Richard Dyer, Judith Williamson, Richard Johnson, Iain Chambers, Dorothy Hobson, Chris Weedon, Tony Jefferson, Michael Green, and Angela McRobbie, shaped the field of cultural studies. Many scholars in cultural studies adopted Marxist analytical methods by investigating the relationship between cultural structures (superstructure) and political economy (base).

¹ The collection of two works in this book—*Interventions: Nine Critical Models* (1963) and *Catchwords: Critical Models II* (1969)—illustrates the author's strong dedication after World War II to exposing the culture that gave rise to Nazism and its inhumane ideology.

In the early 1970s, Louis Althusser's work on rethinking the Marxist definitions of "base" and "superstructure" significantly impacted the Birmingham School's studies. Much of the work at the Birmingham School focused on the subcultural expressions of youth who opposed the "respectable" middle-class British culture after World War II (Hall et al., 1978). The school positions itself alongside Marxism, against positivist mainstream approaches. However, the critical framework of the CCCS is not classical Marxism. It was "completed by the neo-Marxist New Left thought of the late 1960s and 1970s. It benefits from Western Marxism and the new social movements of the time in opposing Classical Marxism's reductionist, deterministic, doctrinal, and anti-humanist focus" (Smith, 2007, p. 208-209).

Raymond Williams, one of the most productive writers in the cultural studies milieu, uses the concept of culture in a broad sense across society. He emphasizes that all sectors of society have their own cultures but also points out a general culture that encompasses everyone or many social sects. The culture he refers to as the culture of the ordinary (common culture) can also be seen as equivalent to popular culture. According to him, popular culture is the culture created by the people. However, mass culture is the culture developed by certain social groups for the people (Güngör, 2022, p. 101).

According to Williams (1983), culture contains many forms that constitute its structure. It is possible to analyze cultural and even social structure by examining the forms within the culture. Also, according to him, culture constitutes the whole way of life of society and can be directed mainly by education. Indeed, various societal institutions and structures, such as family, school, media, etc., should be involved in this process and encompass individuals of all ages. For example, it is emphasized that television is quite influential in shaping society and culture.

On the other hand, John Fiske, had an optimistic view about the formation of popular culture, believing that people determine what they want themselves, which creates wealth for producers and pleasure for consumers. He also argued that the control of the culture industry is in the hands of the public, as the product is subject to the audience's appreciation. When we look at the summary of Fiske's work, he argues that popular culture is not the same as "mass culture." Mass culture is a culture imposed on the public by the dominant class. Popular culture, on the other hand, is an area where people reinterpret and transform texts and meanings taken from mass culture according to their own experiences and values (Fiske, 1989/1991). According to the relatively liberal pluralist view represented by John Fiske,

popular culture is a widespread culture characterized by diversity and pluralism, which includes elements from all segments of society and, therefore, appeals to all segments of society (Güngör, 2011, p. 243). For example, a film may promote tolerance and pluralism by depicting people of different ethnicities and beliefs. Even if a TV series or a movie, even if it is a product of popular culture, highlights female characters, this is a positive development that should not be underestimated according to this liberal perspective.

To summarize, the Frankfurt School argues that the culture industry manipulates consumer desires and perpetuates dominant ideologies, hindering critical thought and social change. On the other hand, the Birmingham School emphasizes the agency of individuals in shaping popular culture. They argue that people are not passive consumers but active interpreters of cultural texts, capable of resisting and subverting dominant meanings. Moreover, John Fiske (1989/2003) considers popular culture a diverse field where active audiences create their own meaning and can challenge the dominant ideologies.

This study is theoretically based upon a critical combination of the perspectives of the Frankfurt School, Birmingham School, and Fiske. For example, feminism has become a product of popular culture and a commodity of the culture industry, and, ironically, this is how it has some impact on the destruction of social stereotypes about women. In this respect, Fiske's optimistic view of popular culture seems justified. Still, the perspective of the Birmingham School, which investigates how different identities such as social class, gender, race, and ethnicity are represented in the media and popular culture and how these forms of representation reflect social power dynamics, is highly valuable. It is because although subverting traditional gender stereotypes, the commodified form of feminism also reproduces them. In this regard, it should be taken into consideration that feminism, with all its gender inclusivity, is turned into a commodity as it is made standardized and uniform in accordance with the interests of the capitalist economy. For this reason, this study brings a critical approach to the representation of the warrior woman archetype in popular cultural texts, drawing on the ideas offered by the Frankfurt School while not ignoring its positive aspects.

The fact that the thesis approaches the issue in this way should not lead to the idea that popular culture is a tool that entirely serves the ruling class's interests. Even though I am closer to the Frankfurt School in this study, I will create a synthesis by making inferences that sometimes justify John Fiske's optimistic views while examining the findings in my

study. Although the representation of warrior women in both global and Turkish media is a positive development in promoting gender diversity, their potential to be turned into standardized popular culture products guided by certain ideological and economic interests is also an issue that requires critical examination. This phenomenon raises concerns about the authenticity and agency of these representations because they run the risk of becoming mere commodities shaped by market forces rather than genuine reflections of the diversity of women's experiences.

2.4. Feminism and the Media

In this section, the importance of gender will first be discussed. An overview of the historical development of feminist theory and practice will follow this discussion. Then, the contributions of feminism to media theory will be reviewed.

2.4.1. Gender

The portrayal of societal roles and how the audience interprets them within the ideological and cultural influence of the media plays a significant role. Therefore, the power groups controlling the media provoke certain understandings about gender among the audiences. Narratives may emerge either conforming to traditional family values and serving a conservative societal structure or challenging this status quo. It can be said that media narratives emerge through the mutual interaction of contemporary culture industries and audiences.

In the past few years, the term "gender" has replaced the word "women" in the titles of many books and articles about women's studies. In some cases, the preference for using this term, albeit ambiguously, is primarily related to the political acceptability of the field (Scott, 2010, p. 115). Therefore, it is necessary to provide an explanation of the concept of gender and to take a look at the feminist ideology and feminist studies that have played a role in the development of this concept in the literature.

Biological gender differences are observed between women and men regarding inherent characteristics that are not learned but innate. Gender differences, on the other hand, are differences observed between women and men in terms of acquired characteristics learned during the socialization process. Gender differences vary from individual to

individual and culture to culture (Dökmen, 2009, p. 25). Gender, based on differentiation shaped by gender, was first used by Robert J. Stoller in his book *Sex and Gender*, published in 1968. However, it was Ann Oakley who introduced and popularized the term "gender" in sociology. Ann Oakley, with her book *Sex, Gender and Society*, published in 1972, introduced the societal dimension of gender into the fundamental discussions and research interests of sociology (Marshall, 1999, p. 98).

Today, sociologists generally use the term gender to refer to the physical and biological differences between men and women (Slattery, 1991/2014, p. 341). Accordingly, the term gender corresponds to a binary classification of women and men (Dökmen, 2009, p. 21). Although this classification may seem like a simple biological classification, the values and roles attributed to women and men are considered a social construction beyond biological sex.

The term "role" is borrowed from theater but is expressed in a sociological sense. The role indicates the position of an individual within an organized social structure, the responsibilities, privileges, and rules that guide interaction with other individuals in that position (Spence, 1985). Women and men are expected to "play" their roles according to the "script" written by society. In this sense, individuals have various roles constructed within society. The role is expressed in some studies as "expected behaviors in a particular social situation," "the sum of the expected actions from a person in a particular social situation and his/her actual actions," or "actual behavior patterns or expected behavior patterns in a particular social situation" (Tan, 1979, p. 158).

From an anthropological perspective, gender roles are the tasks and activities attributed to each gender by a culture (Kottak, 2004/2008, p. 443). Gender perception and the attitudes it generates are essential elements that influence and guide people from any gender in all areas of life.

Gender roles refer to what colors of clothes girls and boys will wear, what types of toys they will play with, how women's and men's roles will differ, and what inequalities will arise. Social environment, including parents, teachers, peers, immediate surroundings, and so on, determines one's learning and internalizing gender roles. The importance of mass media (media) is also significant in this respect. Mass media, especially television, either online or broadcast, provides essential models for children. It has been suggested that

children who spend a certain part of their time watching television learn gender roles from these models (Dökmen, 2009, p. 62). In addition to this, it can be said that digital platforms such as YouTube are also areas where children learn gender roles. The concept of religion, which has a vital role in the functionality of society, also has a significant influence on the shaping of gender roles. Also, traditions embedded in the codes of society can contribute to internalizing these roles in individuals independently of religion. At the heart of this are patriarchal power relations between men and women.

Traditionally, women are expected to be affectionate, passive, compliant, sensitive, intuitive, and needy, which are shown as virtues. Alongside this, it is purported that women should not appear more ambitious, aggressive, competitive, or smarter than men. They are expected to be ignorant and indifferent to current issues of sports, economics, and politics. In contrast, men are expected to be tough, fearless, logical, self-confident, independent, and aggressive, attitudes expected from and strongly praised by society (Zastrow, 2016, p. 605).

The fact that these gender roles between men and women have created a social hierarchy over the centuries has led women to defend their rights and fight against dominant male ideologies. This hierarchy has caused women to be treated as second-class citizens in the economic, social, and political spheres and deepened social injustices. Women's equal access to education, working life, and political life have been denied, causing them to have less say in society. However, struggles against these inequalities have created a critical basis for women to demand their rights and push for social change.

2.4.2. Development of Feminism

Feminism is a modernist movement that advocates women's equal participation in all areas of modern life and fights against social constraints and the chains of tradition that hinder them from being "free" individuals in the modern world (Cihan, 2018, p. 275). Feminism is primarily the name given to thought currents and political movements that question the unequal position of women and men in society and aim to eliminate it. Feminism, as a libertarian and egalitarian ideology, opposes all forms of sexism.

Looking at the history of the struggle for women's rights, we see that this struggle has gone through a long and gradual process. The slogan of the French Revolution, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," brought up the idea that women should also have equal rights. Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) advocated women's equal rights with men in areas such as education

and suffrage in her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. With the French Revolution of 1789, the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" was issued, and individual rights and freedoms were legally guaranteed. In fact, the mass appearance of women in the modern stage of history occurred for the first time during the French Revolution. In every aspect, from popular uprisings that initiated the revolution to marches on Bastille and Versailles and the establishment of political clubs, women from various backgrounds participated in the revolution, supporting it and demanding rights under the symbols of "equality," "liberty," and "fraternity."

In the 19th century, the feminist movement began to gain strength in the United States and Britain. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott organized the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, issuing a declaration for women's rights. This declaration included significant demands such as women's suffrage, education, and property rights. In the 20th century, the world witnessed significant change and development in the women's rights movement. The economic and demographic changes brought about by World War I increased women's participation in the workforce and strengthened their demands for rights such as suffrage (Cott, 1987).

The second-wave feminist movement rose after World War II. Simone de Beauvoir (1949/2000), in her book *The Second Sex*, pointed out the need to separate women as individuals born into bodies and socially constructed femininity from existentialist philosophy. Despite the granting of educational rights, entry into the workforce, and political rights for women during the first wave of the feminist period, these rights could not be fully implemented in practical life due to laws, traditional social norms, sexist perspectives, customs, and traditions (Kolay, 2015, p. 8). During the second-wave feminist movement, a collective female identity was defined. Additionally, a comprehensive approach was developed to counter the oppressive behaviors experienced by women both in the public and in the private sphere. The agency of this identity was women who aimed to end patriarchal social structures, demand equal rights in all areas, and desire to gain sexual freedoms (Beauvoir, 2000, p. 17–18).

With the institutional victories of the second wave of feminism, women entered the following decades with more rights and power. They could consider their identities beyond traditional femininity by embracing individuality and rebellion. Many women expressed

their sexuality more freely through speech, clothing, and behavior, sometimes surprising even the second-wave feminists who resisted traditional femininity.

The term "third-wave feminism" was coined in 1992 by 23-year-old Black bisexual woman Rebecca Walker. The third wave was distinguished by being more conscious of race and other inequalities among women. Kimberlé Crenshaw, an expert in gender and critical race studies, coined the term "intersectionality," which expresses how different types of oppression, such as those based on gender and race, intersect, in 1989. While mainstream first and second-wave feminism largely ignored or neglected racial inequalities within gender, the third wave showed more interest in them. Also, as the internet became widespread, it became easier to hear the perspectives and ideas of feminists worldwide (*Types of Feminism: The Four Waves*, 2024).

It is argued that a fourth wave of feminism has emerged in the last decade but has not yet been fully defined. This development is heavily based on social media because women use social media to wage viral campaigns, engage in protests, and organize movements to support other women worldwide. This wave seems to focus on issues such as sexual harassment, rape culture, and body shaming. They also support LGBTQ+ rights, adopt gender inclusivity and diversity, and embrace the ideas of gender and body positivity (Divine, 2023).

Day and Wray (2018) argue that fourth-wave feminism emerged from third-wave feminism in the 1990s (p. 4). The authors argue that in the late 1990s, the media used the discourse of "girl power" to redefine girlhood as apolitical, meritocratic, and consumerist, and by focusing on the autonomous individual, reduced women's agency to a mere "choice" (p. 11). Day and Wray (2018) argue that consumer capitalism and this discourse used by the media to sell products to young women deviate from the fundamental goals of the feminist movement and lead to more consumption rather than empowerment (p. 11). Day and Wray (2018) criticize third and fourth-wave feminism, arguing that some feminists prioritize individual identity and personal empowerment rather than criticizing social structures (p. 9-10). They argue that capitalism and neoliberalism tend to use feminism for their purposes, potentially distracting from the actual goals of the feminist movement (p. 10-11).

Feminist movements worldwide have developed through various waves marked by different focuses and methods in the struggle for gender equality. These movements have

been shaped by cultural, social, and political contexts, leading to different expressions and priorities in different regions. From advocacy for fundamental rights in the Enlightenment age to the complex intersectionality and digital activism of the 21st century, feminism has continually adapted to address enduring and emerging issues. This global narrative lays the groundwork for understanding how feminism is shaped in Turkey and intersects with unique historical and socio-political dynamics.

There are meaningful connections between the universal development of feminism and the emergence of feminist movements in Turkey. Feminist waves worldwide have also influenced and guided women's rights defenders in Turkey. Women's rights movements, especially those that started in the West in the 19th century, were carefully followed by intellectuals and reformist groups in the Ottoman Empire. During this period, Ottoman women's struggle for their rights gained momentum under the influence of feminist ideas in the West. Thus, Turkish feminists, inspired by Western developments, began to fight against gender inequalities in their own society.

The beginning of feminist movements in Turkey dates back to the 19th century. During that period, the Ottoman Müdafaa-i Hukuk-ı Nisvan (The Protection of the Rights of Women) Society, considered a feminist association, discussed women's fundamental rights, education, and the problems they faced in society. Prominent feminist women in Turkish history, such as Nezihe Muhiddin and Ulviye Mevlan, were actively involved in this association (Metintaş, 2018, p. 110). Women's movements in the late Ottoman period, coinciding with the Constitutional Era, improved the situation of women in some social areas compared to the past but remained insufficient in opening the way for women's political participation.

Feminist movements that would politically impact women became more apparent and concrete with the Republic. From the establishment of the Republic in 1923 to 1935, when the 12th World Women's Union was held, there was a significant increase in women's rights and freedoms (Metintaş, 2018, p. 111).

Feminism in Turkish society evolved in parallel with nationalism and nation-state formation until 1968. After that, it was shaped by ideological fluctuations worldwide and underwent a much more radical transformation in the 1980s.

Betül Karagöz's (2008) article “Türkiye’de 1980 Sonrası Kadın Hareketinin Siyasal Temelleri ve ‘İkinci Dalga’ Uğrağı” examines the second-wave women's movement, which rose in post-1980 Turkey with the influence of the September 12 coup and neoliberal policies, and its political and social context. This movement, influenced by second-wave feminism in the West but also had a character specific to Turkey, enabled women to leave the private sphere and take a more active role in the public sphere. Women, who expressed their demands for equality in fields such as education, business, law, and politics, achieved some gains and laid the foundations of the struggle for women's rights.

The importance of media representation in shaping public perception and reinforcing gender stereotypes is vital not only in Turkey but also globally. Feminist movements worldwide have realized the power of the media and organized various campaigns and initiatives to challenge and reshape how women are portrayed in the media. For example, in the United States, organizations such as the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media have conducted extensive research on gender representation in the entertainment industry. They advocate more balanced and diverse depictions of women in media content to combat common stereotypes and prejudices that limit opportunities for women and girls (Saval, 2015). Therefore, the representation of women in the media is an essential issue in feminist activism, aiming to increase the visibility of women more positively. The struggle of feminism against sexist portrayals of women in the media is one of the main factors that led the number of female lead characters in TV series and movies to increase and their role in the story to develop significantly.

2.4.3. Feminist Media Theory

Feminist media theory usually examines how gender roles are constructed, how women are represented, and how these representations contribute to gender inequality in media texts. The importance of addressing feminist media theory in this thesis lies in the need to understand how warrior women characters are represented in popular culture media texts and the ideological attitudes associated with these representations.

The rise of warrior women characters in popular culture is often associated with feminist perspectives such as the empowerment of women and the questioning of gender roles. However, the representations of these characters are often complex and shaped by writers, directors, and producers with different ideological perspectives.

Feminist media theory criticizes the representations of these characters by examining whether they truly empower women or merely objectify them according to a male-dominated perspective, thereby reproducing societal gender norms and contributing to existing gender inequality.

The emergence of feminist media theory coincides with the second wave era. As Timisi (2011) writes, in cinema feminist studies “emerged as a critical examination area focusing on the ways in which cinema constructs gender, drawing its source from feminist politics and theory” (p. 157). Early feminist critics like Laura Mulvey and Claire Johnston criticized the male gaze in films and the portrayal and stereotyping of women as sexual objects in cinema.

In her famous article “Visual Pleasure and Narrative” cinema, which was first published in 1972, Mulvey (1975/2006) questions how gender roles are constructed in cinema and how these constructed roles represented through cinema determine people's lifestyles. She argues that one of the potential pleasures offered by cinema stems from looking, and this gaze is inherently male.

Using psychoanalytic theory as a political weapon to demonstrate how the unconscious of patriarchal society structures film form, Mulvey suggests that cinema offers various possible pleasures, one of which is “scopophilia” (voyeurism), conceptualized by Freud. At this point, she indicates that Freud's concept of scopophilia is associated with treating others as objects and directing a controlling and curious gaze toward them. Thus, through the concept of scopophilia, other people are positioned as objects of a curious and controlling gaze. More importantly, Mulvey interprets scopophilia in classical cinema as a structure that operates in terms of being active and passive, which is divided into genders (Yücel, 2018, p. 49-50).

Unlike Mulvey, Modleski (1982) takes a different approach to popular media texts from a psychoanalytic perspective. In her work *Loving with a Vengeance*, Modleski examines the impact of television series on female viewers, specifically focusing on how soap operas reflect women's desires, fantasies, and social roles. She evaluates popular culture from a feminist perspective, arguing that these series can help women understand and express their emotional experiences. While cinema confines the audience to a passive position, television series, especially soap operas, invite the female audience to a more active

position, according to Modleski (1982). She argues that soap operas appeal to women's emotional worlds by allowing them to identify with their own lives and experiences.

Today many films and TV series tell stories where women successfully take on warrior roles. These characters are portrayed as powerful warriors while also emotional and human sides are emphasized, thus presenting multidimensional and complex female characters to the audience. However, some stereotypes and clichés are also used in the portrayal of warrior women in the media. For example, these characters are often portrayed in TV series and movies as people who compete with men or achieve success in male-dominated fields, allowing them to conform to masculine norms. It is possible to comment that this situation causes the media to reinforce the stereotyped caricatures of "masculinized women" and create a representation of women that is still presented through the male gaze.

2.5. The Concept of Archetype

Various ancient archetypes feed clichéd representations of women in contemporary popular culture. So, in the pages below, the concept of the archetype will first be overviewed with a focus on the warrior archetype, and its historical construction as a gendered figure will be critically evaluated.

Carl Gustav Jung, one of the most influential figures in psychology, made a significant contribution to the field with the concept of the archetype. Understanding Jung's life story is crucial to understanding the development of the archetype concept. Jung completed all his education and medical education at the University of Basel (Ukray, 2016, p. 9-10). Born in 1875 in Switzerland, Jung described his childhood as solitary and his personality as "introverted" (quoted in Engler, 2014, p. 64). Jung stated that his real scientific work began with his association experiments in 1903 (Jung, 2017, p. 245). Starting to work as a specialist physician at a psychiatric clinic and teaching at the University of Zurich in 1905, Jung sent his first book, *Psychology of Dementia² Praecox*, published in 1907, to Sigmund Freud,

² Jung started his psychiatric career in 1900, at 25, assisting Dr. Eugen Bleuler at Zurich's Burghölzli Hospital. Before meeting Freud in 1907, he authored the renowned monograph *Psychology of Dementia Praecox*, which Ernest Jones deemed groundbreaking in psychiatry, extending Freudian concepts to psychoses (*Psychology of Dementia Praecox*, n.d.).

whose writings he closely followed. In the same year, Jung went to Vienna at Freud's invitation, and it is stated that his meeting with Freud lasted for 13 hours. Upon Freud's suggestion, Jung became the first president of the International Psychoanalytic Association (Geçtan, 2014, p. 158). Initially influenced by Freud and following his writings and thoughts, Jung developed his own views and thoughts independently of Freud, working under the name "analytical psychology." Jung described psychic energy as libido, but unlike Freud, he argued that psychic energy is not just an energy derived from sexual instincts; rather, it encompasses a force that covers the entire structure of the psyche (Ukay, 2016, p. 11).

From Jung's perspective, the "collective unconscious" encompasses the hereditary behavior patterns inherited from ancestors by individuals (Eren, 2017, p. 88). In Jung's book *Analytical Psychology* (1916/2006), the collective unconscious is defined more specifically as a phenomenon encompassing patterned behaviors that people exhibit in response to universal situations, regardless of historical periods, societies, or races, since the beginning of the world (p. 33). This phenomenon is also related to the embedding of common symbolic values of individuals in cultural memory. In other words, this concept encompasses meanings universally shared by diverse groups of people. It includes the impressions and experiences of human beings in the past, which are reflected in dreams, fairy tales, and religious festivals today (Gürses, 2007, p. 79).

Carl Jung's (1964/2009) book *Man and His Symbols*³ is a comprehensive study that sheds light on the importance of symbols and the unconscious. Jung emphasizes that symbols are the language of the unconscious and manifest in dreams, myths and art. These archetypes and symbols play a critical role in the process of individuation, in which the individual discovers and integrates his or her inner self. He explores how art and the creative process externalize symbols of the unconscious.

Jung emphasized the distinction between personal and collective unconscious; while personal unconscious differs for each individual, collective unconscious is a condition that

³ The book aims to bring Jung's psychological theories to a broader audience and is known as the last major work he completed before his death. The book focuses on Jung's theory of archetypes and the collective unconscious; archetypes are universal and inherited symbols of human experience, while the collective unconscious is a layer of the unconscious shared by all humanity. The book referenced in this thesis was translated into Turkish in 2009 under the title *İnsan ve Sembolleri*.

shows similar characteristics and is shared among individuals. This makes the collective unconscious a transpersonal concept (Engler, 2014, p. 68). The concept of "archetype" introduced to the psychology literature by Carl Gustav Jung is directly related to the collective unconscious (Ukay, 2016, p. 103). Derived from the Greek concept of "archetypal," the archetype is defined as the first images, characters, or patterns that are universal and continuous (Darıcı, 2013, p. 77). According to Jung, archetypes are highly emotionally charged universal forms of thought and behavior (Karahan & Sardoğan, 2004, p. 14). The human psyche tends to express the incomprehensible symbolically (Meadow, 1992, p. 188). Archetypes, which constitute the elements forming the collective unconscious, have been embedded in works of art that give the impression of humanity's common heritage (Geçtan, 2014, p. 166).

Archetypes, which Jung stated constitute the content of the collective unconscious, express the essence of human experience. Jung, who described archetypes as factors responsible for shaping the unconscious psychic process of personality, attached great importance to archetypes such as "the persona," "the anima/ animus," "the shadow," and "the self" (Geçtan, 2014, p. 166). "The persona" refers to the social role that a person plays in society. "The anima/ animus" refers to the unconscious feminine or masculine side of a man and a woman, respectively; "the shadow" refers to the repressed, hidden side of the personality, and "the self" refers to the unification of conscious and unconscious elements. It is stated that archetypes can appear in dreams, symbols, and myths and have universal validity in human societies.

2.5.1. Warrior Archetype

Jung (2015) stated that figures exhibiting heroic characteristics derive their driving force from libido (p. 17). The fact that warriors are often wanderers may indicate an unknown desire, sometimes longing for a lost mother. This situation can often be observed in texts associated with the Oedipus complex (p. 20). However, there are symbolic values that the representative of the mature warrior archetype can substitute for the mother. For example, patriotism is among these values. The identification of the homeland with the mother in the culture of many nations is also related to the appropriateness of the mature warrior's goal. Sometimes, the warrior assumes the identity of the "Saviour Messiah" in terms of the myth of heroism. The hero who destroys the monster that killed him and who reappears is the saviour (Jung, 1964/ 2009, p. 73). The warrior archetype is vital in

transmitting cultural achievements and noble human values to all humanity (Moore & Douglas, 1995, p. 84).

Among the male-based archetypes, the warrior archetype is the physical and emotional form of masculine energy, according to Moore and Gillette (1990/1995, p. 80), who theoretically based their studies on Jung's teaching. Warriors are associated with courage, bravery, and the ability to fight and protect. Warriors are often portrayed as fierce and aggressive, ready to face any challenge or enemy. They appear to be in touch with primitive instincts and are ready to sacrifice themselves for a greater cause. In other words, they are ready to kill anything that needs to be killed for the good of the majority. (*The Warrior Archetype*, n.d.).

2.5.2. Warrior Woman Archetype

In mythology, the warrior archetype is often associated with men, expressing the male's aggressive and ruthless personality. However, the warrior woman archetype, though less prominent compared to the male one, is occasionally observed in mythologies. It similarly represents a strong, brave, and independent character. Also known as the huntress or Amazon, the warrior woman archetype embodies a woman's spirit with the primary goal of asserting dominance in life (Durdu, 2021).

To contribute to our understanding of the warrior woman archetype, it is necessary to elaborate more on the anima and animus archetypes. In men, the anima archetype represents the introverted aspects of personality, while in women, the animus archetype embodies the extroverted side. These archetypes work to bring forth the opposite complementary gender within the psyche, maintaining the balance between the ego and the unconscious, allowing both personal responses and reflections of the opposite gender's experiences to be contained within the psyche (Jung, 1916/ 2006, p. 72-73). According to Jung, anima and animus archetypes influence the relationships between both men and women. These archetypes help men recognize feminine traits within themselves, and women recognize masculine traits (Şimşek & Şenocak, 2009, p. 118). In this regard, it can be assumed that the warrior woman archetype embodies the emergence of animus in women since traits such as power, courage, leadership, and heroism are typically associated with men.

Feminist critics, including Annis Pratt, Estella Lauter, Carol Pearson, and others, aim to reconsider and reevaluate Jungian theories in the context of feminist archetype theory.

These critics seek to use the notion of archetype as a feminist tool for re-examining and reassessing women's experiences in psychotherapy, arts, myths, dreams, religion, sociology, and other disciplines. They reevaluate Jung's theories in the light of modern women's experiences, aiming to revise the existing gender-based archetypes to create new and distinct female archetype patterns (Bear-Tibbs, 1991).

Estella Lauter is one of the feminist archetype critics who aims to create new and distinct female archetype patterns different from those controlled by the patriarchal structure of the world. She views Jung's theory as a map that needs to be redrawn to explore the territories of as-yet-undiscovered female archetypes. Her work supports the idea that female warriors can exist and evolve by questioning traditional male-dominated archetype roles (Bear-Tibbs, 1991, p. 7).

Carol Pearson's seminal work, *The Hero Within Six Archetypes We Live By*, published in 1986, also made significant contributions to feminist archetype studies. Despite the assumption in many studies of archetypes, especially the hero/warrior archetype, that "male and female heroism is fundamentally the same," Pearson (2015) acknowledges the differences between men and women. Pearson's work has been used to describe the distinct characteristics of female warriors. She states that female warriors seek power and effectiveness but aim to use this power to make the world a better place. On the other hand, Pearson (2015) often remarks that male warriors forget that "the purpose of the battle or contest is to make the world a better place" (p. 86). In Pearson's (2015) schema, female warriors often reject the principle of defining life as a competition, as seen in male warriors (p. 81). Female warriors struggle with fears of failure and ineffectiveness but rely on their inner beliefs to overcome these fears. Pearson (2015) also suggests that female warriors need courage and strength to face dragons, but sometimes flight is a valid option (p. 3). Female warriors can use their emotions as a source of strength instead of suppressing them like men. These thoughts by Pearson offer a valuable perspective to understand how female warriors can be depicted differently from traditional male warrior models.

Other notable figures examining the warrior woman archetype include Bolen, Murdock, and Estes. In her work *Goddesses in Everywoman: A New Psychology of Women*, Jean Shinoda Bolen (1984) examines warrior goddess archetypes such as Amazons, Artemis, and Athena. Bolen believes that women may not be aware of the powerful forces that influence them, including cultural stereotypes affecting what they do and how they feel.

Bolen (1984) argues that understanding these internal patterns and their relationships provides women with much more liberating, realistic alternatives than the limiting dichotomies of masculine/feminine, mother/lover, and career woman/homemaker. Bolen (1984) introduces these patterns as seven archetypes of goddesses or personality types, then shows readers how to identify their dominant goddesses, which ones to develop and overcome, and how to benefit from the power of these enduring archetypes. She argues that understanding these patterns is key to women becoming better "heroines" in their own life stories (Bolen, 1984).

In *The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness*, Maureen Murdock (1990) analyzes various representations of the female hero in mythology and literature. In response to Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Murdock (1990) wrote the book to address women's journeys (Murdock, 1990). The book tells the story of women's quests for wholeness in a society defined by masculine values. Using cultural myths, fairy tales, ancient symbols, goddesses, and contemporary women's dreams, Murdock (1990) demonstrates the need for and reality of feminine values in Western culture.

Last but not least, Clarissa Pinkola Estés (1992) explores the shadow aspects and healing potential of the warrior woman archetype in her work *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*. Clarissa Pinkola Estés' (1992) book *Women Who Run with the Wolves* introduces and explores the archetypes of powerful, passionate, and visionary women called the Wild Woman. In the patriarchal forms of storytelling, the same feminine and passive traits reappear in such women (Estes, 1992). The thesis will provide more detailed examples of this discussion when discussing myths, fairy tales, and epics below. All these works have contributed to the literature on the analysis of the warrior woman archetype

2.5.3. Warrior Woman Archetype in Fairy Tales

Although contemporary feminist studies address affirmative aspects of the warrior woman archetype, women characters in fairy tales and mythologies have generally been portrayed in problematic ways. Myths, epics, and fairy tales, which play a significant role in shaping a society's culture, have influenced society's view of women and allowed women to internalize their roles. Briefly looking at the topic of fairy tales and examining women's

representations in European and Turkish fairy tales will contribute to illustrating the central problematic of the study.

Clark (1963) defines a fairy tale as a prose narrative where humble heroes achieve fame and fortune in an unrealistic world (p. 23). According to Lukens (1999), fairy tales are one of the traditional forms of storytelling, alongside fables, folk stories, myths, legends, and folk epics (p. 14). All these traditional stories share common characteristics since they are based on oral tradition and passed down from generation to generation, usually with anonymous authors.

One form of these traditional stories, fairy tales, contains events that occur at an uncertain time and place and extraordinary elements. Its characters are not limited to specific individuals. Typologies such as "fairy, princess, prince, king, giant, genie, clever little boy, poor girl, witch, old man..." are examples. Characters are sharply divided into good or bad with definite lines (Can, 2014, p. 50). The hero usually has a task or a problem to solve. Themes such as birth and death, life and death, love and hate, building and destruction, selfishness and solidarity, fear and despair, and hope and salvation are encountered in fairy tales (Freud, 2005, p. 8). These binary oppositions give deeper meanings to fairy tales.

Looking at the research on fairy tales and gender conducted by Melek Özlem Sezer (2015), it is possible to conclude that women are largely portrayed as flawed beings in fairy tales. According to fairy tales, women should not rebel against their circumstances and should listen to others' advice and stay at home; otherwise, they will not escape trouble. In fairy tales, women expect to be rescued by men and escape from dire situations. A handsome and wealthy prince must come for the fairy tale to end happily. Men must have physical strength and wealth and be handsome and fearless when rescuing princesses. Evaluating fairy tales in the context of gender, Sezer (2015) expresses that fairy tales are the most traditional genre of literature and continue to be maintained with the utmost adherence to tradition without much consideration for the changes of age. She generally states that women in fairy tales are always timid, fearful, unable to express their thoughts directly, and excluded (Sezer, 2015).

However, it is a fact that there are fairy tales that rebel against the patriarchal system. The term "fairy tale" was coined by Baroness Marie Catherine d'Aulnoy, who, when she wrote her first fairy tale in 1690, exhibited a veiled challenge to the conservative and

patriarchal French society of the time. In the fairy tales of Marie Catherine d'Aulnoy, small kingdoms were created, adding criticisms of patriarchy. Kings, fathers, and rulers were ineffective, passive, and illogical.

Female storytellers like d'Aulnoy created the archetypes of today's fairy tale heroes, especially Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Rapunzel in German fairy tales. They were best-selling authors of their time, and their fame continued to spread in the 18th century, reaching all segments of society. In the 19th century, the Grimm Brothers collected and printed folk tales, accusing female storytellers of being unoriginal and unable to reflect the people's voice. However, the theory of Grimm's tales being in a linear relationship with the people was later defined by scholars as a masculine perspective, and they were criticized for ignoring the contributions of female writers to the fairy tale genre (Ashley, 2009).

Outside Europe, women occasionally take centre stage in fairy tales. This is made possible primarily by the warrior woman archetype. In Russian fairy tales, a good example of the warrior woman archetype is the "Brave Girl"⁴ type. The "Brave Girl" is beautiful but fulfils functions traditionally defined as masculine. Her behaviour does not match the stereotypical behaviour of a woman, or rather, a "lady." She governs the state or fights in battles. In fact, she violates the established hierarchy between men and women; she does not obey her husband but takes his place. The husband and wife not only deviate from traditional gender roles but also change their roles in the family. The "Brave Girl" goes hunting and governs the state while her husband deals with household chores. To win the "Brave Girl," the male hero must undergo various trials, such as defeating her in battle or enduring her handshake. The male hero does not fight for the "Brave Girl;" he fights against her. Despite being powerful and invincible, the husband of this beautiful woman can only be a hero if he defeats her (Smolik, 2013, p. 52).

Although they are not called "Brave Girls" and are quite rare, there are examples of such female characters in Turkish fairy tales. In the tale of Shah Ismail, an Arab called Üzengi loves battles and cooks rice with the blood of the people she defeats. She is very strong, and for this reason, everyone thinks she is a man. Üzengi has a sack, and when she

⁴ The term "Bahadır" translates to "brave" or "fearless" in English. So, "Bahadır Kız" would be translated to "Brave Girl" or "Fearless Girl" in English.

wears it, she turns into a monster with one mouth on the ground and one in the sky. Shah Ismail is the only one who has defeated her. She wants to marry Shah Ismail because she thinks she has ultimately found a stronger man. Shah Ismail accepts this, and Üzengi also sets out to find the girl Shah Ismail was with at the beginning of the tale (Kumartaşlıoğlu, 2006, p. 276-290).

In Uyghur magical tales⁵, women sometimes have active and sometimes passive characters. Active women with positive qualities (mother, lover, wife, sister, daughter, and so on) are usually highlighted by their courage, patience, sacrifice, morality, and warrior nature, while active women with negative qualities (stepmother, treacherous sister, treacherous lover, treacherous wife, witch, giant, traitor, fairies, and so on) stand out with their cunning nature, deceitfulness, ruthlessness, and immorality. Passive women generally appear as mothers, sisters, wives, and lovers. Extraordinary figures such as "Seven-Headed Monster, giant, fairy," and so on, are traditional types encountered not only in Uyghur magical tales but also in Uyghur epics and folk tales. These extraordinary characters and other female types are continuous in the Uyghur oral tradition (Yalçınkaya, 2019, p. 191).

In these fairy tales discussed above, women can transition from a maternal identity to an alp identity to save their families and husbands. After succeeding, they can return to the maternal role assigned to them by society. Examples of fairy tales told from a patriarchal perspective are also found in Turkish Anatolian folk culture. For example, in the tale of Keloğlan and the Giant, a perfect example of the witch-woman type is seen. She traps people by calling them up to the poplar tree, claiming that her hair is tangled there, and asking for help to untangle it. When passersby climb up to help, she throws them down and adds their herds to her own. Keloğlan understands the situation, climbs up the tree, tangles the witch's hair even more, and throws her down, hanging her by her own hair (Günay, 1975, p. 371-373). Here, the witch woman is in a position of setting a trap and only thinks of her own benefit. However, she pays for it with her life at the end of the tale.

⁵ It may be thought that the word "fairy tales" in translating the expression "Uyghur tales" into English does not fully reflect the characteristics of Uyghur tales. "Magical tales" may have been chosen as an option that better expresses the mystic and fantastic nature of Uyghur tales.

2.5.4. Warrior Woman Archetype in Myths and Epics

While mythology tells the origins of humanity, epics strengthen the concepts of heroism and national identity. These elements play an important role in shaping the identity of a society or nation. Myths and epics tell about the brave and extraordinary adventures of heroes who represent the best qualities of humanity and set an example for society. The emergence of supernatural beings such as giants, dragons, monsters and fairies in mythology and epics symbolizes the struggle between good and evil, adding a fantastic element to these stories.

It is crucial to address these narratives separately, as they stand out for their instructive or entertaining aspects, although there are stories closely related to each other in mythology and epics.

The word “myth” comes from the Greek word “mythos” meaning “word of mouth”. Myths explain how and why our world works, how it came to be, how we should treat each other, why storms form, etc. explains. These are the stories people create to explain. In a way, myths were similar to our ancestors' ancient understanding of science. They explained how natural events occur and that they date back much further than recorded history. These myths are often passed down from parents to children, who in turn tell them to their own children when they grow up and become parents.

Epics are also ancient stories produced by people. However, epics are about real-life people and their deeds. Epics always have an important purpose, but the facts are often exaggerated to make them more interesting and exciting. Generally, some facts are dramatically altered, and the person in question in the epic never actually did what the story says they did (Myths, Fables, Legends, and Fairy Tales, 2023).

Gods, heroes and other figures found in myths and epics frequently embody archetypes. For example, the warrior archetype appears in many mythologies through heroic figures. By examining myths and epics, we can better understand how archetypes work and how they affect human behavior.

When the warrior woman archetype is mentioned, one of the first examples that comes to mind is the Amazon woman. Amazon women were said to have their own laws, food, and

territory under the rule of a queen. There are many epic stories about Amazon women known to kill or enslave men.

Sears (2018) argues that the exact location of the Amazon's country is unknown but mentions names from various regions, including Thrace, Scythia, the Caucasus Mountains, and the lands of present-day Turkey and Libya (p. 168). Stone (2000), on the other hand, suggests that the city of Terme (Themiskyra), located in modern-day Samsun, previously referred to as 'Amisos,' is the most frequently mentioned location in literature (p. 35).

Herodotus (484–425/413 BC) describes a lengthy meeting between the Amazons and the Scythians. The young warriors of the second group persuaded a few individuals who visited the Amazons to establish a new community; the women insisted that they would not change their way of life in any way, neither for themselves nor their children. This new race was considered to originate from the Sarmatians in southern Russia, known for their horses and military aggressiveness. In fact, the Amazon society was conceived as the counterpart of Greek male society, and therefore, they continued traditional male-dominated activities such as riding, hunting, and warfare. Historian Adrienne Mayor suggests that the literary confusion arises from the similarity between the word "amazon" and the Greek word for breastplate, "mastos."

In art, the Amazons are often depicted wearing hoplite armor and frequently riding horses. The most common weapons are bows and spears, but there are also examples of the Amazons carrying axes. They were seen not only as skilled warriors but also as specialists in ambushes and cavalry charges (Cartwright, 2019).

In European history, although there are not as many epic stories of women playing an active role in war or having warrior qualities as men, there are still many legends. For example, Boudica, queen of the Iceni tribe in eastern England in the 1st century AD, rebelled against Roman occupation and led a major uprising. Boudica led thousands of warriors, burning and destroying important Roman cities such as London, Colchester, and St. Albans. However, she was eventually defeated by the Roman army and committed suicide. Boudica is considered a symbol of freedom in British history (Mark, 2013).

In Scandinavian mythology, Valkyries stand out when it comes to the warrior woman. Valkyries are young and beautiful virgins armed with helmets and spears, assisting Odin in Norse mythology. They descend from the sky with their wings onto the battlefield to

transport brave warriors, known as the Einherjar, to Valhalla. The reason for taking them there is to gather strong warriors who will fight alongside Odin in Ragnarok, the battle at the end of the world (Mark, 2021). In Norse mythology, Brynhildr, Odin's daughter and a Valkyrie, is responsible for selecting brave warriors in battle and taking them to Valhalla. However, when she defies Odin's orders, she is imprisoned in a castle on a mountaintop and put to sleep. Later, she is awakened by a hero named Sigurd and falls in love with him. However, when Sigurd marries another woman, Brynhildr also marries his brother Gunnar. Brynhildr tries to kill Sigurd and seek revenge but ultimately ends up killing herself. Brynhildr is also Brünnhilde in English legends (Mark, 2019).

In Scandinavian legends, Lagertha is one of the warrior women. Lagertha's story is told in the book *Gesta Danorum*, written by the Danish historian SaxoGrammaticus, which describes the historical developments of the 13th century BC. Her story may have been inspired by the legendary Norse goddess Thorgerd, a local deity from the Hálogaland region in Norway. In the 10th century AD, a temple was also allocated to Thorgerd in Gudbrandsdal, Norway (Legendary Viking Women Warriors..., 2022).

As in most ancient myths and epics, the patriarchal discourse dominates Turkish culture's myths and epics. Although women sometimes emerge with their warrior identities, it is noteworthy that the male warrior identity is prominent, and these women mostly obey men. Like in most archetypes, women are more associated with mysticism and nature. For example, the shamanistic belief system is believed to be centered around women. This is because giving birth to new life, that is, being the sole owner of reproduction, sanctified them; also, their menstrual cycle and carrying a life in their bellies developed the belief that women possess a type of knowledge unknown to others. At the same time, women were considered the ones who knew and applied the oldest healing methods. These and many other oral and historical traditions have led us to the idea that the first shamans were women (Bayat, 2010, p. 22-23).

At the core of the Turkish belief system, Umay, a version of the archetype of the Mythological Mother, is responsible for maintaining the balance of nature and ensuring the continuity of humanity through childbirth, pregnancy, and protecting the child and mother (Bayat, 2007, p. 20). It is a feminine entity that embodies all the components of the Mythological Mother, conveying the aspects of giving birth and protecting. Based on this

information, it can be inferred that women are identified with mystical archetypes linked to fertility and magical powers associated with nature.

Indeed, according to the eco-feminism movement, the similarity between women and nature has existed since ancient times. The main reason for this similarity is stated as the biological characteristics of women, so much so that women's ability to "give birth" is associated with nature's "life-giving" power, and "menstruation" is associated with the movements of the moon. Besides, the woman's perception of her "duty" in meeting the needs of others caused her to be perceived as associated with nature. In fact, the nature was seen as a "mother." Due to all these associations, it is thought that the male domination over women and nature works according to a similar logic. Nature, like women, has been subjected to one-sided exploitation and oppression by men, and the liberation of both depends on the elimination of the source of this oppression, that is, the patriarchal society (*Eko-Feminizme Bakış I: Tabiat, "Ana" Mıdır?* n.d.).

In the Oghuz Khan epic written in Uyghur script, Oghuz Khan's first wife is born of light, and his second wife is born of a tree. These women are sacred. Described as "beautiful as the pole star, with hair like river waves, teeth like pearls," these women "make the sky laugh when they laugh and cry when they cry" (Gültepe, 2008, p. 125). Such descriptions have led to critical interpretations in feminist literature regarding women's association with nature.

There are elements compatible with the warrior woman archetype in Turkish mythology, such as Lady Alma – the Goddess of War in Turkish/Mongolian mythology. She is primarily seen as a warrior goddess among the Mongolians. She is called Alma Hatan (Alma Hatun) in Mongolian sources. Its etymology is derived from the root *al*, which is related to the verb "to take" (*almak*) in Turkish. Considering that the expression "red apple/*alma*" symbolizes the Turkish understanding of conquest, the content of the word *alma* can be understood more accurately. It would also be correct to consider that the verb to take also means to conquer. The words *alagan*, *alğan*, *alçu*, *alkan*, *almış*, and *alaman* all mean conqueror in Turkish and are also given as names to people (Suzan, 2023).

In the Turkish epic tradition, some women have fighting skills like warriors. In Turkish epics, especially before the adoption of Islam, due to the influence of the nomadic way of life, women and men emerged as hunters. In those Turkish epics, female protagonists were

also trained as warriors, just like men. These women knew how to shoot arrows, wield swords, and ride horses. According to Çobanoğlu (2007), before the Turks accepted Islam, due to their upbringing in a nomadic society, women rode horses, hunted, and fought. There are even epics of the Bashkirs, such as Zata Tülek and Su Suluv, where the central character is a woman warrior (Çobanoğlu, 2007, p. 107). Similarly, Tomris Hatun, the granddaughter of Alp Er Tunga and victorious in many battles, fought with her army, including women, against the Persians multiple times (Uydu, 2021). Additionally, in her study titled *Türk Boylarının Destanlarında Kadın Başkahramanlar* by Pınar Fedakâr (2016) states that the primary purpose of the warrior woman hero type is to protect her homeland from enemies and enemy attacks and highlights the sanctity of the concept of homeland for the warrior woman type (p. 52-53).

The concept of family is crucial in Turkish epics, and women who protect their families with sacrifice and loyalty are a significant part of the epic tradition. In these epics, women sometimes take on the leadership of the household and are the most incredible supporters of their husbands. A woman, when necessary, rides horses and possesses courage as much as a male hero. However, while doing all this, she also carries her loyalty to her husband as a definite character trait. The obedient woman hero is indirectly associated with the archetype of the mother. She enters into narratives with a character structure that carries the nurturing and protective aspects of the Mythological Mother, which includes taking care of family and children, among other activities. At the same time, when a woman is incorporated into the textual material, her purpose is usually not to defeat something, to overthrow it, or to realize herself and create her own space directly. She is there to protect her people or lineage.

In the *Tales of Dede Korkut*, the society is a warrior, a nomadic one; in such a society, women must be able to fight like men to survive (Kaya, 2002, p. 51). In these tales, women are not objects of pleasure and love, as seen in many settled cultures' literary works. In such a warrior society, the man seeks in the woman the heroic quality, which is the most important value for him. The same is true for the woman. In a nomadic and warrior society, since the enemy threatens both men's and women's lives, being brave and strong is necessary for both (Bars, 2014, p. 127). A woman's ability to ride a horse or use weapons results from climatic conditions and is an outcome of the relationship between geography and society. Sarı Donlu

Selcen Hatun, Banı Çiçek, and Boyu Uzun Burla Hatun can be cited as examples of such women with warrior and archaic attitudes (Öncül, 2008, p. 580).

On the other hand, in these stories, the woman is protective of her husband and child, decisive about their lives, educative, and supportive, serving as an authority in the family and generally representing the symbol of wisdom and prudence in the homeland (Solmaz, 2021). Also, even though women are physically strong, the main hero's reputation outweighs theirs. In the *Tales of Dede Korkut*, strong women like Selcen Hatun and Banı Çiçek, capable of defeating a man, are reminded of their limits within the narrative. Selcen Hatun single-handedly routs the entire enemy while Kan Turalı is asleep. Upon witnessing this, Kan Turalı cannot accept it and thinks that Selcen Hatun will boast about it, so he attempts to kill her. (Gökyay, 2006, p. 161) However, Selcan Hatun acknowledges the hierarchy between them and states that boasting is more fitting for men than women (Kolikpınar, 2017). Similarly, Bamsı Beyrek, unable to defeat Banı Çiçek in combat, grabs her by the apron and clings to her breasts. When Banı Çiçek feels ashamed, Bamsı Beyrek grabs her by the waist and throws her to the ground. It is not her weakness but her gender that causes Banı Çiçek to lose this struggle (Gökyay, 2006, p. 77).

Another epic story about Turkish warrior women reveals how women's courage and ability became institutionalized in Anatolia, giving rise to a different organization called Bacıyân-ı Rum. When the Seljuk State, helpless against the Mongol pressure in the East and the Crusaders' attacks in the West, could not maintain political and military stability, Anatolian Turks got organized to defend themselves. Meanwhile, among the political and social structures that contributed to the growth of the Ottoman State, which began to emerge on the western borderlands of Anatolia, the organization established by women, known as the Bacıyân-ı Rum, holds a different significance (Döğüş, 2015). The 15th-century Ottoman historian Âşıkpaşazâde divided the emigrants in 13th-century Anatolia into four groups in his work *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân* as follows: Gâziyân-ı Rûm, Ahîyân-ı Rûm, Abdalân-ı Rûm, and Bâciyân-ı Rûm. Among these groups, the Ghazis represent the warrior class; the Ahis, the artisan class; the Abdals, the dervishes; and the Bacis represent the women's group (cited in Melikoff, 1999) Among these groups, the term "Bâciyân-ı Rûm," which is exclusively composed of women, is quite interesting, but apart from Âşıkpaşazâde, no other source mentions their name. The historian himself does not provide much information about the said organization. He only emphasizes the connection between the Bacıyân-ı Rum and Hacı

Bektâş-ı Velî (d. 669/1271). In this respect, it can be considered a mythological category (Çubukçu, 2015).

When we look at other examples in world history, fascinating historical figures from Africa such as Nzinga from Angola, the Dahomey Amazons from Benin and Gudit from Ethiopia, and Itzpapalotl, who has a supreme position in Aztec mythology in the Americas stand out. Also, in East Asia, people who fit the warrior woman archetype are found in myths and epics, such as the Mongolian princess Khutulun and the legendary Chinese warrior Hua Mulan, Cut Nyak Dhien from Indonesia, who is called "the pride of Southeast Asia," and princess Urduja, the hero of the Philippines (*List of Women Warriors in Folklore*, 2022).

2.6. Warrior Woman Archetype from Comics to Films and TV Series

Storytelling has played a significant role in the development of legends, myths, and traditions in societies. During the oral culture period, storytelling appealed to both sight and hearing, but with the advent of the written era, the recording of narratives introduced various intermediaries between the narrator and the audience. The transition of storytelling from the hunting tales depicted on cave walls by primitive humans to theatrical plays, then to books with the invention of the printing press, and eventually to electronic media such as cinema, radio, and television marks one of the most important cultural and social developments in human history. Technological advancements have primarily facilitated the dissemination of stories to much wider audiences. In today's narratives dominated by digital tools, we observe that the narrative, the narrator, and the audience take on more divergent and complex forms.

The origins of creating images lie in visual thinking, as the human sense of sight provides infinite knowledge about the external world. These pieces of information are later recorded in the mind as images, and people contribute to the formation of the image by using these images. This is why vision is the fundamental conduit of thought. In his book *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger (1995) expresses that "seeing comes before speaking" and that "a child learns to look and recognize before it can speak" (p. 7). Therefore, visual narratives such as comics, series, and films are crucial for the perception and internalization of messages.

The warrior heroes have been among the most important characters in visual storytelling since ancient times. These warrior characters sometimes become the main hero

as a protagonist, sometimes a supporting character serving the main character, and sometimes the antagonist opposing the main hero in the story. In these stories, women have often been presented as passive sexual objects or helpless individuals. However, as discussed above, popular mythology has also given place to female warriors, and their portrayal has undergone significant transformation over time. While early characters were often clichéd and sexualized female figures, recent years have seen the emergence of more complex, multidimensional, powerful, and independent female characters.

Alex Scobie (1980) suggests that comics and films contemporarily play the role of past tales and myths, so folk researchers and academics should focus on these genres if they do not want to become obsolete (p. 70). Not surprisingly, warrior characters, with their extraordinary abilities, are a significant element of popular culture, especially in comics. When we look at the underlying meanings of these comics, we often find stories centred on characters that embrace nationalism. This phenomenon is observed both in globally renowned comics produced in the USA and Turkish comics.

The entry of superhero characters into our lives is synonymous with the comic genre. In his work *Superheroes: A Modern Mythology* (1994), Richard Reynolds argues that comics have a multidimensional nature and represent modern mythology. Therefore, comics play an important role in conveying cultural values to young people and the larger society. Sometimes, they are told through fantastical or science-fictional characters, while others are depicted through historical characters. While in American comics, this is often through fantastical or science-fictional characters, in Turkish comics, it is more commonly through historical characters. It is also occasionally observed that these historical characters also possess supernatural attributes. Cultural differences between the USA and Turkey influence how warriors are depicted in comics. In the USA, warrior female characters are among popular comic portrayals and are usually represented as strong, independent, and free female figures. In Turkey, however, warrior female characters are less prevalent in comics. When seen in this genre, they are usually associated with historical legends, forming a mythology based on patriotism. In the next part, I will first overview the warrior archetype and the image of the warrior woman in American comics and discuss how this image has become a new myth of popular culture. Then, I will shift the focus to the warrior archetype and its gendered nature in Turkish popular culture from comics to films and TV series.

2.6.1. Warrior Woman Archetype in American Comics

American comics are one of the most prevalent areas where the warrior archetype is used in visual media today. Alongside characters like Conan the Barbarian and Red Sonja, contemporary equivalents of this warrior archetype are predominantly represented by superheroes that have become a significant symbol of popular culture today. Originating from the 1930s, comic superheroes have maintained popularity by transitioning into cinema. The image of the superhero with their extraordinary powers is indeed a fundamental element of modern comics culture. With the creation of superheroes, comics increased their popularity and achieved their contemporary form. Now, they constitute a vast cultural industry generating products of popular culture.

The collected study, *Investigating Heroes: Essays on Truth, Justice, and Quality TV* (Simmons, 2011), examines the influence of comic themes and archetypes on popular culture in general, focusing mainly on film and television. Most essays center around the superhero archetype that has dominated American comic book culture for over eighty years, from the golden age of comics in the mid-twentieth century to contemporary superheroes on TV, as Simmons (2011) notes. In fact, the superhero has defined the comics genre in the US so that it is practically synonymous with muscular individuals wearing capes and tights, although comics in Europe and manga in Japan do not necessarily follow these conventions (Victoria, n.d.).

The first superheroes in American comics were young white men in their twenties and thirties. These powerful male characters provided readers with a liberal utopia that allowed for societal, socio-political, and economic affirmation. Superman, created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, is the earliest known superhero in the comics world. Influenced by the comic strip stories of the time, Siegel and Shuster created one of popular culture's most important characters, embracing the "American dream." Additionally, the character Batman, created by Bob Gale and Bill Finger, tells the adventure of a bourgeois man who easily becomes a superhero thanks to his wealth. On the other hand, Batman emerges as a superhero with a dark side and brings his own justice. According to Scoot Snyder, one of the Batman comics writers speaking in the 2017 documentary series *Superheroes Decoded*, Batman's vow to fight criminals after witnessing his family's murder carries an American message. Mythologist John Bucher notes that the greatest heroes, just like in mythology and epics, lose their families, and their loneliness is a crucial factor in their stories of becoming a hero.

Besides, while Superman, who is a human but becomes a superhero due to his superhuman powers, represents idealistic American justice, Batman represents darkness. In this respect, these two superheroes represent different sides of the "American dream" (cited in Kumbasar, 2018, p. 66-67).

In 1940-41, white women also joined the ranks of superheroes. The most well-known female superhero is Wonder Woman, created in 1942. Alongside Superman and Batman from DC Comics, Wonder Woman is recognized as one of the "Big Three" in the superhero universe (Pekmen, 2010). Starting from the 1940s, all female superheroes and characters created have made significant contributions to the empowerment of women and the changing of gender roles, besides being intelligent, strong, and independent. In the 1960s, superheroes of various races, such as black and Asian, and in the 1990s, superheroes representing different sexual orientations, disabilities, religions, unemployment, and the like were also introduced (Seçmen, 2014). These developments were influenced by the political and cultural events of the time. For example, *Executive Order 10925*, signed by John F. Kennedy, was one of his first actions as president. The order required federal contracting agencies to "take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin" (Maclury, 2010). This decision by Kennedy, coupled with the media's role in reflecting and shaping societal values, contributed to a more diverse representation of heroes in comics, challenging traditional norms and promoting inclusivity.

Prior to World War II, characters and superheroes in comic books were primarily aimed at a male demographic. Therefore, writers did not focus on female readers; female characters were not heavily included in superhero stories. In *The Supergirls: Fashion, Feminism, Fantasy, and The History of Comic Book Heroines*, Mike Madrid (2009) discusses how female superheroes were represented in comics and their evolution, especially from the 1940s onwards, in line with the changing world order. Madrid argues that global events such as World War II, feminism, and human rights movements influenced comics. During this period, female superheroes in comics transitioned from mere decoration to independent characters with their own rights, separate from male superheroes, and their representations evolved over time (cited in Kumbasar, 2018, p. 80).

As Madrid (2009) points out, American comics had no female heroes before the 1940s. Women in comics were almost universally represented in one of two roles: romantic objects of interest or supportive characters. Then, in *Jungle Comics #2*, the first real female

superhero emerged. The Mysterious Jungle Woman Fantomah used her supernatural powers to punish those threatening the jungle or its inhabitants. Transforming from a beautiful young woman into a terrifying, blue-headed monster, Fantomah is a symbol of terror and justice. Queen of the Jungle Sheena debuted in 1937 in *Wags* #1 and continued to have her own series a few years later. In fact, Sheena was the first female hero in history to have her own comic book series.

By the mid-1940s, superhero comics began to lose popularity. After World War II, readers were no longer interested in traditional superhero stories. As a result, comic book publishers began to seek ways to address declining sales: many turned to new genres like Westerns, but a few companies focused on a new demographic. Beyond being the first popular female superhero created, Wonder Woman became a symbol for feminists and symbolized women's empowerment in the workforce or rather the symbol of "women being able to do anything men can do" during World War II. Laura D'Amore, a researcher on feminism at Roger Williams University, attributes Wonder Woman's rapid rise to popularity after publication to women gaining power while men were away at war (Kumbasar, 2018, p. 65).

Following the United States' entry into World War II in 1941, Wonder Woman was introduced to the comic book world in 1942 with the words "as beautiful as Aphrodite, as wise as Athena, as fast as Mercury, and as strong as Hercules" (Cocca, 2016, p. 26). Created by psychologist William Moulton Marston, Wonder Woman was drawn to create a female superhero role model for young girls in the male-dominated comic book world by combining mythology and feminism. Although many characters such as Miss Fury, Black Cat, Mysta of the Moon, Gale Allen, and Mary Marvel were created during this period, Wonder Woman was the only female superhero to have her own comic book series, and other created characters never stood out as much (Dunne, 2006, p. 7).

In the 1950s, a return to conservative "normalcy" attempted to return women to where tradition said they belonged: the home and kitchen, subservient to their husbands. On the other hand, a few comic book publishers tried to highlight female superheroes during this time, as the genie was already out of the bottle. Policies attempting to sideline women were quickly abolished at the beginning of the 1960s, and there was an increasing focus on equality and women's liberation. Marvel Comics spread feminism in the comic book world by introducing strong female heroes such as Marvel Girl in *The Uncanny X-Men* and Invisible Girl in *The Fantastic Four*.

Some of them, unfortunately, were stereotypes that hated men, but we also saw the creation of Women's Liberation Press, whose first publication was *That Ain't Me Babe*, featuring popular female symbols such as Supergirl and Betty & Veronica. They later rebranded themselves as Wimmen's Comix and continued their underground anthologies until 1992.

In 1977, Ms. Marvel was introduced as an (albeit unsuccessful) attempt at creating a feminist hero. Marvel also revamped its existing female heroes in *The Uncanny X-Men* (1975), renaming Jean Grey's alter ego Marvel Girl to Phoenix and changing Lorna Dane to Polaris. This was also the introduction of Storm, arguably the most famous black hero and one of the first female heroes to be depicted as strong and capable.

While we had seen more and more female heroes up to this point, they were still second to men. In the 1980s, however, these superheroines began to take on leadership roles. Invisible Girl was rebranded as Invisible Woman and led the Fantastic Four, while Wasp was given leadership in The Avengers.

Jamie Hewlett and Alan Martin created a new hero in the 1990s, representing a modern woman: Tank Girl, a punk aesthetic girl with a shaved head. Another growing trend since the 1990s has been the depiction of queer identities. In 2006, Batwoman underwent a renewal, rebranding herself as a former military lesbian hero, and in 2016, Wonder Woman's bisexuality was canonically confirmed. Representation in comics began to be much more gender-inclusive and diverse in that period; we have seen not only more female superheroes but also more gay heroes, more black heroes, and more diverse religions and nationalities since then: Ms. Marvel Kamala Khan is a young Muslim hero inspired by Carol Danvers' Captain Marvel, from whom she borrows her name. Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur features 9-year-old Afro-American super genius Luna Lafayette, who shares a bond with Devil Dinosaur.

Also, while in the past, most female characters created in comics were portrayed as sexy and beautiful superheroes aimed at the male audience, today, any woman one might encounter in daily life could be the subject of a comic book. However, according to some critics, female superheroes are given more space in comics because, as an image, women attract more attention aesthetically from the target audience. Nevertheless, the female characters created, influenced by the fourth wave of feminism, are depicted as skilled warriors, not experiencing gender confusion and being able to stand on their own feet as strong individuals (*Super Women: A brief history of female superheroes*, n.d.).

The social democratic and neoliberal transformations of the 1960s and 1990s influenced comic books by giving way to the representation of various previously marginalized characters, beyond just women, as superheroes. These characters contribute to breaking down prejudices and building a fairer society by offering audiences different perspectives and experiences. However, an alternative view suggests the existence of a myth of pluralism in the media (Özer, 2024). As the British Cultural Studies argue, some subcultural identities resist the dominant culture. Subcultures like punk culture and black nationalism have constructed oppositional identities differing from mainstream norms (Kellner, 2016). Over the years, however, characters serving or representing these subcultures have become part of popular culture, turning into commodities of the culture industry.

In the United States, all comic book superheroes visually represent American social structure. Gender roles are prominently depicted through characters, regardless of the diversity of cultural narratives presented. This reflects America's liberal values and, in the subtext, the ideology of the "American dream." Building on the Frankfurt School's ideas, one could interpret this pluralism as an illusion. These marginalized superheroes represented by the culture industry are turned into commercial commodities, aligning us with the capitalist system. This applies to the archetype of the warrior woman, the central theme of our study, as well. The proliferation of these representations in TV shows and movies further reinforces this phenomenon.

2.6.2. Warrior Women Archetype in American TV Series and Movies

Thanks to numerous TV series and movies released recently, the portrayal of women in historical and fantasy genres has acquired a more feminist tone. Female characters identified with warrior identities have stood out in today's modern myths, such as superhero films. Various films bearing the names of characters adapted from comic books, which are the modern mythology of America's warrior archetypes, such as *Wonder Woman* (Jenkins, 2017), *Captain Marvel* (Boden & Fleck, 2019), and *Black Widow* (Shortland, 2021), have been produced. Additionally, projects featuring characters like Scarlet Witch, America Chavez, Kate Bishop, Ms. Marvel, She-Hulk, and Echo continue in the popular superhero world.

However, the dominant perspective in popular culture productions was male-centric for many years. Even though women existed in some productions with warrior personalities, they often constituted one-dimensional sexual objects or other characters lacking depth beyond imitating men. Apart from these, women were portrayed as passive beings. Particularly, in TV series and movies adapted from and inspired by European fairy tales, mythology, and epics, the warrior archetype was conveyed in a male-centric manner for years. In Disney's fairy-tale world, women not only lack maternal figures but are also portrayed as passive characters waiting to be rescued by princes. Furthermore, in productions where fantastical universes were built with inspiration from European mythology and epics, the male gaze dominated the depiction of the warrior archetype for years.

The rising power and popularity of feminist movements and related socio-cultural changes have positively influenced the visibility of women in TV series and movies. Producers especially adopted the idea of introducing feminist content into popular culture in a commodified form. Nowadays, even in universes constructed entirely with fictional fantasy like, *Foundation* (Goyer, 2021-), *Game of Thrones* (Benioff & Weiss, 2011-2019), *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power* (Bayona & Payak, 2022), and *Star Wars* (Lucas, 1977-2024), a rather female-centric narrative starts to emerge.

Although *The Lord of the Rings* film series (Jackson, 2001-2003), including *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), *The Two Towers* (2002), and *The Return of the King* (2003), as well as the subsequent *Hobbit* trilogy (Jackson, 2012-2014), comprising *An Unexpected Journey* (2012), *The Desolation of Smaug* (2013), and *The Battle of the Five Armies* (2014), gives slightly more priority to female characters than the original books, it does not follow the feminist line influenced by today's popular culture. On the other hand, in *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power* (Bayona & Payak, 2022), the lead character is a female warrior named Galadriel. She stands out with her warrior identity and has exaggeratedly superior features than many other characters.

Furthermore, in the adapted series *Foundation* (Goyer, 2021), the main character, originally male in the original book, is portrayed by a black woman. In the series *Game of Thrones* (Benioff & Weiss, 2011-2019), characters like Daenerys Targaryen and Arya Stark contribute to constructing the modern mythology of today with their warrior women identities. In the recent *Star Wars* projects (Lucas, 1977-2023), characters such as Rey,

Princess Leia, Ahsoka Tano, and Bo-Katan play significant roles in the universe as warriors characters.

Traces of the fourth-wave feminism are also frequently seen in globally popular Disney productions. Despite projects like *Mulan* (Bancroft & Cook, 1998), *Pocahontas* (Gabriel & Goldberg, 1995), and *Brave* (Andrews & Chapman, 2012) featuring female warrior characters in leading roles in recent times, Disney films in the past often depicted women in a stereotypical and sexist manner. Women waiting to be rescued by princes and superficially villainous witches were common in these projects. However, new adaptations of these fairy tales are being made, portraying previously passive women as central to the story and warrior characters.

Furthermore, outside Disney, independent companies often depict women in more empowering fairy tale adaptations. For example, *Snow White and the Huntsman* (Sanders, 2012) is one film in which Snow White has a warrior personality. In the *Shrek* (Adamson et al., 2001-2010) film series, female fairy-tale characters are portrayed in more active roles. In *Shrek Forever After* (Mitchell, 2010), Fiona is depicted as a female warrior. Another project that adapts fairy tales to the present day and narrates them in a more feminist tone is the TV series *Once Upon A Time* (Kitsis & Horowitz, 2011-2018). In the third season of *Once Upon A Time* (Kitsis & Horowitz, 2011-2018), Snow White survives as a warrior personality sought after by the Evil Queen, and her encounter with Prince Charming occurs while she tries to rob him. Additionally, in the second season of the series, Snow White is the one who wakes Prince Charming from the sleeping curse. In the subsequent seasons of the series, characters like Snow White, Cinderella, Belle, and many others are portrayed as characters who fight for their loved ones. The most prominent character in this series is Emma Swan, the story's main protagonist and saviour character.

Although TV series and movies in popular culture have been narrated with a male-dominated perspective for many years, feminist elements are occasionally seen in these productions. In science fiction popular culture cinema, Ellen Ripley, featured in the *Alien* (Scott, 1979) movie, was the first iconic female action heroine. Ripley's presence and portrayal in the film series might be said to demonstrate that narrative cinema is not inherently male-centered. In the first film, we see her as the last surviving female character from the massacre by the alien. Her character also stands out for her efforts to save a cat's life in the film, highlighting her virtue. The character of Ripley, in particular, indicates to

the audience from the very beginning of the movie that she will struggle against the alien. For these reasons, the *Alien* (Scott, 1979) movie is the highest-grossing film series in feminist film circles, dealing with gender and sexual politics of the time. This is not a cliché portrayal of women as screaming, helpless victims. In Laura Mulvey's terms, Ripley is the first "final girl:" a woman who can still possess everything we associate with femininity while defeating a creature (Hosch, 2016).

Adapting legendary events of the past to the present is frequently encountered in American popular culture. Examples of this can be seen in productions like *Vikings* (Hirst, 2013-2019), *300: Rise of an Empire* (Murro, 2014), and *Woman King* (Prince-Bythewood, 2022). Such films and Tv series bring to the fore historical epic warrior female characters in American popular culture.

For instance, *300: Rise of an Empire* (Murro, 2014) is a sequel to the film *300* (Snyder, 2006). It tells the story of the Battle of Artemis, where the Persians and Athenians clash. The new film's heroes are the Persian King Xerxes and the Athenian warrior Themistocles. Artemisia, a female warrior character, is a ruthless and scheming leader of the Persian army. In the series *Vikings* (Hirst, 2013-2019), Lagertha stands out. The series tells the story of her rise from a shieldmaiden to the Countess of Hedeby and eventually to the Queen of Kattegat. The character is based on the legend of the Viking shieldmaiden of the same name from Norway. Although listed as the wife of Viking Ragnar (for a while), she is a mighty warrior in her own right. *Woman King* (Prince-Bythewood, 2022) is a feminist American historical epic film about Agojie, an all-female warrior unit that defended the West African kingdom of Dahomey between the 17th and 19th centuries. This film is important in drawing attention to the role of Africa's Amazons in European colonial history.

As a result, the warrior woman archetype in American TV series and films is becoming increasingly visible and influential, thanks to its influence from feminist movements and socio-cultural changes. In popular productions traditionally dominated by a male-centered perspective, female characters are often depicted as one-dimensional and passive. However, with the increasing presence of feminist content in popular culture in recent years, there has been a considerable increase in women being portrayed as strong and well-rounded characters. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of female warrior characters, especially in American cinema and television series, which are the determinants of popular

culture worldwide. This trend contributes to diversifying and strengthening female representations in popular culture.

2.6.3. Warrior Archetype as a Gendered Figure in Turkish Comics

In Turkey, comic books also feature many excerpts from folk tales and male warrior characters with an emphasis on nationalism. It can be said that Turkish comics share a common feature with American comics in emphasizing nationalist hegemonic masculinity, thereby serving as an instrument of ideological hegemony in the Gramscian sense.

However, this cannot be said to be the only common feature between Turkish and American comics in reproducing the male-dominated culture. According to Mike Donaldson (1993), aggressiveness is one of the prominent indicators of masculinity, and the muscular body of a man facilitates the portrayal of this aggressiveness (p. 646). In both Turkish and American comics, male protagonists are depicted semi-naked as having a muscular physique and an aggressive personality. For example, a defining characteristic of Karaoğlan, a male protagonist from Turkish historical comics, is his invincibility and the warrior spirit that never gives up on fighting. The depiction of Karaoğlan as semi-naked with a muscular body has also shaped the image of the ideal Turkish man (Kumbasar, 1992, p. 63-75). In each issue, Karaoğlan embarks on different adventures and emerges victorious while saving another female character. For example, in the second issue, a shepherd girl rescued from the Vandals initially resists Karaoğlan. The shepherd girl, whose head gets into trouble for not listening to Karaoğlan, is portrayed as someone who needs to be rescued by a strong figure. While Karaoğlan's nudity is only depicted in scenes with sexual content, the clothing of the female characters is always suggestive (Kumbasar, 2018, p. 93). In Karaoğlan comics, while the violence perpetrated by the hero is normalized, extramarital relationships with women do not attract societal backlash. In fact, even the rape of women does not receive condemnation, as it is believed that the woman deserved such behavior. The story implies that the hero does not intend to rape, but the course of events forces him into it (Kumbasar, 2018, p. 95).

In Malkoçoğlu's comics, female characters also appear as weak personalities. Often depicted as helpless, these characters are rescued by Malkoçoğlu from their difficult situations. As a result, they are content to be seen as sexual objects by Malkoçoğlu and to

surrender themselves to his power (Demirtaş, 2014, p. 57). While the male body symbolizes strength, the female body undergoes an opposite process and is sexualized.

Although heroes of Turkish comics, such as Malkoçoğlu, Tarkan, and Karaoğlu, are represented as powerful men with aggressive personalities as American superheroes, they have not been as effective as their American counterparts in creating popular mythology, albeit leaving a certain mark on Turkish cinema. On the other hand, contemporary historical TV, which carries nationalist and conservative tones with a focus on religious values and practices, can be said to play an essential role in forming such a popular mythology today.

Today, with the influence of fourth-wave feminism, it is observed that female warrior characters are central in Turkish comics as well. The article *Kültürel Anlatılardan Amazon Kadınları Mitlerine: Hareketli Çizgi Roman Uygulamaları* by Aylin Güngör and Şule Atılğan (2020) explains this contemporary cultural transformation. This article examines the animated comic called *Tomris Dream Kingdom* (2020), the story of which can be summarized as follows:

A young girl goes for a walk for a photo shoot and travels back in time through a mirror to the period of Tomris Hatun. She fights with King Cyrus because she rejects his marriage proposal and loses her son. She rises to the sky with an eagle to take revenge, and when she wakes up, she is in the present day. She receives a call from a woman named Tomris Hatun and is asked to save all the women in the world. The young girl saves all the women in the world from the virus using social media. Among the elements of the story are time travel, mythological figures, war and revenge, technology and social media, and women's solidarity (Güngör & Atılğan, 2020). The story offers an original perspective by blending different genres and delivering a contemporary message.

Aside from these less visible examples, generally speaking, nationalist and male-dominated discourses frequently appear in Turkish comics. These discourses often legitimize the dominant ideology by emphasizing values such as heroism, patriotism, and family. Moreover, Turkish comics have not found a place in popular culture as much as TV series and films. However, films adapted from comics such as Tarkan and Kara Murat have impacted cinema in constructing and reconstructing hegemonic masculinity with an overtly nationalistic tone.

2.6.4. Representation of Women in Turkish Cinema and TV Series

In Turkey, since the 1950s, the exploitation of emotions in cinema has resulted in many films being presented to the audience through classical stereotyped roles with a melodramatic appeal. The understanding of beauty and the emphasis on the body of women has led to the creation of stereotypes in which women are portrayed prominently in a fetishistic and/or voyeuristic manner. Women were portrayed in cinema and TV series through character types such as a peasant beauty who is abused, a blind woman, a beautiful prostitute led astray, a rich and evil woman, a proud yet poor young woman, a betrayed wife, and seductive women with eroticized bodies (Yalamaç, 2011, p. 85).

In the 1970s, as a result of migration from villages to cities and the growing pace of urbanization with all the associated problems, films depicting socio-economic inequalities and challenges involved in adapting to urban life began to be produced. These films, shot within a social realist paradigm, gave place to some strong female characters who stood against patriarchy and other social inequalities. On the other hand, due to the popularity of erotic films in the 1970s and 1980s in Turkey, cinema began to focus more on the female body and nudity. The number of films where women were either belittled or only represented as seductive beings augmented.

For decades in Turkish cinema, male and female characters have been presented as follows: Regardless of their social class, women are generally portrayed as weaker and more emotional than men. In contrast, men are portrayed as much stronger and as protectors of both women and their families. Traditional values were embraced in films, and these values, in a sense, continue to exist in cinema. Therefore, it has become quite difficult for women to take on an emancipated and empowered role in society; the most important and sacred duty assigned to them by traditional values was "motherhood." Women are always expected to be understanding and forgiving. While heroines almost always demonstrate socially desirable and morally acceptable characteristics, women acting outside this framework are labeled villainesses (Kaplan, 2004, p.12).

The beginning of the second wave of feminism in Turkey dates back to the 1980s. This period saw significant socio-cultural changes in women's status and a rising awareness about the woman problem, which found its reflections in Turkish cinema. Atıf Yılmaz's feminist films became the subject of heated debates in this regard. Ayşe Çağrıçı's 2014 study titled

Feminist Film Teorisi Bağlamında 1980'ler Atıf Yılmaz Filmlerinde Ataerkilliğin Eleştirisi provides important insights into these debates. In the film *Mine*, directed by Atıf Yılmaz (1983), an attempt was made to reveal the underlying psycho-social processes behind the masculine discourse, attributing passivity, irrationality, lack of intellect, and so on to women. In the film, the female protagonist, Mine, responds to the repressive societal conditions she is in with silence. Mine's silence seems to create a protective space against the societal realities that confine her. On the other hand, women's silence creates a fear of emasculation and losing phallus in men. Therefore, the silent woman is perceived as a threat to the (patriarchal) order, and attempts are made to domesticate her. However, by the end of the film, in a manner that disrupts the audience's perception of the film, Mine manages to gain an identity and elevate her subject position (Çağrı, 2014, p. 174)

In *Adı Vasfiye* (Yılmaz, 1985), the emphasis on the perception of femininity being constructed by the masculine discourse and fantasies presents a new perspective on women's silence (Çağrı, 2014, p. 175). According to this perspective, within the dominant masculine discourse, women are fragmented, detached from any meaning, and transformed into a "void." Another element that constrains women in the patriarchal societal order is the concept of honor, which is addressed through the issue of prostitution in *Asiye Nasıl Kurtulur?* (Yılmaz, 1986) (Çağrı, 2014, p. 174-175). The film adopts an epic narrative technique, creating a distance between the audience and the film that allows for interpretation but prevents reaching clichéd judgments. This distance is meant to reveal the connections between prostitution and the capitalist system (Çağrı, 2014, p. 175).

In Atıf Yılmaz's 1986 film, *Aaahh Belinda*, the central theme revolves around exploring and illuminating the dilemma of the "rescued" woman versus the "besieged" woman. The film delves into how patriarchal ideology creates a complex and stratified gender hierarchy, even among women themselves. The two female characters in the film embody different layers of femininity within this hierarchy. In *Aaahh Belinda* (Yılmaz, 1986), the focal point of the film is the attempt to resolve or rather shed light on the dilemma of the "rescued" woman and the "besieged" woman. The patriarchal ideology creates layers of gender hierarchy, even among women. The two women in the film represent different layers of femininity within this hierarchy (Çağrı, 2014, p. 176). The dominance of women as prominent characters in films has continued since the 1990s, yet at the same time, stories depicting men's existential crises and their friendships as a way to fight against these crises

also became noticeable in films. While in the films of the Yeşilçam era, men were represented as strong, fearless, and authoritarian figures, starting from the 1990s, they began to occupy roles outside the norm; they were portrayed as insecure, weak, and pessimistic individuals.

It can be said that there has been an increase in the quantity and quality of films made since the 2000s. Considering that the main aim of popular cinema is to make a profit, it is not surprising that films with huge budgets started to be produced to attract mass numbers of viewers. This was particularly true for historical films, a wing of popular cinema (Şahin, 2014, p. 68).

Among these films, *Son Osmanlı: Yandım Ali* (Doğan, 2007) and *Karaoğlan* (Sabancı, 2013) are costume adventure films adapted from comics. Some historical films made in Turkish cinema after 2000 focused on the Gallipoli War. One of these films was *Çanakkale 1915*, directed by Yeşim Sezgin in 2012. Another Gallipoli-centered film of this period was *Çanakkale Yolun Sonu*, directed by Serdar Akar in 2013. This movie was adapted from Turgut Özakman's (2008) novel *Diriliş: Çanakkale 1915*. The 2013 film *Taş Mektep* by Sadullah Çelen (2013) was inspired by a real event where 63 students at Kayseri High School joined the army during the National Struggle period (Şahin, 2014, p. 71). Additionally, in these films, female characters are relegated to the background.

TV series in Turkey, which started in 1974 on TRT (Okumuş, 2020), followed a similar path in the representation of women as in cinema, with the roles of housewifery and motherhood being celebrated as the main duties of female characters.

TRT's first historical series began airing in 1981, and, during the twenty-one years until 2002, historical series with abundant warrior archetypes aired. Examples of these series include *IV. Murat* (Çakmaklı, 1981) and *Preveze Öncesi-1538* (Erksan, 1981) and *İttihat ve Terakki* (Öztan, 1982) and *Ateşten Günler* (Öztan, 1987) and *Yalnız Efe* (Renklidere, 1987) and *Kuruluş Osmancık* (Çakmaklı, 1988) and *Kıbrıs'ta Vuruşanlar/Mücahitler* (Uçanoğlu, 1988) and *Kurtuluş* (Öztan 1994) and *Cumhuriyet* (Öztan, 1999). These mini-series also highlighted nationalist-conservative features (Okumuş, 2020). Especially in the series set in the Ottoman period, strictly masculine warrior figures were prominent in line with the codes of the period. On the other hand, in those series depicting the Ottoman era, women found their place as intriguers and helpless or suffering mothers. In series depicting the National

Struggle and the early Republican era, women's resistance, heroism, and leadership qualities were portrayed, however, with iconic figures of the national struggle like Halide Edip Adıvar. However, patriarchal codes were also present in these series. These are narratives in which men's heroism is evident, women stand out as mothers and sisters, and women are one click behind men. However, from time to time, the story emphasizes that women and men are equal. Otherwise, it cannot be said that they are outstanding feminist works in terms of storytelling and semiotics.

The series *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014) marked a turning point in historical dramas on TV. Demonstrating that female characters can also be prominent in historical series, this series emphasized the emotional side of warrior male characters even more. *Diriliş Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019), which depicted the Ottoman founding myth, allowed the continuation of the religious and nationalist conservative historical narrative but also gave place to strong women characters, some of whom were featured as warriors. The portrayal of warrior women in these series will be analyzed in detail in the following pages.

Today, while the warrior archetype is depicted in a more multi-dimensional manner for both men and women in films and TV series in Turkish media compared to the past, it is still dominated by conservative narratives. Although the visibility of warrior women characters in films and TV series has increased, they are still more conservative compared to contemporary European and American productions.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this section, the overall methodology of the thesis will be outlined, including its subject, purpose, research questions, scope and limitations, and the method of analysis it employs.

3.1. Subject and Purpose

The warrior woman archetype has gained a great place in various cultures and societies throughout history. In recent years, thanks to feminism becoming a movement that has become widespread around the world, the warrior woman archetype is increasingly showing the presence of warrior female characters both in global media and in Turkish TV series and films. In addition, just as American comics, TV series, and movies create their own mythology, Turkish society is rebuilding the warrior archetype through historical drama, which is also effective in popular culture with its foundations based on myths and legends. Characters with the female warrior archetype also significantly impact this restructuring. It is a subject worth researching, especially since it contains other ideological indicators besides feminism. This study examines how female warrior characters are represented in Turkish TV series and films that have had an important place in popular culture since 2000 and analyzes the ideological meanings of these representations.

Therefore, the literature review offered a comprehensive overview of how the warrior woman archetype has been shaped throughout history and how it is represented in different cultures. Bringing together various academic approaches, from Jung's notion of archetype to feminist media criticism, it deeply analyses the evolution of the warrior woman archetype and its reflections in today's popular culture. This study, which is hoped to constitute an important resource for understanding how the warrior woman archetype is reflected in Turkish TV series and films and the overall Turkish popular culture, can also be considered as a step to provide a broader understanding of how female representations are shaped in the context of the rising popularity of feminism.

This study offers a comprehensive analysis of how the warrior woman archetype is represented in recently popular Turkish TV series and films. While the warrior woman archetype is associated with positive characteristics such as courage, strength, independence,

and leadership, negative characteristics can also be seen in its representations in some mythological, fairy tales, and epics. The evolution of this archetype reflects significant social changes in women's gender roles and identities, and feminist criticism serves as an important tool in understanding these changes.

3.2. Scope

The study includes historical series and films produced in Turkey after the year 2000 that gained popularity. These series include *Destan* (2021-2022), *Diriliş Ertuğrul* (2014-2019), *Kuruluş Osman* (2019-present), *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu* (Konuk, 2020-2021) *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (2011-2014), *Muhteşem Yüzyıl Kösem* (2015-2016), *Elveda Rumeli* (2007-2011), *Vatanım Sensin* (2016-2018). The films analyzed include *Hacivat ve Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü* (Akay, 2009), *Fetih 1453* (Aksoy, 2012), *Malazgirt 1071* (Bakar & Kalyoncu, 2022). These series and films have been included in the research scope due to their high online viewership rates.

TV series and films with at least one million views on their official YouTube channels were selected for the study. The ratings of the first and highest-rated episodes were examined for the series. The box office gross and the highest-grossing films were considered for the films, with a minimum total gross of three million Turkish liras as a criterion.

3.3. Limitations

This study has some limitations. First, the study only covers historical TV series and movies shot in Turkey after 2000. We are discussing the year 2000 and beyond because the Turkish television and cinema industry went through a significant transformation in this period. During this period, more TV series and movies were shot compared to previous years, and the variety and quality of these productions increased. Therefore, the period covered in the study is important in reflecting this change in the Turkish cinema and television industry.

A second major limitation of this study is that it focuses explicitly on warrior female characters. Although other types of female characters are also included in the media productions to be analyzed, they are not the focus of the study, limiting the study to a relatively narrow subfield of the general portrayal of female characters. Another limitation

of the study is as follows: While there is more data available in television series regarding the archetypal representation of female warriors, there is less data available in films.

A further limitation is that the findings are limited to female characters in historical TV series and films, in which warrior women representations are not as diverse as in American TV series and movies. Still, these Turkish historical series and films offer portrayals of women warriors closer than any other media texts to the image of the superhero in American productions. Therefore, the study is limited to historical productions.

3.4. Research Questions

The study will seek to analyze how the warrior woman archetype was constructed in Turkish historical TV series and films made after 2000 and look for the ideological connotations of these gender representations produced by the culture industry and their implications for popular culture. In this context, the study will address the following key questions:

- How are these female warrior characters' physical characteristics, personalities, and behaviors represented? What meanings do warrior female characters' costumes, accessories, and weapons convey?
- How are these representations related to patriarchal and feminist ideologies? What feminist elements are present in these representations? What are the aspects that prescribe traditional roles to women in these representations?
- Does the warrior woman archetype offer an alternative model of heroism and leadership?
- How do nationalism and national identity ideology play a role in representing the warrior woman archetype?
- How are the intra-family relationships and romantic relationships of warrior female characters represented?
- How does the representation of the warrior woman archetype vary according to the historical period covered and genre in these productions?

3.5. Method

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will be used in this study. CDA is a research method aimed at revealing the ideologies and power relations embedded within texts that might not be available at first sight. Relatedly, in the thesis, various signs and symbols in the sampled series and films are carefully examined to reveal the ideologies and power relations behind them.

This method parses visual and audio elements, revealing implicit messages about social issues such as gender, class, and race within character dialogues and narrative structures. This methodology is vital as it illuminates how these structures reinforce or challenge dominant narratives.

In feminist media studies, CDA is generally used to analyze the portrayal of women, gender stereotypes, and how the media perpetuates or questions gender inequality and discrimination. Thanks to this methodology, feminist researchers understand how media shapes and influences discourses about women and other marginalized groups. For example, Gizem Kumbasar (2018) employed CDA in her thesis, *Amerikan Çizgi Romanlarında "Superhero" Kavramı Üzerinden, Türk Çizgi Romanlarında Türk Kadın Süper Kahraman İncelemesi*, to analyze the representation of Turkish female superheroes in Turkish comics, exploring their roles, motivations, and the underlying cultural values and ideologies associated with their portrayal.

Ömer Özer's (2024) article "Medyada Şiddetin Temsili" also shows how CDA is utilized in Turkish media studies. In this article, Özer employs CDA to analyze the depiction of violence in Turkish television, delving into the ideological meanings behind these portrayals. Specifically, he investigates how violence intersects with social categories such as gender, class, and nationality and how the media either reproduces or challenges these intersections. These studies reveal CDA's ability to uncover hidden biases, power dynamics, and ideological foundations in media texts. This allows for a more nuanced and critical understanding of gender representations and social issues in popular culture, as this thesis strives to do regarding the reproduction of the warrior woman archetype in popular Turkish movies and TV series.

4. FINDINGS: WARRIOR WOMAN ARCHETYPE IN TURKISH SERIES AND TURKISH FILMS

4.1. Warrior Woman Archetype in Turkish Series

The most suitable genre in Turkish TV series and movies for analyzing the warrior woman archetype are historical productions. In the stories of these TV series and movies, warrior women show characteristics compatible with the codes of warrior women in fairy tales, myths, and legends. These women dress like them, talk like them, and use weapons like them. In this section, the use of the warrior woman archetype in the series *Destan* (Bozdağ, 2021-2022), *Diriliş Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019), *Kuruluş Osman* (Bozdağ, 2019-present), *Uyanış Büyük Selçuklu* (Konuk, 2020-2021), *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014), *Muhteşem Yüzyıl Kösem* (Savcı, 2015-2017), *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009), and *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018) will be examined. The reason for focusing on these series is that each has at least one video on YouTube with over one million views. These videos were spread through the series' official channels. Moreover, series like *Diriliş Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019), *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014) and *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009), and *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018) are important for research due to their record-breaking ratings and commercial success abroad. Examining the series in chronological order may help better understand the development and transformation of female warriors in Turkish history.

With this approach, the viewer can compare the social status of women in different periods, their role in war, and their power. For example, while the *Destan* series is set in the 8th century, *Uyanış Büyük Selçuklu* (Konuk, 202-2021) in the 11th century, *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019) and *Kuruluş: Osman* (Bozdağ, 2020-) are about the 13th century, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014) is about the 16th century, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl Kösem* (Savcı, 2015-2017) in the 17th century, *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009) is about the end of the 19th century, and *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018) is about the beginning of the 20th century. This chronological order allows viewers to see how female warriors have changed in historical and cultural contexts. In addition, this chronological analysis is chosen as it provides a more effective framework for comprehending the shifts in the representation of warrior women within the context of these ideologically similar series.

4.1.1. TV Series Featuring the Ancient Turkish Mythology: *Destan*

Stories depicting pre-Islamic Turkish history are not very common in popular culture. However, this is gradually changing, thanks partly to the growing popularity of historical dramas and the search for new story periods to explore. *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014) is the pioneer of historical dramas in popular culture in Turkey, set in the 16th century. Achieving great success both in Turkey and abroad, it paved the way for other historical dramas that broke viewing records in Turkey and the world, such as *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019) and *Kuruluş: Osman* (Bozdağ, 2019-), both set in the 13th century. Series like these, including *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu* (Konuk, 2020-2021) set in the 11th century, have increased in popularity in Turkey and abroad, becoming series that act in line with the Neo-Ottomanism⁶ ideology (Durgun, 2020).

Both Neo-Ottomanism ideology series and orientalist series like *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014) and its sequel *Muhteşem Yüzyıl Kösem* (Savcı, 2015-2017), set in the 17th century, will be discussed in more detail in their own sections. However, these series' local and global success has also affected the market in the Arabian territories and Central Asian region.

Unlike Mehmet Bozdağ's previous series, *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019) and *Kuruluş: Osman* (Bozdağ, 2019-), which focused on the Ottoman Empire's founding period and Islamic values, *Destan* (Bozdağ, 2021-2022) takes the audience to the life, mythology, and traditions of ancient Turkish tribes in Central Asia. Thus, it managed to attract a broad audience with different worldviews rather than being a production that appeals only to a particular segment. The prominence of strong female characters, magnificent battle scenes, and references to the deep-rooted history of the Turks played a significant role in *Destan*'s success.

In an interview with Sercan Meriç (2022) for the *Birgün* newspaper, Özlem Akkaya suggests that Turkey's foreign policy is shifting significantly. It is moving away from its previous emphasis on leading the Arab world and instead focusing on strengthening ties

⁶ Neo-Ottomanism refers to the efforts, especially after the 1980s in Turkey, to revive and adapt the history, culture, and political legacy of the Ottoman Empire to contemporary politics. This trend manifests itself in domestic and foreign policies, cultural spheres, and social identity (Durgun, 2020, p. 299). This will be discussed further in the next section.

within the Turkic world, particularly in Eurasia. This new direction aligns with certain US interests and involves distancing itself from the Muslim Brotherhood while rebuilding relationships with the United Arab Emirates.

This shift in foreign policy was reflected in cultural trends as well. There is a noticeable move from Ottoman and Islamic themes towards a more secular focus on Seljuk history and earlier Turkic roots. The popularity of *Destan* (Bozdağ, 2021-2022) exemplified this trend. The show appeals to a broad, secular audience and portrays characters who embody ethnic Turkic identity and masculinity. The emphasis on returning to roots in *Destan* (Bozdağ, 2021-2022) mirrors a broader discussion within the AKP, potentially indicating a shift from Ottoman-centric narratives to a supposedly more authentic past.

Akkaya also points out the scarcity of TV shows and movies depicting pre-Islamic Turkish history. This may be attributed to the growing popularity of Islamic-themed content among Turkish viewers. However, *Destan* (Bozdağ, 2021-2022) is a rare exception, not only for its portrayal of pre-Islamic Turkish culture but also for featuring a female lead character. (Meriç, 2022)

Destan (Bozdağ, 2021-2022)

The production and project design of *Destan* belongs to Mehmet Bozdağ. Having been directed by Emir Khalilzadeh and written by Nehir Erdem and Ayşe Ferda Eryılmaz, *Destan* aired on ATV between 2021 and 2022. The first episode of *Destan* ranked first with a total rating of 8.74 points, fourth with 4.90 points in the AB group, and first with 7.61 points in the ABC group. *Destan* achieved its highest TOTAL rating of 8.89 in episode three, its highest AB rating of 6.18 in episode two, and its highest ABC1 rating of 7.61 in episode one. The series maintained high ratings for a long time but gradually declined after the 7th episode. Eventually, it received ratings in the range of 3-5 in the final episodes (ATV Destan - Dizi Reytingleri, 2023). The most-watched video on the *Destan* YouTube channel has 1.35 million subscribers and 23 million views (Destanatv. n.d.).

Initially planned to be named *The Akkız Destanı*, *Destan* tells the epic love story between an orphaned warrior mountain girl Akkız, whose father was killed by the Sky Khan (*Gök Hanı in Turkish*) Alpaga Han, and the orphaned Sky Prince Batuga, set against the backdrop of the harsh steppes of Asia, where they "achieve the impossible by making their love swords and their hearts shields" (Destan Hakkında, n.d.).

The story is set in the 8th century before the Turks accepted Islam. The female protagonist character, Akkız, is depicted as a spirited leader. With her charismatic personality, Akkız stands out as a powerful character who personally participates in battles. As a child, she declares, "I will not be the sword of any khan. I will be the claw of the double-headed wolf." In her words, she chooses to be a claw for those without a hand to hold a sword. Driven by a strong desire for revenge, Akkız is not satisfied even when plundering the Sky caravans and seeks to take the life of the Sky Khan himself. Besides being a warrior, the female protagonist stands out for her courage.

In the first episode, she duels with her enemies wearing a mask, much like a superhero. Her warrior personality and cultural traits are frequently emphasized in the series. Like most warrior Turkish women of the time, she uses bows and swords. As a woman warrior with religious beliefs, she fights her enemies by invoking her belief in God, saying, "Give me strength." Additionally, she never hesitates to participate in an archery competition with her injured arm alongside her friend Yaman. Even when captured, she never compromises on fighting and prefers to die honorably. She remembers her father's words, "Akkız, release your arrow like the wolf's claw. Where your arrow falls, there your fate will be sealed." The main character, including the first episode, gives a feeling of power with a battle-ready stance and clothes typical of warrior figures, mostly in line with the archetype of a warrior woman.

In the 5th episode, believing she is the chosen one mentioned in the prophecy and should have a claw, she kneels before Batuga. The brave and freedom-loving warrior woman obeys a man once again. In the same episode, she defeats the commander Balamir, the governor of the Western Sky Khanate, in a sword duel. While in captivity, she proves herself a strong warrior by sparring with the men of the Sky tribe. After regaining her freedom, she stands out with her leadership qualities and fights to avenge the Sky Khanate.

Additionally, a charismatic female warrior character is well presented in the series. Çolpan Han, who leads the tribe, also has a similar personality. She states, "This spirit will not leave this body until it kneels before the mountain of the sky. So, continue to be a nuisance to the heavens and leave the demon to me." As a rule-setting figure, Çolpan Hatun is quite strict regarding behaviors like theft. She aims to infiltrate Tılsım into the Sky Khanate and take control of it. In this regard, Çolpan Hatun is a good example of the representation of both a warrior and an authoritative woman. She reveals her ruthless and

pragmatic personality in the face of her revenge against the Sky Khanate. In a flashback scene in the 12th episode, she demonstrates her mastery of the sword while practicing swordsmanship with her nephew.

Throughout the series, we witness her struggle for freedom as a captive and her desire for revenge against Alpaga Han. In the 4th episode, she even endures torture to free herself from captivity. According to her philosophy, a prisoner who does not yield to the "claw of the double-headed wolf" does not die. This unwavering ideal of not becoming a captive and choosing death over slavery represents the ideal Turkish warrior woman.

In the 7th episode, Çolpan Hatun and Akkız capture some Sky tribe soldiers. They make Alpaga Han comply with their terms by putting him in a problematic situation. They force an army led by women to kneel before an army led by men. Alpaga Han acknowledges that two women have defeated his sons. Akkız pretends to serve Alpaga Han, who killed her father while conveying the plots against her to him and contributing militarily to him.

In the 9th episode, Akkız takes Balamir hostage, but Çolpan Hatun prevents it because she believes that he is the only solution to take revenge on Alpaga Han. In the same episode, Akkız confronts Alpaga Han, stating that she wanted to avenge him for leaving her fatherless and Batuga motherless but refrained from doing so because it would harm her homeland.

Akkız is tested and captured several times but survives through her faith and merit. In the 11th episode, she fights with all her might against her enemies who come to kill her. In the 14th episode, while fighting against the Sky Khan, Akkız does not hesitate to show her courage and strength against her enemy. However, she demonstrates her intelligence by taking Batuga's son hostage and forcing Khan to negotiate. Akkız and Balamir, sparring together, are watched by the Khan, who expresses his concerns about their strength when they are together.

As the series progresses, highlighting scenes that emphasize the superiority of female warriors, the series serves as a good example of a representation with feminist undertones. However, Akkız's loyalty to men in the traditional sense is sometimes evident. In the 18th episode, while Çolpan Hatun is wounded, she advises the Mountain Tribe not to let a man take over and not to leave them leaderless. She tells Akkız to support Batuga. The transition from female leadership in the Mountain Tribe to male leadership reflects patriarchal codes within the tribe. In this regard, a more conservative feminist understanding is more dominant

in the series. When Batuga becomes the head of the Mountain Tribe, Akkız is in the position of a loyal wife who cheers behind her man. Akkız shows great respect for Batuga, and sometimes Batuga is portrayed as the hero by saving Akkız's life. For example, in the 10th episode of *Destan*, Batuga saves Akkız's life by absorbing the poison from her.

In the series' final episodes, Akkız once again finds herself alone and pregnant after Batuga is captured while trying to kill the Chinese Emperor. Despite her challenging circumstances, Akkız refuses to give up and embodies the warrior woman archetype by taking on the responsibility of protecting her people and unborn child. She forms an army of women, demonstrating her leadership and resilience in adversity. This portrayal of Akkız aligns with the warrior woman archetype as she draws strength from her maternal instincts and determination to protect her legacy, showcasing the multifaceted nature of female strength and resilience.

Even though the main characters die in the story, the legend of Akkız continues to live. In this story, adorned with Turkish nationalism and embellished with a feminist ideology, the character sanctified represents a warrior woman who exists.

The use of the warrior woman archetype in Turkish series and films has gained popularity in recent years, attracting viewers' interest. *Destan*, examined in this study, successfully portrays this archetype through the character Akkız. She emerges as a strong character with her leadership qualities, courage, and fighting spirit. In addition, Akkız embodies the characteristics of a traditional Turkish warrior woman and is depicted from a feminist perspective, supported by scenes emphasizing the superiority of women. However, the series occasionally adheres to traditional gender roles and emphasizes subordination to men.

As a result, the series *Destan* offers a compelling portrayal of the warrior woman archetype in the Turkish television industry, presenting viewers with a strong and impressive character, Akkız. She stands out as a powerful figure because of her leadership qualities, courage, and warrior spirit. Akkız represents the traditional Turkish warrior woman, skilled in fighting and archery, who often expresses her belief in God during battles. Her clothing was decorated with images of wolves. The series' representation, which carries feminist tones, can be considered an essential step towards empowering women and increasing their presence in leadership roles.

Table 1*Portrayal of the warrior woman archetype in Destan*

Series Name	Year	Producer	Period	Character	Portrayal	Strengths	Weaknesses
Destan	2021-2022	Mehmet Bozdağ	8th Century	Akkız	An orphaned mountain warrior, a strong character with leadership qualities	Leadership skills, courage, fighting spirit	Adherence to traditional gender roles, loyalty to men
Destan	2021-2022	Mehmet Bozdağ	8th Century	Çolpan Hatun	Charismatic leader of the tribe, strict, ruthless, and pragmatic	Skilled warrior, authoritative figure, strategic thinker	Driven by revenge, can be ruthless in pursuit of her goals

4.1.2. TV Series Reviving the Seljuk-Ottoman Foundation Myth: *Diriliş Ertuğrul*, *Uyanış Büyük Selçuklu*, & *Kuruluş Osman*

The interest in the Ottoman and Islamic past that began during the multiparty period was further revitalized by the Turkish-Islamist synthesis policy after 1980, especially due to the economic and political relations developed with the states established in the former Ottoman territories, as well as cultural rapprochements with them. While some interpreted this closeness as a natural consequence of openness, others characterized it as a new form of expansionism. Undoubtedly, the increasing relations with countries in the former Ottoman geography also contributed to reshaping Turkish national identity within a more Islam-oriented tone. Particularly since the 2000s, Turkey's domestic and foreign policy, characterized by Neo-Ottomanism, began establishing a fundamentally new national history narrative and identity construct (Durguni 2020, p. 300). Neo-Ottomanism became the official political ideology that claimed to embrace cultural connections from the Balkans to the Middle East inherited from the Ottoman Empire. Emphasizing the religious and nationalist cultural symbols of the Ottoman and Seljuk periods, it has remained influential in both domestic and foreign policy since the 2000s. Today, most television series and films with nationalist and religious themes feature a Neo-Ottomanist foundational myth.

In this study, the series will be examined in the following order: *Uyanış Büyük Selçuklu* (Konuk, 202-2021) in the 11th century, *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019) and *Kuruluş: Osman* (Bozdağ, 2019-present) are about the 13th century. This is because it will be more

beneficial to understand how the warrior woman archetype has changed over time in series with similar ideologies. All three of these series, produced by TRT, depict female characters within the framework of Turkish-Islamist ideology. However, their portrayal varies depending on the historical period they are set in and whether they are adaptations or incorporate actual historical figures. Each series will be examined chronologically to understand these differences.

Uyanış Büyük Selçuklu (Konuk, 2020-2021)

The Turkish television series *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu*, directed by Emre Konuk and produced by Akli Film, aired on TRT 1 from 2020 to 2021. The series continued with a second season as a prequel titled "*Alparslan: Büyük Selçuklu*." However, this analysis will focus solely on *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu* due to the consistent portrayal of warrior women archetypes and the fact that the first season represents a complete narrative arc within the series. *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu*, aired on Mondays, concluded its season with the 34th episode on May 31, 2021. Its first episode, aired on September 28, 2020, achieved a Total rating of 7.13, ranking first. In the AB category, it ranked first with a rating of 8.44; in the 20+ABC category, it ranked second with a rating of 8.26. The ratings continued to rise, maintaining its position at the top. Episode 15 of the *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu* achieved the highest ratings of the series, with 10.14 in TOTAL, 11.74 in AB, and 11.81 in 20+ABC¹. (TRT 1 *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu* - Dizi Reytingleri, 2023). The official YouTube channel of the series has 1.83 million subscribers, with the most-watched video having 19 million views (*Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu* TRT, n.d.)

The historical backdrop of the series is set in the year 1072. Sultan Muhammet Alparslan, the second ruler of the Great Seljuk Empire, had gained a great reputation in the Islamic world after his victorious campaign against the Byzantine Empire in Anatolia a year earlier. Now, he sets his sights on an expedition towards the eastern border, where the Berzem Fortress poses a threat to the Seljuk Empire. Alparslan aims to capture the fortress to secure the eastern borders.

After a long, arduous, and successful battle, the fortress was captured by the Seljuk Dynasty. The commander of the fortress, Yusuf Harezmi, was brought before Sultan Alparslan. Yusuf Harezmi was a bold man who never intended to submit to them and even dared to undermine Sultan Alparslan's reputation and honor. Following these harsh words,

Alparslan prepared to execute Yusuf on the spot. However, with a dagger hidden in his hand, Yusuf managed to stab Alparslan in the back before he could attack. Seljuk soldiers then mutilated Yusuf's body on the spot. However, Alparslan was severely wounded. He entrusted his son Melikshah to the vizier Nizamülmülk and passed away a few days later. After Alparslan's death, Sultan Melikshah ascended to the Seljuk throne. Melikshah, while dealing with the political affairs of his state, also tried to halt the activities of Hasan Sabbah, the leader of the Batiniyya sect.

In the series *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu*, which includes historical figures such as Sultan Melikshah, Nizamülmülk, and Hasan Sabbah, there are warrior women with both warrior and charismatic personalities. One of the prominent warrior women is Elçin Hatun. Elçin Hatun, who holds an important place in Seljuk Turkish history, is the daughter of Kutalmışoğlu Süleyman Şah. She is also the sister of Sultan Kılıçarslan of the Anatolian Seljuk State. She is fiercely angry at Melikşah, who killed her father and then took her brother Kılıçarslan as a hostage. After these events, Elçin Hatun sets out to take revenge. When confronted by those questioning her intentions, she easily manipulates them with her beauty. Despite harboring feelings of revenge, Elçin Hatun falls in love with Sultan Melikşah and marries him.

Elçin Hatun is portrayed as a leader who manages her tribe with authority. When she learns of her brother's capture by Melikşah in the first episode, she advises her warriors to remain calm, saying, "Anger clouds the mind, and a mindless head remains on the body. Everything has its time." When one of the soldiers insists on seeking revenge and accuses her of cowardice, she draws her sword against him, asserting her authority by saying, "The time for revenge lies in the sword of Süleymanoğlu Kutalmışoğlu, and the sword is in my hand. I decide when and to whom it will be drawn! My word is the word of my brother Kılıçarslan. Anyone who disobeys my command disobeys him. Whoever dares to defy me will have defied him." She also declares, "When the time for revenge comes, my sword will be the first to strike." These statements demonstrate her desire for revenge as a female commander.

In the same episode, when Melikşah's army comes to capture Kılıçarslan's brother, they are surprised to see a woman leading the tribe as his valiant sister. When accused of being involved in an assassination attempt on Melikşah, she says, "What kind of slander is this! Are they plotting such tricks to start a war with us? If our sultan's life were at stake, we

would fight like lions in the arena." She further states, "No one can tolerate any more shedding of brotherly blood. I will tell Sultan Melikşah that we had no hand in this. If he believes, then fine; if not, the blame will fall on his shoulders." In the second episode, she instructs her assistant to write a letter commanding them not to abandon their loyalty to her brother even if she dies. Her political and leadership qualities continue in the second episode. In the sixth episode, Elçin Hatun enters Melikşah's meeting room without permission, saying, "The lioness can be a lion too." In the ninth episode, Elçin Hatun and Sultan Melikşah fight together against their common enemies. The Sultan's soldier says, "Elçin Hatun arrived just in time to fight alongside us, but it would have been tough without you." The series presents feminist representations through the character of Elçin Hatun. Still, her love affair with Melikşah and subsequent submission to him contradict her "headstrong, independent" attitude, indicating the series' flaws in feminist representation.

Another character is Zübeyde Hatun. She is the daughter of Emir Yakuti, son of Çağrı Bey. Zübeyde Hatun, who married Sultan Melikşah, significantly influenced her husband. In 1081, she gave birth to Berkyaruk. When her son Berkyaruk became the Seljuk Sultan and his brother-in-law Tacüddeve Tutuş rebelled, Zübeyde Hatun supported him. After Berkyaruk suppressed the rebellion and killed his uncle, he wanted to bring his mother to his side, but the vizier Müeyyidülmülk opposed it.

In the 16th episode, Zübeyde Hatun saves Elçin Hatun from an attack with her own soldiers. After saying, "Touching the honor of a Seljuk woman is inviting your doom," she orders, "Kill these bastards!" She then takes out the attacker by saying, "The eagle's female can be an eagle too." In the same episode, Zübeyde Hatun is appointed as "Baş Hatun" (Head Hatun) by Melikşah. After assuming this position, she assigns tasks to women in the palace. When Mahmelek Hatun refuses to take sword training, she says, "It's a disgrace." She asserts her authority by saying, "Every Seljuk woman will wield a sword for battle and do a good deed. I won't allow a Hatun to sit idle in the palace. I will inspect every Hatun; rest assured." In the 17th episode, Zübeyde Hatun teaches Mahmelek Hatun swordsmanship. She says, "After the recent events in the palace, I hope you understand better why Hatuns should also wield swords. You never know when and where the enemy might strike." Terken Hatun responds by emphasizing that she has been using a sword since age four.

In the 19th episode, Zübeyde Hatun confronts a rebellious group opposing the state. The man representing the rebellion underestimates her because she is a woman and demands

to speak with a man instead. Zübeyde Hatun responds, "Both the man and the woman of this dynasty are one. Rest assured, even if they were men, I would do what I'm about to do." After that, she kills the man with her sword and declares, "This sword belongs to Sultan Melikşah. Whoever dares to rebel will face the consequences of his power. Whoever dares to revolt will face the consequences with his power." In the 25th episode, a crusader army surrounds Zübeyde Hatun and the women with her. The women under Zübeyde Hatun's command bravely confront the men. She addresses her companions, saying, "My girls, my brave ones, may your swords never falter." In the 32nd episode, Zübeyde Hatun and Terken Hatun engage in a sword duel. While dueling, they both express their own goals for the unity and existence of the state.

The series *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu* has rich content with its historical and periodical elements, while its female characters stand out with their strong leadership qualities. Characters like Elçin Hatun and Zübeyde Hatun shine with their warrior spirits and political influences. However, it is possible to evaluate the story of Elçin Hatun, shaped by her thirst for revenge and subsequent love affair, as a flaw in feminist representation. Nevertheless, the female characters highlight the unity and power of the state, emphasizing their societal and political roles. In this regard, the series presents a nationalist and statist feminist narrative with the warrior women.

Diriliş: Ertuğrul (Bozdağ, 2014-2019)

Produced by Tekden Film, produced and project designed by Mehmet Bozdağ, written by Mehmet Bozdağ and Atilla Engin, and directed by Metin Günay, the series *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* started broadcasting on TRT1 in 2014. The first episode aired on December 10, 2014, with initial ratings as follows: Episode 1 (December 10, 2014) - It ranked third with a 5.54 rating in TOTAL, first with an 8.42 rating in AB, and first with an 8.07 rating in 20+ABC1. The series' ratings continued to increase, becoming one of Turkey's most-watched series. *Diriliş Ertuğrul* achieved a total rating of 17 with its 102nd episode, 21.24 in the AB category with its 109th episode, and 20.51 in the ABC1+ category with its 100th episode. (TRT 1 *Diriliş Ertuğrul* - Dizi Reytingleri, 2014). The official YouTube channel of the series has 1.23 million subscribers. The most watched video on the official YouTube channel of the series is 29 million views. (*Diriliş Ertuğrul*, n.d)

Diriliş: Ertuğrul depicts the 13th century, focusing on the struggle between the Kayı tribe living in Anatolia and the Knights Templar. Meanwhile, in the first season, the Kayı tribe is in search of a homeland. The first season's struggle against the Knights Templar takes on a different form in the second. The Mongols are also one of the Kayı's greatest enemies, often raiding Anatolia in attempts to destroy the Kayı tribe and the Seljuk state. The second season focuses on the battles with the Mongols, informing the viewers about the devastation caused by the Mongol invasion in Anatolia.

By the third season, Ertuğrul becomes the leader of the Kayı tribe, settling in Söğüt, in today's Bilecik, and showing tendencies to establish a state. The period of struggle against the Candaroğulları and the Byzantine state in Anatolia, laying the foundations of the Ottoman Empire was narrated in the 3rd season (Kültür Sanat Haberleri, 2021).

In the 4th and 5th seasons, the struggles with the Byzantines and Mongols continue, narrating the path to the establishment of the Ottoman Empire. Throughout the 150 episodes, Turkism and the Islamic religion carry out an ideological discourse.

Besides all, *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* features significant portrayals of warrior women. Women in the series are not only loyal to their state, religion, and men but also skilled fighters. In the first season, Aykız, known for her archery skills, embodies a warrior identity. Halime Hatun, the beloved woman of Ertuğrul Gazi, stands out as a warrior woman character in the series, too. Like many women in *Diriliş: Ertuğrul*, Halime Sultan rides horse, wields swords, and fights. In episode 106, she fights against a group of mountain bandits who intend to enslave her using her sword. Later, she fights alongside Ertuğrul Gazi. Halime Sultan constantly emphasizes her obedience to her state and husband with lines such as "I will take the eye of anyone who speaks ill of Ertuğrul Bey" and "The most appropriate decision is the just one. We do not doubt that our Sultan will make a just decision."

Action scenes involving Selcen, Goncagül, Halime, and others are present in the series. In episode 52, Selcen, Halime, Goncagül, and Aytolun engage in sword fights. These scenes are crucial in demonstrating that women's warfare continues not only through throne and power intrigues but also physically.

Aslıhan Hatun is another character in the series. She fights directly with Saadetin Köpek and sacrifices herself heroically. In episode 103, the women of the tribe practice sword fighting together. Aslıhan Hatun motivates other women in training, saying, "Ladies,

your wrist holding the sword should be as hard as a stone. If you hold your wrist bent, your sword will fall at the slightest movement." Ertuğrul Gazi's mother, Hayme Hatun, says, "Gökçe girls, you are the guarantors of this tribe. In the future, each of you will be the head of the sisters." Hayme Hatun continues to serve as the tribe leader and possesses warrior traits despite her age. In episode 37, she fights the Dodurga Alps with her sword.

In episode 88, Aliyar Bey, Aslıhan Hatun's brother and the tribe leader, passes away. The question of who will lead the tribe arises. Ertuğrul Bey suggests that Aslıhan Hatun is suitable for this role and that her brother will support this. In one scene, Aslıhan Hatun will discuss this role with Emir Sadettin, who is expected to marry her. At the beginning of the scene, Emir Sadettin proudly describes how the woman stood firm despite her brother's death, saying she was "brave." This expression, "brave," a positive trait attributed to masculinity, describes many women in the series. Regarding Aslıhan Hatun's potential role as the tribe leader, Emir Sadettin says he sees no problem in her taking on this role until a new leader is appointed after the council. However, Aslıhan Hatun's priority is her tribe before marriage. She says, "I won't leave my tribe alone after the council is held." Irritated by her decisiveness, Emir Sadettin exclaims, "Do you know what you're saying, Aslıhan?" Aslıhan confidently responds, "I know that my two brothers, one a martyr and the other destroyed, have entrusted me with this task. I will not leave my tribe without a leader until I avenge them." Emir Sadettin then stands up and says, "You seem to have lost your mind from grief... You promised to be my woman and devote your life to me; I remind you of that," belittling Aslıhan because of her womanhood. Aslıhan does not yield. She says, "Once upon a time, Hayme Ana managed it; I will do the same... Besides, Ertuğrul Bey will always be by my side," so she maintains her stance.

What is noteworthy here is that Aslıhan attributes her strength to her two brothers and Ertuğrul. Femininity alone does not provide sufficient power, but a woman who is "brave" can also become the head of the tribe through a title delegated by powerful men who trust her for this masculine trait. Nevertheless, this example does not show that *Diriliş Ertuğrul* exhibits gender fluidity in its gender roles. Femininity and masculinity entail specific attributes; women who resemble men can fight alongside them with manly attributes associated with them.

In another scene in the same episode, Banu Çiçek, the pregnant wife of the deceased Doğan Bey, and her mother-in-law Hayme Ana are talking. Banu Çiçek talks about the

unborn child as if she is sure of its gender, wishing for it to be a son: "A child worthy of its fathers, an alp worthy of its ancestors," she hopes. Later, Banu Çiçek expresses her desire to fight for the tribe to Hayme Ana, prioritizing her tribe and avenging her deceased husband over the scent of her child. However, Hayme Ana affectionately rejects this request, as her "duty is to be a mother to her child." As can be understood from the wishes regarding the unborn child, being "like a man" is a positive trait in this series. Women are primarily responsible for fulfilling duties attributed to them due to their gender, such as motherhood; however, women who are "brave" like men can also assume leadership or warrior roles delegated to them by powerful men who trust them for this attribute.

Kuruluş Osman (Bozdağ, 2019-)

Kuruluş: Osman is a Turkish television series in the historical, action, adventure, fiction, and drama genres, premiered on November 20, 2019, with its first episode produced by Bozdağ Film. Initially directed by Metin Günay and later by Ahmet Yılmaz, the series is written by Mehmet Bozdağ. It is a sequel to the TV series *Diriliş Ertuğrul*, which aired on TRT 1 from 2014 to 2019 (Televizyon Haberleri, 2019). The first episode of *Kuruluş Osman* on November 20, 2019, achieved a 15.73% viewership rating in the AB Social Status category, a 13.48% viewership rating in 20+ABC1, and became the top-ranked program among 100 programs (Takvim, 2019). Episode 16 of *Kuruluş Osman* got the highest rating in the TOTAL category with 17.28, while episode 2 had the highest rating in the AB category with 14.59. Episode 16 also had the highest rating in the ABC1 category, at 16.70. The series continues to maintain its success in ratings. (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.) Its official YouTube channel has 9.22 million subscribers, with the most-watched video reaching 32 million views (Kuruluş Osman, n.d.)

Female representations exhibit similar characteristics in *Kuruluş: Osman*, similar to *Diriliş: Ertuğrul*. Women are not only portrayed as good mothers and wives but also as skilled warriors. Additionally, compared to *Diriliş Ertuğrul*, this series highlights the roles of female warrior characters more prominently. Characters such as Malhun Hatun, Bala Hatun, Fatma Hatun, Aygöl Hatun, Lena Haun, Julia, Gonca Hatun, Targun Hatun, Frig, İstemihan Hatun, Hazal Hatun, Sofia, and Alaca Hatun are among these female warriors.

Especially in the first season of *Kuruluş: Osman*, Bala Hatun stands out as a representation of a warrior woman. Bala Hatun rides horse, wields swords, and fights

alongside men. She has numerous scenes where she engages in combat and action. Together with Osman Bey, she sometimes fights against enemies alongside other female warriors. In the 12th episode, she plays a significant role in initiating a rebellion alongside Bamsı. In the 26th episode, Bala Hatun confronts Aygöl Hatun, responding to Aygöl's comment about Osman Bey potentially betraying her with confidence in her husband's decisions by saying, "He is my bey; he knows what is right." This scene not only portrays a woman as a warrior but also emphasizes the ideal of a woman obedient to her husband's decisions.

Throughout the series, different female characters continue to engage in battle scenes. Aygöl Hatun, Dündar Bey's daughter and the wife of Cerkutay Alp, is a character fitting the archetype of a warrior woman who becomes a martyr during the conquest of Yenişehir in the 98th episode. Hazal Hatun, Dündar Bey's first wife and Savcı Bey's wife, engages in a sword duel with Aygöl Hatun in the 34th episode. In the 36th episode, a duel between Aygöl Hatun and Lena Hatun takes place, highlighting their courage and combat skills. Malhun Hatun, Umur Bey's daughter, Osman Bey's wife, and the mother of Orhan and Fatma, rescues Osman Bey from an ambush in the 46th episode, showcasing a woman saving the life of the main male warrior character. Malhun Hatun also fights against the enemy warrior character Julia. This aspect of Malhun Hatun demonstrates her as a brave warrior fighting against the enemy, sacrificing herself for her state.

Gonca Hatun, the wife of Bora Alp and friend of Bala Hatun, is another female warrior in the series. In the 71st episode, she is martyred by the warrior woman Julia, an enemy of the Kayı tribe. Alaca Hatun, assisting Malhun Hatun, also demonstrates her skills in battles.

The series also features antagonist female warrior characters. Princess Sofia, the main antagonist of the first season, stands out with her warrior personality and leadership qualities. Osman Gazi kills her in the 27th episode. Targun Hatun, the daughter of Kuman Bey and a spy for Aya Nikola, is killed by Bala Hatun in the 46th episode. Julia, the leader of the Byzantine Tekfurs, serves different Byzantine rulers and is killed by Boran Alp in the 82nd episode. Frig, an enemy warrior often fighting against Bala Hatun, is a dangerous and lethal enemy character. Bala Hatun kills her in the 118th episode. Valide İsmihan Sultan is another antagonist female warrior character, the mother of Sultan Alaeddin and an enemy of Osman Gazi. She is taken to Gazan Han with her son, Sultan Alaeddin, due to her collaboration with Nayman and the accession of Sultan Mesut to the throne. Valide İsmihan Sultan occasionally fights alongside the Kayı Hatuns against common enemies, as seen in the 118th episode.

Another scene in the series highlighting the importance of female warrior characters is in the 138th episode, during the raid on Uç Pazar, where female characters demonstrate courage and heroism in the face of adversity. Osman Gazi's wives, Bala Hatun and Malhun Hatun, also fight in this scene. The epic portrayal of women's struggles through cinematic techniques emphasizes their bravery.

In the 145th episode, Bala Hatun and Osman Gazi's daughter, Fatma Hatun, are prominently featured in their heroic struggle for their lands. In the 146th episode, during the raid on Yenişehir, the heroines are the female alps. They fight fearlessly against their enemies, demonstrating their determination to protect their city and lands, even at the cost of their lives. Despite challenging conditions, the female warriors continue to resist and fight, showcasing their courage, defense skills, sacrifice, and resilience as defining attributes.

In *Kuruluş: Osman*, female characters adhere to national and religious values as fundamental principles. Pride is taken in women who sacrifice their lives for these values. The series idealizes women who actively participate in warfare and social production. Conversely, women who rebel against the established order are punished and marginalized, while those who obediently follow their men are rewarded.

Table 2

Portrayal of the warrior woman archetype in the TV Series reviving the Seljuk-Ottoman foundation myth

Series Name	Year	Producer	Period	Character(s)	Strength(s)	Weakness(es)
Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu	2020-2021	Emre Konuk	11th Century	Elçin Hatun, Zübeyde Hatun	Elçin: Strategic, manipulative. Zübeyde: Skilled fighter, influential.	Elçin: Becomes submissive to Melikşah. Zübeyde: None specified.
Diriliş: Ertuğrul	2014-2019	Mehmet Bozdağ	13th Century	Halime, Selcan, Goncagül, Aytolun, Aslıhan	Halime: Devoted to husband and state. Aslıhan: Brave, takes on leadership.	Primarily focused on traditional roles, limited independence.
Kuruluş: Osman	2019-	Mehmet Bozdağ	13th Century	Bala, Malhun, Fatma, Aygül, etc.	Bala: Brave, loyal. Malhun: Skilled fighter, protective. Sofia: Strategic leader.	Adherence to traditional gender roles, some characters marginalized for rebelling.

4.1.3. TV Series Reviving the Ottoman Rise Myth: *Muhteşem Yüzyıl & Muhteşem Yüzyıl Kösem*

Muhteşem Yüzyıl (Savcı, 2011-2014), penned by Meral Okay for the first 56 episodes and starring Halit Ergenç and Meryem Uzerli, is a pioneer in Turkish television history. It created a glamorous image of the Ottoman Empire's rise, paving the way for a wave of subsequent Ottoman-themed series and a new popular culture (Yıldırım, 2016, p. 51-52). Interpreted as a Turkish adaptation of *The Tudors*⁷ (Hirst, 2007-2010) opulent style, the series approached with an orientalist perspective on the Ottomans garnered reactions from various segments of society and politics during its broadcast. In response to these controversies, the series officials stated it was a fictional reality, not a documentary.

Beyond its success in the Middle East, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* reached over 500 million viewers, airing in numerous countries, including Japan. Ranking among the most-watched productions in Arab countries like Jordan, Iraq, Qatar, Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, the series continues to be viewed via the internet despite bans in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The series also ranks high in ratings in Turkish-speaking countries like Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, as well as in European countries like Albania, Poland, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, and Kosovo (Uştuk, 2019).

The sequel series, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem* (Savcı, 2015-2017), despite not achieving successful ratings in Turkey, was widely watched abroad. The series' second season, aired on a private channel in Tunisia, topped the ratings with a 48% viewership rate. According to data from a Tunisian rating research company, the second season aired in Tunisia on November 6 and achieved a higher viewership rate than all other series broadcasts on all channels. The statement indicated that the series, with a 48% viewership rate, was watched by 4.8 million people in Tunisia, which has a population of approximately 11 million (AA, 2017).

⁷ *The Tudors*, a British-Irish historical fiction television series, was produced by Peace Arch Entertainment for Showtime in association with Reville Productions, Working Title Television, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. It premiered on April 1, 2007.

The success of *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014) can be seen as an important example of the concept of "soft power" and the power of the media in international relations. Soft power refers to a country's influence on other countries through culture, art, and lifestyle. TV series such as *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014) positively affect Turkey's image, increase interest in the country, and contribute to its becoming a cultural center of attraction. (Mestçi, 2012) Revealing the magnificence and richness of the Ottoman Empire, the series aroused curiosity about Turkey's historical and cultural heritage and positively impacted the tourism sector. However, the success of such a historical series has brought with it some criticism. Productions such as *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014) and *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem* (Savcı, 2015-2017) were criticized for portraying historical events and characters as "soap operas". The intrigues, love, and dramatic events in the series deviate from historical reality and present a fiction aimed at entertaining the audience more. It is also claimed that female characters are shaped according to the soap opera craze in popular culture and are presented unrealistically. As a result, such series have increased Turkey's international visibility and expanded the country's cultural influence. However, blending historical reality with popular culture elements in these series has brought about some debates. Criticisms such as turning history into a "soap opera" and stereotyping female characters require a deeper consideration of such productions' cultural impact and social messages.

Muhteşem Yüzyıl (Savcı, 2011-2014)

Produced by TIMS Production under the production of Timur Savcı, directed by Yağmur Taylan and Durul Taylan, and written by Meral Okay, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* aired on Show TV and Star TV, totaling 139 episodes. *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* ranked second with a 10.87 rating share on Total on January 5, 2011. In the AB demographic, it ranked first with a 14.96 share. The 12th episode of *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* aired on March 30, 2011, received the highest ratings, with 17.63 in Total and 24.68 in AB. (*Muhteşem Yüzyıl Dizisinin Tüm Bölümlerinin Reytingleri*, 2014). The remake of *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* has 2.5 million views on the Remi YouTube channel, with its most-watched video garnering 64 million views (*Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, n.d.)

The series revolves around Sultan Süleyman and Hürrem Sultan, who left their mark on the history of the Ottoman Empire. The story begins with Süleyman, still a prince, ascending to the throne upon his father Yavuz Sultan Selim's death and falling in love with

Hürrem Sultan, who was brought to the palace harem as a concubine. Characters like Pargalı İbrahim, Şehzade Mustafa, Mahidevran, and Rüstem Paşa are also significant within the series.

However, one of the characters in this series fitting the warrior woman archetype is Aybüke Hatun. With a sword in her hand and dressing more masculinely and rebelliously according to the cultural norms of the time, Aybüke Hatun surprises Malkoçoğlu⁸. In the 45th episode, after stealing Malkoçoğlu's horse, she says, "Will you protect me? You can't even protect yourself," before Malkoçoğlu interrupts her and engages with her. This leads to a romantic attraction between them. In the series' later episodes, a love triangle story unfolds between Mihrimah Sultan, Malkoçoğlu, and Aybüke Hatun.

Another character fitting the warrior woman archetype in this series is Mihrünisa Hatun, portrayed by Berrak Tüzünataç. In the series, she plays the daughter of the fictional character Barbaros Hayreddin Paşa. This character, who later becomes the wife of Şehzade Mustafa, fights alongside men against other men. In the 107th episode, she challenges Şehzade Mustafa to a duel to prove her strength. Although Şehzade Mustafa initially expresses discomfort with her, he receives the response, "No one has ever defeated me before." This leads to a duel between them, where Mihrünisa's strength causes Şehzade Mustafa to struggle. Taşlıcalı Yahya admits, "At one point, I even thought of helping you." However, it cannot be said that this character continues her assertive behavior consistently. In the 107th episode, she is ambushed because she is the daughter of Barbaros Hayreddin Paşa and is saved thanks to the help of two men. In the 109th episode, she is helplessly taken hostage by Rüstem Paşa's men and rescued by soldiers under the command of Şehzade Mustafa, clinging to him in tears.

Although a warrior woman character, she has been influenced by the narrative of the culture industry that highlights the "feminine" qualities of women and requires them to be passive. Despite living a free pirate life with her father at the beginning, she later becomes Şehzade Mustafa's wife and his children's mother. After this transformation, her warrior identity and independent power gradually fade.

⁸ Malkoçoğlu in this series has a more romantic side than Malkoçoğlu in Cüneyt Arkin's films. He is portrayed as an emotional handsome knight.

In summary, while the characters of Aybüke Hatun and Mihrünisa Hatun in the series *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* are initially portrayed as brave and free-spirited warrior women, they are later trapped in the roles imposed by the patriarchal order as the story progresses. The rebellious and masculine attitude of Aybüke Hatun is ignored. At the same time, the power and warrior identity of Mihrünisa Hatun is overshadowed by her adaptation to traditional roles such as marriage and motherhood.

In conclusion, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, despite its massive popularity and cultural impact, perpetuates the conventional narrative of women in popular culture. While characters like Aybüke Hatun and Mihrünisa Hatun initially embody the warrior woman archetype, their narratives ultimately conform to traditional gender roles, highlighting the enduring influence of patriarchal norms in even seemingly progressive narratives. This underscores the need for continued critical examination of media representations of women, even in seemingly empowering contexts.

Muhteşem Yüzyıl Kösem (Savcı, 2015-2017)

Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem, produced by TIMS Production under the production of Timur Savcı, directed by Çağatay Tosun, and written by Yılmaz Şahin, aired between 2015 and 2017. The series started airing on November 12, 2015, and with its first episode, it ranked second with a 5.88 share in Total, first with an 8.80 share in the AB category, and first with an 8.57 share in the ABC category (Muhteşem Yüzyıl Kösem, 2015). The most-watched video on the series' main YouTube channel has received 16 million views (01. Bölüm Fragmanı, 2015, n.d.)

The first season of *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem* revolves around the struggle between Kösem Sultan, married to "Devlet-i Aliyye," and her son Murad. When her six-year-old son ascends the throne, Kösem Sultan rises to the position of "Regent" and becomes a sultan who bows the world to her feet with both her acquired power and the regency she has achieved. In the second season of *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem*, titled *Bağdat Fatih 4. Murad*, the story revolves around Kösem Sultan's son, Murad IV, who becomes the most significant authority in the state after Sultan Murad, who wants to take power back from Kösem Sultan, shakes it with an iron fist; two individuals who can never accept to be ordinary; mother and son, sovereign and sultan, will face each other. (Tims, n.d.)

Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem depicts the period about a century later than the original series, focusing on the ascent of Ahmed I to the throne upon the death of his father, Murad III, and the love between him and Kösem Sultan, who was brought to the palace harem as a concubine during this time, followed by Kösem Sultan's quest for revenge and her power games. In the second season, as Kösem Sultan's eleven-year-old son ascends to the throne, the story portrays the power struggle between Kösem Sultan, who rises to "Regent," and her adult son, Murad IV. In this series, it cannot be said that the notion that "female sultans playing active roles in the Ottoman State destroyed the state" in the textbooks is completely endorsed. This is because the most warrior-like character in the series is Anastasia. Anastasia first becomes Mahpeyker and then Kösem Sultan, gradually evolving into a more ruthless character.

In this series, examples of warrior women characters include Gölge Hatun, who appears in the first season's first episode, and Farya, who plays one of the lead roles in the second season. Gölge Hatun is a deaf-mute enslaved woman within the team that kidnaps Kösem Sultan from her homeland, the Greek island. Initially her enemy, she becomes very loyal to Kösem later on and saves her life in the 6th episode. She often saves her from death and listens to her most secret conversations. However, like everyone Kösem loves, she must also watch her die. Farya, who enters the series in the 31st episode of the second season of *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem*, is also highly suitable for the warrior woman archetype. Farya starts the story as a princess allied with the Ottomans to take revenge on her uncle, who usurped her throne. When the princess arrives in the Ottoman Empire, she fights alone against a group of assassins disguised as Ottoman soldiers.

The princess, who stands out with her warrior characteristics, fiercely battles her enemies alongside the Ottomans. When her relationship with Murad IV sours, she even climbs a rope to enter the sultan's chamber, demonstrating her courage. However, in the later episodes, her submissive nature and obedience to Murad IV take precedence. Gradually losing her warrior nature, she becomes one of the significant actors in the cliché stories of "intriguing palace women" in the Turkish history series. Under Kösem Sultan's orders, the character killed off was hastily removed from the series.

The characters of Gölge Hatun and Farya in the *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem* series initially stand out as brave and independent warrior women, but as the story progresses, they transform into the figure of the scheming palace women, losing their warrior identities. This

situation demonstrates the patriarchal perspective of the culture industry and soap operas, hindering the warrior woman archetype from reaching its full potential. Soap operas generally present stories based on intrigue and dramatic conflicts. The warrior woman archetype is incompatible with these roles and, thus, cannot be fully explored in soap operas. However, it should be noted that characters like Hürrem Sultan and Kösem Sultan, who stand out with their intrigue and political intelligence, are well portrayed from a feminist perspective. These characters use their intelligence and skills to rise in the patriarchal order by challenging men. From this perspective, characters like Hürrem Sultan and Kösem Sultan can be interpreted as inspirational figures from a feminist perspective.

In short, this TV series, like its predecessor, addresses the complexities of the representation of female power in a historical context. While characters such as Shadow Hatun and Farya initially represent the warrior woman archetype, their narratives are ultimately shaped by the constraints of the genre and social expectations. However, figures like Kösem Sultan, who challenge the patriarchal order with political acumen and strategic maneuvers, offer a nuanced portrayal of female agency within their own historical realities. Therefore, this series provides a well-rounded examination of female characters, showcasing both the limitations and possibilities of women's power in a patriarchal society. However, this TV series cannot present a successful example of the warrior woman archetype.

Muhteşem Yüzyıl Kösem offers viewers a thought-provoking experience by presenting the power dynamics of women and their struggles with societal expectations from a historical perspective. Although the series does not fully utilize the warrior woman archetype's potential, it showcases women's strength and determination through powerful and intelligent female characters like Kösem Sultan. However, due to the influence of melodrama in popular culture, some female characters, most notably Farya, undergo an unfounded transformation, and their warrior traits are pushed into the background. This situation hinders the series from delving deeper into female characters and utilizing the warrior woman archetype better. Nevertheless, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl Kösem* provides a significant platform for discussion on the roles of women in historical processes and their relationship with gender norms.

In conclusion, while the *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı 2011-2014) and *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem* (Savcı 2015-2017) series have the potential to criticize the patriarchal social order through the warrior woman archetype, they have not fully realized this potential. The female

characters in the series remain trapped in traditional patriarchal roles as the shadow of the traditional patriarchal view. Although they initially emerge as brave and independent warrior women, characters like Aybüke Hatun and Mihrünisa Hatun succumb to the roles imposed by the patriarchal order as the story progresses. While Farya initially stands out with her warrior characteristics, she later turns into the figure of a scheming palace woman, losing her warrior identity. This situation demonstrates that the culture industry and soap operas reflect a patriarchal perspective, hindering the warrior woman archetype from reaching its full potential.

Table 3

Portrayal of the warrior woman archetype in the TV series reviving the Ottoman rise myth

Series Name	Year	Producer	Period	Character	Strength	Weakness
Muhteşem Yüzyıl	2011-2014	Timur Savcı	16th Century	Aybüke Hatun	Rebellious, masculine	Submissive
Muhteşem Yüzyıl	2011-2014	Timur Savcı	16th Century	Mihrünisa Hatun	Skilled warrior	Loses warrior identity, becomes helpless
Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem	2015-2017	Timur Savcı	17th Century	Gölge Hatun	Loyal, protective	Limited portrayal, dies tragically
Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem	2015-2017	Timur Savcı	17th Century	Farya Hatun	Brave, skilled fighter	Becomes submissive to Murad IV, dies tragically.

4.1.4. TV Series Covering the Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the National Struggle Period: *Elveda Rumeli & Vatanım Sensin*

The portrayal of the late Ottoman Empire and the War of Independence period on Turkish television consists of productions about national independence in Turkish TV series and films, usually with a Kemalist line. Previous productions such as *Kurtuluş* (Özta, 1994) and *Cumhuriyet* (Özta, 1998) focused primarily on the heroic narrative of the War of Independence and the founding of the Republic. Generally, they treated the late Ottoman period as a period of decline and stagnation. These series, whose roots were based on

Kemalist ideology, talked about the importance of modernization, secularism, and Westernization as the key to progress for the newly established Turkish nation, and the indicators in the series and movies revealed this.

Elveda Rumeli (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009) and *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018) presented the audience with a more nuanced and versatile depiction of this historical period. While these series acknowledged the corruption and inadequacies of the late Ottoman Empire, they delved deeper into the complexities of the period. They showed a broader range of characters and perspectives. For example, *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009) offered a critical perspective on the Ottoman Empire while providing a look at the lives of ordinary people in the Ottoman Balkans, describing their struggles, cultural diversity, and resilience in the face of political turmoil. On the other hand, *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018) offered a more humane depiction of historical figures by examining the personal sacrifices and moral dilemmas of individuals caught in the middle of the War of Independence and did not shy away from showing treacherous statesmen within the Ottoman Empire. In addition, *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009) and *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018) incorporated elements of melodrama and romance, appealing to a broader audience and making history more accessible and intriguing.

Examining these series from a chronological perspective will be more helpful in understanding the changes in women's social status, roles in war, and power in different periods. For example, while the female characters in the series *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009) take on more traditional roles during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the women in the series *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018) take on a more active and combative role during the War of Independence period. As a result, the portrayal of the last period of the Ottoman Empire and the War of Independence on Turkish television has undergone a significant transformation and development from the heroic narrative of previous productions to the more nuanced and versatile narrative offered by new series such as *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009) and *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018).

Elveda Rumeli (Akar, 2007-2009)

Elveda Rumeli began its broadcast in 2007 with the production company Adam Film, directed by Serdar Akar (*Elveda Rumeli*, n.d.). The series' first episode achieved high ratings on Total and AB channels during the first two seasons. (*Elveda Rumeli ratings (TV show, 2007-2009), 2020*) For instance, on May 11, 2009, it ranked first with a rating of 8.56 on Total and second with a rating of 7.22 on AB (*Elveda Rumeli Merhaba Reyting!.. Dün En Çok İzlenen Yapım Hangisi Oldu? Haber Bültenleri Ne Kadar İzlendi?.* 2009, May 12). The most viewed video on the series' official YouTube channel has 2.4 million views (*Elveda Rumeli*, n.d.).

Set in the year 1896, the series depicts the declining Ottoman rule in the Balkans. The protagonist, Sütçü Ramiz, is a poor Turkish peasant living with his wife and three marriageable daughters in a village near the city of Manastır in Macedonia. The events revolve around Ramiz and his family, reflecting the atmosphere of the "World Empire" withdrawing from the Balkans during those years.

The character Vahide stands out as a young woman who uses weapons and is curious about tasks usually associated with men. She mocks men who fail to fulfill the role of masculinity and lack the courage typically associated with it. For example, when her sister's boyfriend Hasan fails to describe their relationship to Ramiz bravely, Vahide tells him that he should "act like a man." She also demands Zarife to forget about Alex with all her authority, believing he cheated on Zarife.

In the 5th episode, when Vahide expresses her desire to participate in a shooting competition, she receives surprised reactions from the men around her. Another man states that "this competition is not for women," and the person writing down the competitors' names says it is "not permissible." When asked if her father knows about it, he describes her as "acting like a man." Despite this, Vahide demonstrates excellent shooting skills in the competition and wins. Even when she is shot by Dimitri, who cannot accept defeat, she shows remarkable bravery and resilience against the bullet extracted from her body.

In the 9th episode, when Hatice and Hasan's wedding is raided, Vahide is one of those who fights the raiders with her rifle. The dialogue between Mustafa, an Ittihatçı character, and Vahide perfectly illustrates her character traits. Mustafa mentions that the name Vahide means "unique" and emphasizes that no other girl in Macedonia carries a rifle like her.

Vahide points her gun at him out of curiosity, but Mustafa takes the bullets and flees. The character Mustafa is a Unionist medical student. It is his love that instills the idea of freedom in Vahide.

In the 13th episode, Vahide expresses her desire to provide sharpshooting training to soldiers at the governor's office. Despite Commander Cezmi's statement that this is impossible, she demonstrates her skills by hitting a metal coin thrown into the air. However, when she is harassed by Abdül, who gave her the job, she slaps him and leaves.

Abdül, the spoiled son of a Pasha, is depicted in the series as someone who used to live a privileged life and abused his power. Abdül often exhibits an arrogant and authoritarian attitude towards those around him and commits much evil. This character, who tends to belittle and abuse others due to his privileged status, is Vahide's and Mustafa's biggest enemy. The biggest reason for this hostility is that this character displays an abusive attitude towards Vahide, one of the female characters in the series. However, Vahide's determination and courage pose a challenge to Abdül's power. The slap Vahide delivers in response to Abdül's harassment highlights the determination of women to defend themselves and protect their rights. This scene represents the struggle of women to define their place in society and protect their boundaries. Vahide's reaction to the harasser, by slapping him, demonstrates her determination to uphold her rights and dignity.

In the 15th episode, Sütçü Ramiz entrusts her to watch over the house and says, "If you hear anything, let me know, my soldier daughter." Similar dialogues continue in many other episodes, indicating that Vahide plays an important role not only within the family but also in society. The responsibilities given to Vahide by Sütçü Ramiz highlight that she is seen not only as a woman but also as a warrior who is trusted and relied upon. This underscores that women can be leaders and active participants, not just protectors or assistants to men.

In the 16th episode, she rescues "Kara Kalpaklı" Mustafa from the hands of Ottoman soldiers trying to capture him, disguising herself like him and becoming a hero in her own right. Influenced by Mustafa, Vahide also adopts libertarian ideas. She proposes the establishment of a newspaper to Mustafa to tell everything happening in Macedonia. Vahide's embrace of libertarian ideas under Mustafa's influence marks a significant turning point in her character development. Mustafa's struggle for freedom and justice awakens

Vahide's strong and independent voice within herself. This illustrates women's participation in the struggle for freedom and equality and their role in societal change. Vahide's proposal to Mustafa to establish a newspaper to report on events in Macedonia reflects her desire to engage in societal events actively. This reflects not only her individual goals but also her desire to fight for social justice and freedom.

In the 27th episode, when the Ottoman-Greek war begins, she wants to go to war in disguise as a man. When her sisters ask, "Sister, did you become a man?" she responds, "Since they don't enroll girls as voluntary soldiers, I dressed as a man." Her response to her sisters explicitly states that gender norms hinder women's desire to participate in war, hence her decision to dress as a man. This situation represents the struggle of women to defy gender norms and demand their right to make their own decisions. Therefore, this scene signifies that Vahide embodies the warrior woman archetype, challenging societal gender norms and defying them by adopting a masculine appearance.

In the 36th episode, disguised as "Kara Kalpaklı," she aims to "instill fear in separatist gangs" and "give hope to the innocent." However, when her parents see her, they react negatively. In the same episode, Abdül, a medical student, threatens to reveal Mustafa's true identity and have his family arrested. At that moment, Vahide points her gun at Abdül. When he approaches her, she shoots him. Even though the İttihatçı Ahmet takes the blame for it, Vahide insists on being honest about her actions. This reaction further emphasizes Vahide's determination and independence. She is resolute in pursuing the path she believes is correct and is not inclined to comply with societal expectations. This demonstrates that Vahide is a character who actively defends herself and is far from passive. It also highlights her courage to confront challenges and defend her beliefs. This scene reinforces the perception of Vahide as a strong and decisive character.

In the 52nd episode, when gang members kidnap her, she and her friend escape thanks to her plan. Once again, this scene showcases Vahide's warrior spirit and intelligence. Even when kidnapped by gang members, Vahide's courage and determination enable her and her friend to escape. Vahide's escape plan demonstrates her courage and ability to think strategically. Even in a difficult situation, she remains calm, quickly devises a plan, and acts to save herself and her friend. This illustrates that she not only takes control of her own destiny but also takes action to ensure the safety of her loved ones. Vahide's successful escape demonstrates not only her physical strength but also her intelligence and

determination. She once again proves her warrior identity by overcoming a challenging situation alone. This scene shows that Vahide embodies the physically and mentally strong warrior woman archetype.

In the 73rd episode, Vahide martyrs heroically. In a flashback scene, Vahide is portrayed as a character who fought with two boys and defeated them even in her childhood. As a strong woman who sacrifices herself for a greater cause, she says, "Everyone is entrusted to you, Mustafa," before she dies.

Vahide represents the warrior woman advocating freedom. Not bound by patriarchal norms, Vahide is independent-minded. She continues to fight alongside Mustafa against the despotism and indifference of the Sultan. While male-dominated power is sometimes criticized within the series, the struggle of women like Vahide is also portrayed with praise. In addition to Vahide, another character in the series fits the warrior-woman archetype. In the 66th episode, another warrior woman character named Gülsüm Hanım is among the men searching for rebel committees. In the 72nd episode, she is awarded a medal by Commander Cezmi.

In conclusion, the series *Elveda Rumeli* presents an important feminist representation by portraying the period of the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the National Struggle through the lens of the warrior woman archetype. The character Vahide stands out with her courage, determination, and libertarian attitude. While challenging societal gender norms, she also questions patriarchal structures. Vahide's ability to use weapons, brave decisions, and rejection of social roles highlight the warrior-woman archetype. Her determination to defend her rights and fight for justice emphasizes a feminist perspective, encouraging women to empower themselves and seek freedom. The series also strengthens the warrior woman archetype through other female characters such as Gülsüm Hanım. These characters show that women can play significant roles not only beside men but also independently, contributing to societal change. In this regard, they align with the principles of *İttihatçılık* and *Cumhuriyetçilik*, embodying the warrior woman archetype.

However, a critical feminist approach can be taken towards the character of Vahide. While she challenges classic norms associated with femininity by displaying overly masculine traits, this can also be a point open to feminist criticism. While Vahide's masculine behaviors may highlight the fluidity of the boundaries of conventional masculinity and

femininity, they may also overlook the diversity and complexity of femininity. This can reinforce the perception that women need to conform to male norms to be strong and ignore the diversity of feminine identity, fitting women into a single mold.

Vatanım Sensin (Güvenatam, 2016-2018)

Vatanım Sensin is a series produced by O3 Medya, with executive producer Onur Güvenatam executive producer Banu Gündoğdu, directed by Yağmur Taylan, Durul Taylan, Burak Arıel, and written by Uygur Şirin, Deniz Gürlek, Melek Seven, Melih Özyılmaz. It premiered in 2016. *Vatanım Sensin* started its broadcast on October 27, 2016, with a rating of 5.73 on Total, ranking second, 7.85 on A/B Socio-Economic Status, ranking first, and 7.32 on ABC1. (*Vatanım Sensin yeni sezona zirvede başladı!*, 2017) The 3rd episode of *Vatanım Sensin*, which had the highest ratings, reached 7.71 in Total, 11.12 in AB, and 10.48 in ABC1. (*Vatanım Sensin*, n.d.) The most-watched video on the official Youtube channel of the series has over 5 million views (*Vatanım Sensin Kanal D Official*, 2019).

Starting with the Balkan War and the occupation period of Izmir, *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018) portrays the story of a fragmented family coming together again amidst "a great war where who is a traitor and who is a hero cannot be understood at first glance." The series depicts "the struggle of a magical, passionate, and unforgettable love to survive in the shadow of a war." The main male character, Cevdet, is a Turkish soldier infiltrating the Greek army. Azize is a hardworking Turkish woman who loves her family and her country. Their young daughter Hilal is a patriot and a freedom-loving young woman. The spring of 1919, when "a nation exhausted by consecutive defeats prepares for its last and greatest test," will begin a new era in Azize and Cevdet's lives. Their story will be intertwined with the fate of a brand-new country rising from the ashes. *Vatanım Sensin* is the story of "those caught between their duties and consciences in the merciless environment of war, those trying to nurture their love despite everything, a family striving to stay together, and the relentless journey from captivity to freedom." (*Vatanım Sensin fragmanında Bergüzar Korel ve Halit Ergenç...*, 2016)

In the first season of *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018), the character of Kara Fatma exemplifies the warrior woman archetype. Kara Fatma, a short-looking but influential historical character in the series *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018), is depicted as a woman who uses weapons and fights directly, carrying visual images appropriate to the

warrior woman archetype. This leader character is a character who exhibits leadership qualities not only on the battlefield but also within her own community.

This warrior character, adapted from a historical figure named Kara Fatma, organizes and leads female warriors like herself. She is also fighting with them on the front lines against imperialism. As a significant figure considered one of the main actors in the War of Independence, she is depicted in the series accordingly. Kara Fatma, emphasizing the importance of women in defending the homeland, says to Azize, "This homeland is entrusted not only to men but also to women. They call me Kara Fatma from our generation." Kara Fatma's sacrifices for her family and country lead her to dedicate herself to this cause. By saying this and asking Azize to act as a spy against Colonel Tevfik, she demonstrates her commitment to the homeland.

From a feminist perspective, this is a positive element in empowering women and expanding their social roles. Kara Fatma's harsh and charismatic attitude can be described as authoritarian. However, from a feminist perspective, this feature can be seen as a positive feature that emphasizes women's tendency towards strong leadership roles. The depiction of women's sacrifices for their families and their dedication to the cause emphasizes their social responsibilities and sacrifices from a feminist perspective. It shows that women are not only the protectors or helpers of men but also important actors who actively fight for their homeland. Therefore, while Kara Fatma represents the warrior woman archetype, it can also be analyzed as an important figure that strengthens women from a feminist perspective.

In the second season of *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018), the character of Azize assumes a role suitable for the warrior woman archetype. In one episode, Azize is called "Our Kara Fatma from now on." This series provides examples of characters like Azize, who are committed to independence and resist the oppression of women. In Episode 37, Azize meets Efsun, who is on her way to Kara Fatma, carrying a rifle. When Efsun asks if there's any difference between men and Kara Fatma, Azize approves, and later, after Azize saves Efsun from Greek soldiers attempting to rape her, Efsun declares, "From now on, you are my Kara Fatma." Here, the theme of solidarity among women against sexual violence is highlighted.

In Episode 38, Azize bravely fights alongside women by arming them against Greek soldiers raiding their location. Efsun, a character who courageously engages in close combat

with the enemy, declares, "Bullets won't touch me," highlighting her bravery. Azize then personally eliminates the "traitor" who caused the situation. Emine Bacı explains Azize's heroic plan to other characters, drawing inspiration from Çerkez Hasan, known for his opposition to regular armies, and representing him in the form of the character Dağıstanlı. He acknowledges Azize's courage by saying, "I know this nation's women are brave, but I've never seen one like you before." Azize, alongside Efsun and Emine, displays leadership and courage, embodying the warrior woman archetype.

In Episode 39, Efsun insists on forming a women's unit and emphasizes that men are either fighting on the front lines or have already become martyrs. Azize facilitates a woman's birth in labor, showing her compassion and resourcefulness. Then, Efsun recounts Azize's heroism to the women, portraying Azize as a symbol of courage and leadership. Their conversation underscores women's potential to question traditional gender roles and make their own decisions during wartime.

In Episode 40, Azize establishes the Sisters' Union. Dağıstanlı credits Azize's persuasion for the union's formation, emphasizing the significance of women's active participation in the war effort. The creation of the Sisters' Union highlights women's desire and determination to contribute to the war effort and underscores their solidarity.

In the same episode, İsmet Pasha, a historical figure and character in the series, acknowledges the contributions of women in the national struggle, mentioning female heroes such as Halime Çavuş and Rahmiye Hanım. This highlights the courage and sacrifice of women in the war effort and emphasizes their active role in the conflict.

Throughout subsequent episodes, Azize continues to lead and support women, demonstrating compassion, bravery, and commitment to their cause. Her actions exemplify the warrior woman archetype and inspire others to join the fight for independence.

Vatanım Sensin (Güvenatam, 2016-2018) portrays the Sisters' Union under Azize's leadership as a significant element focusing on feminism and the warrior woman archetype. The series showcases through Azize and other female characters how women can actively assume roles, show solidarity, and effectively participate in societal change during wartime. Azize's leadership, along with that of other women, demonstrates their willingness to fight together, show solidarity, and make sacrifices for their homeland.

The TV series *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018) and *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009) depict the warrior woman archetype during the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the War of Independence by presenting important feminist representations. Both series challenge gender norms through female characters and emphasize that women can be strong and influential. Especially characters such as *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018), Azize, and Vahide in the novels *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009) stand out with their courage, determination and progressive attitudes. They reject social roles and question patriarchal structures. Azize's leadership on the battlefield and Vahide's skill in using weapons give critical messages about women's empowerment and the search for freedom.

Diriliş: Ertuğrul (Bozdağ, 2014-2019), *Kuruluş Osman* (Bozdağ, 2019-present), and *Uyanış Büyük Selçuklu* (Konuk, 2020-2021) highlight nationalist, statist, and patriarchal figures, while *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009) and *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018) mainly question women's individual strengths and societal roles. While characters in *Diriliş Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019) and *Kuruluş Osman* (Bozdağ, 2019-present) are often portrayed as protectors of family and state, women in *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009) and *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018) take on more individual and powerful roles. However, these series also have common points. The element of solidarity and support between female characters is crucial. The strong bonds between women show that they are stronger together and support each other in overcoming challenges.

Examining these series chronologically allows for a more in-depth understanding of changes in women's social status, their role in warfare, and their power. For example, the female characters in *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009), which is set during the decline of the Ottoman Empire, are generally limited to traditional roles, while the female characters in *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018) are mostly limited to traditional roles. We are taking on more active and combative roles in the Turkish War of Independence. This chronological analysis provides insight into how historical context and social changes have affected the portrayal of women on Turkish television.

Table 4

Portrayal of the warrior woman archetype in the TV Series covering the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the National Struggle Period

Series Name	Year	Producer(s)	Period (Century)	Character	Strength(s)	Weakness(es)
Elveda Rumeli	2007-2009	Serdar Akar, Tarkan Karlıdağ	20th Century	Vahide	Defies gender norms, fights with skill, challenges male authority	Overly masculine traits might not align with all feminist perspectives
Elveda Rumeli	2007-2009	Serdar Akar, Tarkan Karlıdağ	20th Century	Gülsüm Hanım	Takes up arms alongside men	Limited screentime
Vatanım Sensin	2016-2018	Onur Güvenatam	20th Century	Kara Fatma	Leads women warriors, embodies strong leadership	Limited presence in Season 2, potential for deeper exploration unrealized
Vatanım Sensin	2016-2018	Onur Güvenatam	20th Century	Azize	Initially passive, later fights alongside others, establishes women's unit	Initial portrayal might not fully embody warrior archetype

4.2. Warrior Women Archetype in Turkish Historical Movies

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, some Turkish films adopted a critical perspective on the governance and social structure of the Ottoman Empire. *İstanbul Kanatlarımın Altında* (Altıoklar, 1996) and *Abdülhamid Düşerken* (Ökten, 2003) are examples of such films. *Hacivat Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü?* (Akay, 2006) also touches upon the corruption of those in power in the Ottoman Empire.

The representation of female warriors in Turkish cinema is a complex and evolving landscape shaped by socio-political changes and industry trends. *Hacivat Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü?* (Akay, 2006) offered a look at a more nuanced female character who challenged traditional gender roles in a historical context. However, the rise of nationalist and conservative sentiments, especially with the transition to the presidential system, affected the portrayal of women in later films.

The film *Fetih 1453* (Aksoy, 2012), shot during the period when the *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014) series was most popular, began to display nationalist elements similar to Cüneyt Arkın's old Yeşilçam films. For example, while a female character was displayed with the agency in *Fetih 1453* (Aksoy, 2012), it ultimately confined her within the boundaries of traditional expectations and religious norms. This trend continued in *Malazgirt 1071* (Bakar & Kalyoncu, 2022), where female characters were relegated to supporting roles. The transition of the political system in Turkey from a parliamentary system to a presidential system in the mid-2000s, combined with the conservative majority in the parliament, significantly influenced a Neo-Ottomanist ideology similar to the TV series, with films such as *Türkler Geliyor: Adaletin Kılıcı* (Aydın, 2020) and *Deliler Fatih'in Fermanı* (Kaya, 2018), reflecting the dominant political ideology in the cinema. It exemplifies the manifestation of Turkish-Islamic ideology on the big screen.

The disparity between the portrayal of female warriors in cinema and television is also striking. While series such as *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019), *Kuruluş: Osman* (Bozdağ, 2019-present), and *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu* (Konuk, 2020-2021) feature prominent female characters who actively participate in wars and decision-making processes, such representations are scarce in cinema. It is possible to interpret this discrepancy as a result of several factors, including audience preferences, production budgets, and the perceived commercial viability of feminist themes on different platforms.

Moreover, the portrayal of female warriors in Turkish cinema often intersects with broader nationalist narratives. These characters are usually depicted as symbols of cultural heritage and national pride; their strength and resilience strengthen collective identity. This intertwining of gender and nationalism raises questions about how these representations empower women or reinforce existing power structures.

In conclusion, the evolution of the female warrior archetype in Turkish cinema reflects the dynamic interaction of social, political, and industrial forces. As Turkish society grapples with issues of gender equality and cultural identity, the representation of female warriors in cinema will likely remain a subject of ongoing debate and scrutiny.

4.2.1. Hacivat Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü?

The film *Hacivat Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü?*, produced and directed by Ezel Akay and co-written by Levent Kazak, was released in 2006. According to IMDB, the film attracted 157,731 viewers in its opening weekend and was watched by 649,746 people over 24 weeks. Similarly, the film grossed ₺1,158,558 in its opening weekend and a total of ₺4,233,546 over 24 weeks. (*Hacivat Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü?*, n.d.) The film portrays the events surrounding Hacivat (Hacı İvaz) and Karagöz, two mythical figures of shadow play, also known as Karagöz theater. It is set in Bursa, the early Ottoman capital of the 14th century, aiming to reflect the characteristics of the time and place. Hacivat serves as an envoy in the Eşrefoğlu Beylik, one of the many principalities in Anatolia. He is sent as an envoy to the Tatar ruler Demirtaş by Eşrefoğlu. Still, the judge of Eşrefoğlu, Pervane, replaces the letter and diamond sent as gifts with a foul one and a snake, respectively. When Hacivat takes the letter and the snake to Demirtaş, Pervane's true intention is revealed, leading to an attack on the principality by Demirtaş. Meanwhile, Pervane, along with the diamond and his men, comes to Bursa and continues his intrigues there. When he encounters Hacivat, whom he had deceived into death but found alive, he is astonished. After all, Hacivat knows his tricks, and he has evidence. In Bursa, Hacivat gains the favor of the people by engaging in a dispute with Karagöz, a nomad, which Pervane tries but fails to eliminate. Hacivat and Karagöz accidentally meet and begin performing their acts, criticizing various aspects, including the city's political situation, during their shows. This does not sit well with Pervane and the merchant guild of Ahis, leading to the murder of the duo.

In the film *Hacivat Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü?* (Akay, 2006), the Bacıyan-ı Rum organization plays an active role. There are lines such as "We heard about the bravery of the Bacıs" within the film. Ayşe Hatun, one of the Bacıyan-ı Rum, stands out prominently in the movie. Additionally, the portrayal of female warrior characters in positions of authority and with empowering camera angles is noteworthy. For example, she fights with her female soldiers against thieves who stole the mosque's minaret. It is emphasized that Ayşe Hatun is descended from Osman Gazi, and her leadership qualities are highlighted. Despite her father converting to Islam, she continues to adhere to the Christian faith. Her rebellious nature is striking. When the judge Pervane belittles her warrior personality by saying, "What does a young Muslim girl like you do with a sword?" and continues mockingly, "Bacıs should be making stuffed dolma at home," Ayşe Hatun stands up to him, saying, "If you talk too much,

I'll slice your head like a stuffed squash." She further asserts, "Bacı are the legacy of Şeyh Edebali; the mouth of the one who speaks should be clean." Pervane believes that women should bear children, reconcile, and not fight. Ayşe Hatun opposes this notion. This character, who fights and refuses to submit to authority, represents the freedom-loving woman who resisted the Islamization of Anatolia while preserving her own culture. She prays to her believed God, saying, "God grant me the power to fight and the power to speak the truth." Additionally, she blames her father for changing her beliefs for the sake of the Ottoman Empire's power. She does not want to marry Pervane, whom her father wants her to marry, but rather wants to be with Karagöz, whom she loves. She and her Bacı save Karagöz and Hacıvat from being killed. Knowing that Pervane would abolish the Bacı organization and establish his traditional patriarchal order, she tries to reveal his true face. Her warrior character and uncompromising personality make her a great example of feminist representation. She critiques the patriarchal society of the time, saying, "You've finished off the Bacı; from now on, women are defeated. Even if men are defeated, they are still victorious."

The film *Hacıvat Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü?* not only tells the story of Hacıvat and Karagöz but also sheds light on the political and social atmosphere of the 14th-century Ottoman Empire. The Bacıyan-ı Rum organization and the character of Ayşe Hatun bring significant criticisms of the patriarchal societal order. In comparison to the archetype of warrior women characters seen in recent historical dramas like *Kuruluş Osman*, these women appear to be more on a path of freedom. Unlike the conservative nationalist female identity that upholds the state's religion and obedience to authority in that series, these characters, particularly Ayşe Hatun, rebel against the system. It can be said that these characters diverge from the dominant narrative seen today with their portrayal of Ayşe Hatun as a woman who challenges the system rather than conforming to it.

In short, *Hacıvat Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü* is a film that uses its own opposition ideology as symbolism while challenging the dominant ideological discourses. The character of Ayşe Hatun is a free-spirited character who challenges the new traditions imposed on her and wants to decide for herself whom she will marry or fall in love with. The only non-positive feminist criticism to be made about the warrior woman archetype in the movie is that warrior women's screen time is shorter than that of male characters. However, it is also

possible to infer that the most successful warrior woman archetype among the TV series and movies examined is seen in this character.

4.2.2. *Fetih 1453*

Fetih 1453 is a Turkish historical and war genre film. Directed by Faruk Aksoy, the film was released on February 16, 2012, and produced by Aksoy Film. During its initial release weekend, the film was watched by 1,161,250 people and garnered 6,572,618 viewers over 52 weeks. Similarly, the film earned ₺11,064,600 in revenue during its opening weekend and a total of ₺55,744,699 over 52 weeks. The movie depicts the conquest of Istanbul by the Ottoman Empire. Faruk Aksoy's directed *Fetih 1453* portrays the reign of Mehmed II, extending to the conquest of Istanbul, with an epic narrative (*Fetih 1453*, n.d.)

The character Era in *Fetih 1453* exemplifies the warrior woman archetype. Era, the adoptive daughter of Hungarian foundry master Urban, is captured and raised as his own after Eastern Roman soldiers raid her village. While she embodies the image of a strong and capable female warrior, her portrayal leans towards the male perspective of the "strong woman" stereotype. The stereotype of a woman warrior resembling a man and being portrayed as strong is quite evident in this character. Additionally, Era's character often overshadows herself by Ulubatlı Hasan, emphasizing her occasional need for protection despite her bravery on the battlefield. Despite Era's significance in representing the warrior woman archetype in Turkish cinema, her relationships with male characters exhibit notable shortcomings. These shortcomings prevent her full potential from being realized and hinder a more complex and multifaceted portrayal of her character.

The relationship between Era and Ulubatlı Hasan in the film is predominantly shaped by romantic interest and Era's perceived need for protection. This relationship confines Era's strength and independence, trapping her character within traditional feminine roles. Era often displays a sentimental and vulnerable demeanor towards Ulubatlı Hasan. In their dialogues, Era's ideas and strategies are not adequately considered by Ulubatlı Hasan. Era lacks sufficient opportunities to express her thoughts on war plans and tactics. Ulubatlı Hasan assumes a paternalistic role in protecting and guiding Era.

Era often assumes a passive role in her interactions with other male soldiers. Depicted as obedient and subordinate, Era lacks the opportunity to express her ideas on war plans and

tactics. Not enough scenes show Era actively participating in military meetings and strategy discussions. Era is not portrayed as confident enough to lead other soldiers or assert her own ideas. There is no clear image of Era being respected by male soldiers.

The observed shortcomings in Era's relationships with male characters hinder her character from fully realizing her potential and deviating from traditional representations of the warrior woman archetype. These shortcomings prevent Era from reflecting on her complex inner world and emotional development. While Era's character is essential in representing the warrior woman archetype in Turkish cinema, significant shortcomings and complexities are observed in her relationships with male characters. These shortcomings prevent her full potential from being realized and contribute to the service of the nationalist ideology portrayed in the film.

4.2.3. Malazgirt 1071

The directors of the film *Malazgirt 1071* are Özgür Bakar and Bilal Kalyoncu. The screenplay was written by Bilal Kalyoncu, Özgür Bakar, and Alper Kırılcım together. The production is undertaken by TRT and 2056 Sinema (Türkyılmaz, 2022). During its opening weekend, 23,949 people watched *Malazgirt 1071*, and it was viewed by 197,175 people over 19 weeks. Similarly, the film earned ₺646,377 in revenue during its opening weekend and a total of ₺3,465,631 over 19 weeks. The movie focuses on the Battle of Malazgirt (1071), one of the most significant historical events in Anatolian and Turkish history (Malazgirt 1071, n.d.).

The movie shows that Sultan Alp Arslan continued the Anatolian expeditions initiated by his uncle Tuğrul Bey to realize his dream of gathering Muslims under the Seljuk flag. The movie explains that the turmoil in Byzantium gave the Turks the opportunity to advance rapidly in Anatolia. The failure of Roman Diogenes' coup attempt and his being sentenced to death are also among the scenes in the movie. However, this is the case in the film where Diogenes, who ascended to the throne with the help of Queen Ludika, takes action to expel the Turks from Anatolia. The scene where two great armies confront each other in the Manzikert Plain, which will be the beginning of the thousand-year adventure of the Turks in Anatolia, is also impressively depicted in the film (AA, n.d.).

In this film, the character of Eleni stands out as an example of a warrior woman. Living in an Armenian village, Eleni vows revenge after her town and family are massacred, and she is taken captive by Eastern Roman soldiers, expressing her desire to fight alongside the Seljuks. When the Seljuk soldier who rescues her asks, "Haven't we taken our revenge, is it not enough?" Eleni responds, "It's not enough; I want to join you and fight against those oppressors." Later, Eleni expresses her desire to learn to wield a sword, stating that she is already skilled with a knife. Even in the Seljuk camp, Eleni thinks about the atrocities committed against her village. A Seljuk soldier then gives her sword training. During the Battle of Malazgirt, Eleni is one of the archers. Taking a stand alongside the Muslim and nationalist identity of the Seljuk army, she appears as a character in the film.

Eleni's scenes in the film are limited. Although she finds her place as a woman fighting alongside men on the battlefield, the film predominantly adopts a masculine perspective. Female characters in the movie are also limited. Apart from the Eastern Roman Empress, who is not a deeply developed character, and Eleni, who seeks revenge, the film is dominated by scenes depicting male characters in battle and praising the identity of the Seljuks.

When examined from the perspective of the warrior woman archetype and feminist representation, Eleni's representation in the film appears one-dimensional. While her warrior and avenging side is emphasized, no depth is provided to her character development. This reflects the typical portrayal of female characters in the cultural industry as superficial and one-dimensional. Although cinema plays a vital role in portraying the warrior woman archetype and feminist representation, portraying female characters in a more nuanced and complex manner, showcasing both their strengths and weaknesses, is essential for a more realistic and impactful representation of the warrior woman archetype.

While the film *Malazgirt 1071* raises the issue of the warrior woman archetype and feminist representation through the character of Eleni, it falls short in its execution. The film industry, including cinema, is responsible for creating representations that empower women and support gender equality. However, such representations should not glorify militarism or objectify the female body.

In conclusion, while the film *Malazgirt 1071* sparks a discussion on the representation of the warrior woman through the character of Eleni, its shortcomings prevent it from presenting a feminist perspective effectively. The film industry, including cinema and other

art forms, is responsible for creating representations that empower women and promote gender equality.

Table 5

Portrayal of the warrior woman Archetype in Turkish historical movies

Film	Year	Producer(s) and Director(s)	Period (Century)	Character	Strength(s)	Weakness(es)
Hacivat ile Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü?	2006	Ezel Akay	14th	Ayşe Hatun	Strong, rebellious, challenges patriarchal order	Limited screentime compared to male characters Relies on male characters for protection, portrayal reinforces "strong woman" stereotype
Fetih 1453	2012	Faruk Aksoy	15th	Era	Strong and capable	One-dimensional character, limited screentime
Malazgirt 1071	2022	Özgür Bakar & Bilal Kalyoncu	11th	Eleni	Determined, seeks justice	

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examines the representation of the warrior woman archetype in popular Turkish TV series and films. The study discussed how these representations are portrayed ideologically in *Destan* (Bozdağ, 2021-2022), *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019), *Kuruluş Osman* (Bozdağ, 2019-present), *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu* (Konuk, 2020-2021), *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014), *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem* (Savcı, 2015-2017), *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009), *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018), *Hacivat Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü?* (Akay, 2006), *Fetih 1453* (Aksoy, 2012), and *Malazgirt 1071* (Bakar & Kalyoncu, 2022).

The selected TV productions were examined according to the chronology of the historical period in which the series was set to make sense of the role of the warrior female characters from a historical perspective and to compare their changing roles over the years. In films, an analysis was made based on the shooting year of three popular films to understand the change in the ideological discourse of the period. The reason for this different preference in the analysis of the selected TV series and movies is the diversity of TV series compared to the limited number of movies in the sample.

In this context, referencing feminist media studies, the portrayal of warrior women in popular culture was discussed, alongside an exploration of the historical trajectory of feminism and its theoretical implications for the media. Following this, the definition of the warrior archetype and its historical usage in myths, legends, and epics were explored. Subsequently, the depiction of the warrior woman archetype in TV series and films was analyzed, highlighting the ideological variations present in these representations. Throughout this analysis, it was acknowledged that historical figures or those inspired by them served as counterparts to the American superhero trope within Turkish culture.

Cultural products cannot be considered separately from social structures and relations. Therefore, historical TV series and films are effective in (re)producing gender codes in Turkey, and this serves as an essential tool in shaping a cultural identity related to the collective unconscious. Even though the representation of women in the media is conveyed in a more feminist language today, some stereotypes continue. These stereotypes are related to traditional femininity roles. With the power of the media as a propaganda tool, these

stereotypes contribute to the consolidation of gender roles in society. This phenomenon has existed for many years, not only in Turkish productions but also in European and American media.

It is possible to examine the portrayal of female warriors in contemporary media, especially in Turkish TV series and films, from the focal point of Carl Gustav Jung's concept of archetype. As universal patterns of human behavior and symbolism, archetypes serve as a framework for understanding recurring motifs and character types that appear in storytelling across cultures and periods. The warrior woman archetype, emphasizing strength, courage, and independence, is a mighty figure in contemporary media, connecting with evolving social attitudes towards gender roles and female empowerment. However, as feminist archetype critics have noted, the representation of such archetypes in the media can be complex, and often, these archetypes reproduce dominant cultural ideologies. These critics bring a new perspective to archetypes, highlighting the importance of re-evaluating and re-imagining archetypes from a feminist perspective to challenge traditional gender norms and offer more nuanced and empowering representations of women.

Traditional forms of storytelling, such as fairy tales, myths, and legends, passed down through generations, have played an important role in guiding people in changing their understanding of the world, social roles, and gender dynamics. In the modern era, television series and movies are popular cultural tools that have replaced old fairy tales and myths, becoming the main storytellers that shape people's minds. These contemporary narratives, spread through mass media, become the cultural myths of our time.

The warrior archetype often found a place in popular culture in Turkey with various real or fictional historical figures. These figures, known for their warrior identities and extraordinary abilities, left their mark on Turkish cultural memory and were depicted as superhero-like figures in Turkish comics. In addition, in Turkish cinema during the Yeşilçam period, characters such as Malkoçoğlu, Battal Gazi, and Tarkan, played by actors such as Cüneyt Arkın and Kartal Tibet, were presented as legendary historical figures similar to superheroes. These characters, who often carry hypermasculine characteristics and serve as a means of promoting patriarchal ideologies, have shaped the perception of masculinity and heroism in Turkish popular culture.

On the other hand, especially since the 2000s, feminism has affected the representation of female warrior characters in Turkish TV series and films. It has come to the fore in these stories and the structure of the characters. However, female warrior characters in our society are often depicted as loyal to the state and willing to obey their male counterparts when necessary. Representations of these characters are usually provided with a narrative intertwined with patriarchal ideologies and nationalist sentiments.

In Turkish society, the representation of the warrior woman is often presented to the audience as defined by religious or nationalist qualities and sometimes as a mixture of both. These characters are often constructed as national heroines prioritizing maintaining family ties by being good wives, mothers, and sisters. However, the increasing influence of the globally spreading feminist movement in Turkish TV series and films has allowed these characters to be handled more deeply and differently. When classic Yeşilçam films and old TRT series, in which women were shown in a more problematic way, are compared to today's productions, it is observed that female characters are presented with a more powerful feminist tone. However, popular culture's commercial concerns and ideological attitudes sometimes damage these apparently feminist representations.

Ideological indicators are evident in all the TV series and films examined in this study, and there are often symbols and connotations introduced with commercial concerns originating from popular culture. In productions such as *Hacivat Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü?* (Akay, 2006), *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009) and *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018), various symbols and narratives are used to convey their secular ideological messages. In the series *Destan* (Bozdağ, 2021-2022), which is influenced by the nationalist and conservative inclinations of ruling power in Turkey, it is seen that even though there is a rebellion against the patriarchal system, the image of women as submissive to the state cannot be abandoned. Akkız's character in *Destan* shows fighting skills and leadership qualities in harmony with the warrior woman archetype in the Brave Girl and Dede Korkut stories in legends and fairy tales. However, like Brave Girl, Akkız's power reveals the permanence of patriarchal norms in her relationship with the male protagonist, Batuga. This situation continues with more apparent examples in other Turkish TV series and films, where ideological and commercial concerns mainly shape the warrior woman archetype.

Based on these examples, we can argue that traces of Althusser and Gramsci's theoretical frameworks are often seen in the findings of this study. Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) sheds light on how cultural products, including TV series and films, can serve as tools to spread and maintain dominant ideologies. Women are depicted in the productions of *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019), *Uyanış Büyük Selçuklu* (Konuk, 2020-2021), and *Kuruluş: Osman* (Bozdağ, 2019-present), which feature the Seljuk-Ottoman founding legend as submissive to the state, religion, and nation. Those who think otherwise are often portrayed as enemies in these series. It can be said that these representations began to resemble more and more the classical narratives in Turkish epics over the years. In the series embracing the conservative nationalist ideology, such as *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019), images such as "good wife," "sacrificing mother," and "punished bad woman" are dominant. However, alongside these depictions, there is also popular mythology of the Turkish warrior woman, depicting these characters not only as good wives and mothers but also as skilled warriors, representing courageous Muslim women from historical Turkish tribes. Productions such as *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019), *Kuruluş: Osman* (Bozdağ, 2019-present), and *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu* (Konuk, 2020-2021) are popular cultural products that combine Islamic and nationalist ideologies. In this context, these series can be interpreted as confirming the perspective of the Frankfurt School, which argues that the culture industry often adopts and commodifies feminist themes to maintain existing power structures. So, the warrior woman archetype, imbued with religious and nationalist characteristics, can be seen as a product of the culture industry, packaged and presented to appeal to a wide audience while subtly reinforcing dominant ideologies.

On the other hand, while series such as *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014) and *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem* (Savcı, 2015-2017) feature warrior female characters who initially stand out with their individual morality and libertarian nature rather than national or religious qualities, the continuity of these characteristics cannot be ensured. Due to concerns about ratings, these characters often transition from being independent individuals to relying on male partners or spouses and starting heterosexual families to maintain their power. This evolution not only creates inconsistency in the development of the characters but also diminishes the feminist elements that were initially present in the characters. This is in line with the Frankfurt School's critique of the culture industry, as the empowering aspects of female characters are often watered down to suit popular culture norms and commercial

interests. Within the scope of this study, the seemingly empowering warrior woman archetype can be seen as a product of the culture industry, packaged and presented to appeal to the masses while reinforcing dominant ideologies, as seen in the characters Aybüke Hatun and Mihrünisa Hatun in the TV series *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014).

In productions such as *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009) and *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018), which are about the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the War of Independence, the warrior woman archetype is depicted as more independent and stronger. Characters such as Vahide in *Elveda Rumeli* and Kara Fatma and Azize in *Vatanım Sensin* actively participate in the war and resist patriarchal norms. However, these productions can be criticized for depicting women as overly masculine, potentially limiting the diversity of women's experiences. Despite this, these series offer more successful feminist representations by challenging traditional gender roles and showcasing women's agency and power. The portrayal of strong and independent female characters in these series reflects Fiske's optimistic view that popular culture is a space for diverse representation and audience agency. The Birmingham School's emphasis on audiences' active involvement in decoding media messages also applies here, as audiences can interact with these characters and their actions in ways that challenge traditional gender norms.

Ezel Akay's (2006) film *Hacivat Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü?* offers a critical perspective on the Ottoman Empire's 14th-century political and social atmosphere, particularly bureaucratic corruption. In this context, Ayşe Hatun stands out as an example of the warrior woman archetype and a figure who challenges the patriarchal order and corrupt bureaucracy. Ayşe Hatun defies traditional gender roles assigned to women of the time, using her power and authority to seek justice. She actively resists the dominant ideology and power structures. The treatment of this character is important as it reminds us that popular culture can be used as an area of resistance.

The portrayal of women as background characters with less depth than male characters in the films *Fetih 1453* (Aksoy, 2012) and *Malazgirt 1071* (Bakar & Kalyoncu, 2022) limits the feminist perspective of these films. This coincides with the Frankfurt School's criticism of the culture industry because female characters are often marginalized and objectified in mainstream media. The Frankfurt School's critique of the culture industry emphasizes the commodification and standardization of cultural products and highlights how this can potentially lead to a passive and uncritical audience. *Fetih 1453*, with its flashy production

and appealing narrative, can also be evaluated in this context. In particular, some scenes in the film evoke the nationalist elements seen in Cüneyt Arkın's old Yeşilçam films and portray the image of "treacherous Byzantium," which suggests that this film reproduces a popular narrative about the rise of the Ottoman Empire from a highly conventional sense.

In this study, the analysis of warrior female characters in Turkish popular culture draws heavily on Carl Gustav Jung's concept of archetype. Jung's "animus" and "anima" archetypes, in particular, provide a framework for understanding female characters' complex structures and transformations. These archetypal concepts offer valuable information about how women can integrate their masculine and feminine aspects or how dominant ideologies may guide them. Additionally, the work of feminist archetypal critics such as Annis Pratt, Estella Lauter, and Carol Pearson has brought a new perspective to our understanding of women's experiences and empowerment by re-evaluating these archetypal concepts from a feminist perspective. In particular, Pearson's (1989) reinterpretation of the "hero's journey" concept through the lens of women's experiences has been a valuable tool in understanding the personal development and social roles of the female characters examined in this study.

In this context, it is possible to infer that the initial depictions of characters such as Aybüke Hatun, Mihrünisa Hatun, Farya, Selcan Hatun, Elçin Hatun, and Akkız are related to Jung's concept of the animus archetype, which represents the masculine aspects of the female psyche. Their courage, assertiveness, and willingness to challenge social norms reflect the animus' association with power, independence, and action. However, as the series progresses, the warrior spirit of some of these characters is suppressed, and they become increasingly defined by their relationships with men and their roles as wives and mothers. This change can be interpreted as a regression to the anima archetype, which Jung associated with the feminine principle of relationship and emotional connection.

Admittedly, characters such as Vahide, Kara Fatma, Azize, and Ayşe Hatun continue to exhibit the characteristics of the animus archetype throughout the series. They are depicted as brave, independent, and combative, challenging gender norms and resisting patriarchal structures. This shows they embody the animus archetype qualities of strength, determination, and action orientation. However, feminist criticism can be made of these characters, as with almost every character examined in this study, in terms of creating a narrative with the image of women depicted in accordance with masculine norms. While the masculine behavior of these characters might be said to challenge traditional female

stereotypes, it can also distort the diversity and complexity of womanhood. This can reinforce the perception that women must conform to male norms to be strong and pressure women to fit into a single mold.

When we look at the chronological progress of the warrior woman archetype in the TV series *Destan* (Bozdağ, 2021-2022), set in the 8th century, Akkız meets the audience as a fierce and independent warrior who represents the pre-Islamic Turkish ideal where women fight alongside men. It gives us this message about the period in that it contains a series of characters inspired by the warrior woman archetype in Pre-Turkish-Islamic epics and legends. The series titled *Uyanış: Büyük Selçuklu* (Konuk, 2020-2021) brings a more refined and strategic approach by exemplifying the strong leadership and political influence in the Seljuk Empire by Elçin Hatun and Zübeyde Hatun in the 11th century. These productions, which convey that women also have a say in the post-Islamic state order, leave us alone with an image of the woman constructed in accordance with the neo-Ottoman myth. This is also the case in the TV series *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (Bozdağ, 2014-2019) and *Kuruluş: Osman* (Bozdağ, 2019-present), which tell about the 13th century.

In contrast, during the late Ottoman and Turkish War of Independence periods, women were defending their freedom by defying the system and external forces, such as Vahide, Kara Fatma, and Azize, as depicted in the TV series *Elveda Rumeli* (Akar & Karlıdağ, 2007-2009) and *Vatanım Sensin* (Güvenatam, 2016-2018). These characters actively participate in the struggle for freedom and national identity. This progress opens a historical window to the fact that there was a trend towards more independent and assertive female characters while significant social and political changes were taking place in Turkish society, and it shows how the warrior archetype changes from period to period. However, the ideological subtexts in the series should not be forgotten.

Additionally, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Savcı, 2011-2014) and *Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem* (Savcı, 2015-2017), which depict the 16th and 17th centuries respectively, the warrior woman archetype is initially introduced through characters like Aybüke Hatun, Mihrünisa Hatun, Gölge Hatun, and Farya. These characters challenge traditional gender roles with their power and independence, showcasing women's agency in the rise of the Ottoman Empire and introducing us to semi-epic characters. However, as mentioned earlier, there are limitations to the development of these characters. The series tells us about the Ottoman Empire, where women had a significant influence at that time but were ultimately bound by

patriarchal norms. Although the warrior female characters in the series are limited due to the historically realistic tone of the series, it should not be forgotten that commercial and ideological influences also affect the story.

When we examine the historical change in the gender ideology of the films analyzed, we see that *Hacivat Karagöz Neden Öldürüldü?* (Akay, 2006) touched upon the corruption of those in power in the Ottoman Empire, featuring a strong female character who challenged traditional gender roles, such as Ayşe Hatun. However, rising nationalist and conservative sentiments affected the portrayal of women in later films. While big-budget productions such as *Fetih 1453* (Aksoy, 2012) exhibited nationalist elements similar to Cüneyt Arkın's old Yeşilçam films, they limited female characters within the framework of traditional expectations. This trend continued in productions such as *Malazgirt 1071* (Bakar & Kalyoncu, 2022), where female characters remained more in the background. Turkey's transition from the parliamentary system to the presidential system in the mid-2000s and the conservative majority in the parliament strengthened the neo-Ottomanist ideology, as reflected in many popular television series and many other films, such as *Türkler Geliyor: Adaletin Kılıcı* (Aydın, 2020) and *Deliler Fatih'in Fermanı* (Kaya, 2018), not analyzed in this thesis. This situation opens a window into the relationship between cinema and ideological transformation.

In this thesis, it has been observed that similarities and differences emerge between the warrior woman archetype of popular culture in America and Turkey. While the warrior woman archetype in American popular culture creates an ideological myth with superheroines, in Turkish popular culture, an ideological myth is constructed with the help of fictional warrior female characters inspired by epics and legends. Characters in American popular culture, such as Wonder Woman, represent individual rebellion against traditional gender roles but are influenced by commercial concerns that may perpetuate certain stereotypes of women, such as lagging behind men.

A similar situation exists with the warrior woman archetype in Turkish popular culture. In TV series and movies with a more secular yet melodramatic appeal, warrior female characters eventually become characters that fall behind their men. Although they are praised for their courage and heroism in TV series and films with a more conservative ideology, they are usually depicted as brave protectors of the family and the state, adhering to collectivist values and traditional gender roles. They can also be depicted as dependent on

men, reinforcing patriarchal norms. Despite these cultural differences, both depictions provide media analysts with evidence of how women can be commodified by a predominantly male-dominated cultural industry, even when they are portrayed as mighty warriors.

To summarize the discussion about the representation of the warrior woman archetype in Turkish TV series and films, even though the female characters in the examined productions are depicted as brave and daring warriors who display strong leadership, they often present these roles as trapped within traditional femininity. These women, who stand out with their swords, arrows, and brave lines, sometimes under the influence of melodrama, also appear as mothers and wives who make sacrifices for the sake of love and adhere to the traditional family structure. Especially in productions dominated by patriarchal and nationalist ideologies, the power of female characters is limited by their loyalty and obedience to male characters. Although this means that women's independent leadership potential has not been fully revealed, it can still be interpreted as a significant development in women's empowerment as these productions can challenge patriarchal values and question women's societal roles via the strength and courage of their female characters.

In general, the findings of this study show that warrior female characters are represented in various ways in the Turkish popular TV series and films examined. Some characters adopt traditional male roles in battle, while others fight more independently and freely. More significantly, the representation of the warrior woman archetype provides important clues about the perception of women in Turkish society. The fact that these characters go beyond traditional gender roles and take on more active and influential roles shows that the perception of women in Turkish society has changed.

Finally, the representation of warrior women in Turkish television series and films reflects the complexity of gender dynamics in Turkish society. While such character representations make the concepts of women's empowerment and power evident, they are often conveyed to the audience through a narrative intertwined with patriarchal ideologies and nationalist feelings. Even though the depiction of female warrior characters has become more solid under the influence of the rising popularity of feminism, women in these representations often adopt the roles of obedient wives and good mothers.

As a popular mythology, the warrior woman archetype has gained a narrative that transcends time and cultures by inspiring various stories. In both the Western and Turkish contexts, while these archetypal figures offer empowering narratives that challenge traditional gender roles, they can also be co-opted by commercial and ideological interests, thus perpetuating certain stereotypes. Based on this inference, it is possible to say that the representation of the warrior woman archetype in Turkish popular culture media offers a critical perspective on how gender perceptions and the gender ideology are changing in Turkish society.



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