
Working through the Past in Turkish Melodrama: The Cases of Kuzey G'üney and Merhamet

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Résumé

Biography

Feyza Akinerdem graduated from Boğaziçi University, department of Sociology in 2002. She received her MA degree in Sociology in 2006, with a thesis entitled "Between Desire and Truth: The Narrative Resolution of Modern-Traditional Dichotomy in Asmalı Konak". Currently, she is a PhD candidate in Cultural Policy and Management, at City University London.

Abstract

In this paper, I will explore how complex narrative form which is a form recently imported from Western television serials and adapted to locally produced melodramas in Turkey contributed to new articulations of postcolonial imaginary in Turkey by providing examples from popular melodramas, *Kuzey G'üney* and *Merhamet*.

This paper is based on my studies on Turkish melodrama, as a genre dominating prime time television broadcast in Turkey over the last two decades (Akinerdem, 2005; 2012). In my studies, I observed that the melodrama genre, which is based on the struggle between good and evil, and the ultimate triumph of good, has an intricate relationship with post-colonial imaginary, where everyday conflicts historically correspond to the conflict between becoming modern and preserving national values at the same time (see Abu-Lughod, 2005; Akinerdem, 2005; Mankekar, 1999).

Taking this argument as a point of departure, in this paper I will look at how the complex narrative form which is extensively used after 90s in television serials globally (Mittel, 2006) is adapted to Turkish melodrama (Akinerdem, 2012), by providing examples from two popular television serials. Among a wide range of complex narrative techniques, I specifically refer to non-linear temporality in storytelling. Events taking place in different times are mixed so as to work through the past and future as a source for understanding or complicating the diegetic present of the narrative.

I will argue that complex narrative form enabled the melodrama to present its conflicts in new and complicated ways. The multiple temporalities introduce new ambiguities in the

*Intervenant

social norms interrogated in melodrama. For example in the case of *Kuzey G'üney* (Kanal D, 2011-2013), we see that family norms are interrogated throughout the narrative, as the Tekinoğlu family's history gradually unfolds in relation to the events taking place in the present in a complex form of storytelling. This is the case for *Merhamet* (Kanal D, 2012, cont.) as well, where the past is always recalled in order to complicate the possible resolutions of the conflicts taking place in the present.