
”Nice Guys Died in Vain?” - The Representation of Revolutionaries in Turkish Series on Recent Political History

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Résumé

Biography

Bariş Yıldırım is doing his PhD studies in two departments of Ankara University: Theatre and Political Science. His master's thesis was on Marxist aesthetics in METU Dpt. Of Philosophy. Yıldırım publishes theatre, movie and book reviews in various journals, newspapers and web portals as well as articles on politics, arts and aesthetics. His PhD theses are respectively on ”Dialectics of Dramatic Structure” and ”Mahir Çayan and Colonial Revolutionism.”

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Abstract

Although Turkish cinema and history education rarely treats it, recent history has become a popular theme in Turkish TV series. Turkey experienced decennial waves of social turmoil in the 1960s, 1970's and 1980s, milestones of which had been marked by coup d'états in 1960, 1972 and 1980. *Hatırla Sevgili*, *Çemberimde Gül Oya*, *Bu Kalp Seni Unutur mu?* and *’Oyle Bir Geçer Zaman Ki* are the most well-known series treating this social turmoil. Our paper will focus especially on the representation of Marxist revolutionaries, most of whom were killed, in these and other productions. We can say that, this representation holds that these were very nice and loveable young people, but their untimely deaths were mostly due to an unrealistic ideal. The tones of the productions were dedicated to raising a humane sentiment and pity towards them. This representation of history, despite displaying a positive attitude towards revolutionaries, coincided partly with the official discourse of coup d'état regimes, which insisted that these people died in vain and in futile conflicts between ”brothers.” In

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order to emphasize this "sibling rivalry" , these series, now as well as then, have depicted ultra-nationalistic militants (known as "civil fascists" in Turkey's democratic circles) with a sympathetic eye. We can say that, this led these producers to an unfortunate overlap with coup generals' discourse, however clearly this was not their intention. In this paper, we will discuss the representation of recent history in these productions with their positive (a revived interest in that era which for example resulted in reprinting leftist literature of the time) and negative (equalizing civil fascist attacks and the revolutionary-democratic defense movement; perception of "nice guys' death in vain") outcomes. An indication of abstract humanism displayed by these series treated Deniz Gezmiş and his two comrades, who were executed, by handling them very heavily while undertreating other important figures, such as Mahir Çayan and İbrahim Kaypakkaya, who pursued a much pronounced armed struggle against coup d'état regimes.