
Follow Us! Turkish TV Drama (Re)conquering the Arab World ?

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Résumé

Biography

Associate Professor (MCF-HDR) at the University of Giresun, Sociology Department in Turkey, Şirin Dilli teaches Socio-anthropology of media cultures (MA, 1st year, first semester); Research methods in humanities and social sciences (1st year, undergraduate, second semester); Cyber-anthropology (MA, 1st year, first semester) and Sociology of publics, audiences and reception (2nd year, undergraduate, first semester). Her research themes include media, culture and digital practices; Internet communication; fragmented public spheres; fan cultures; sociology of reception and publics.

Abstract

Beyond the structural aspects that define fiction, one of the most universal features of it, if one takes the notion of the ‘receiver role’ as proposed in Jauss’s literature (1978), is the transmission of social norms and identification patterns thanks to the exemplary character of the work. This assumption makes sense, in a deep and paradoxical way, when discussing the case of fiction in the Arab World.

Fiction, and more precisely *telenovela* as a genre, is not only a way through which television introduced in the imaginary and in the social discussion of the Arab World dozens of Turkish TV drama stories, characters, aesthetic and common sense values that are now part of popular culture, but also opened in a persistent and critical way, a public debate about love, the life of couples, sexism, social inequality, domestic violence and lately, through the serial *Muhtesem Yüzyil* (Magnificent Century), the situation of women in the harem, during the Ottoman Empire.

Based on 237 interviews conducted in Lebanon (one country from Mashriq), Saudi Arabia (one Gulf country) and in Tunisia (one country of the Maghreb) from November 2012 till November 2013, this article explores the shifts in audience participation when stories migrate from history books, film, and television to eventually enter the domain of the everyday life. It particularly focuses on how fictional events associated with these characters rely on the blurring of the boundaries between fiction and reality. Discussing events associated with the popular television drama *Muhtesem Yüzyil* (Magnificent Century), it looks into how everyday life –and the Internet and social media communication systems that are integral to its operations– become a playground that weaves the participant into storytelling worlds.

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