

A CASE STUDY OF AMERICAN-TO-TURKISH TRANSNATIONAL
TELEVISION ADAPTATIONS

A Master's Thesis

By

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Ankara

September 2015

To my family...

A CASE STUDY OF AMERICAN-TO-TURKISH TRANSNATIONAL
TELEVISION ADAPTATIONS

Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Dođramacı Bilkent University

by

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September 2015

I certify that I have read this thesis and in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Media and Visual Studies.

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ABSTRACT

A CASE STUDY OF AMERICAN-TO-TURKISH TRANSNATIONAL TELEVISION ADAPTATIONS

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M.A., in Media and Visual Studies

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Colleen Bevin Kennedy-Karpat

September, 2015

This thesis provides a close reading of Turkish television series *Doktorlar* (2006-2011) and *Medcezir* (2013-2015) as transnational adaptations of American dramas *Grey's Anatomy* (2005) and *The O.C.* (2003-2007). The research deals closely with adaptation studies, its theory and its appeal for audiences and producers. Additionally, aspects of globalization of the television market and format trade as catalysts in making television content transnational and transcultural are discussed in detail. Later, the relationship of Turkish television series is demonstrated showing Turkey's presence in the format market and the global television content trade. Conclusively, *Doktorlar* and *Grey's Anatomy*, and *Medcezir* and *The O.C.* are comparatively analyzed as transnational/transcultural television adaptations from United States to Turkey. It is concluded that both of these Turkish series derive from their source texts immensely, yet the added local flavor is emblematic of the tendencies and practices of Turkish television as themes of motherhood and morality are sustained while refraining from excessive portrayal of sexuality and avoiding themes of homosexuality altogether. Meanwhile, some recurring themes,

industrial tendencies, and the emerging innovative approaches in Turkish television are also mentioned.

Keywords: Adaptation, Transnational, Format Trade, Television Series, Media, Turkey, American Studies

ÖZET

ABD'DEN TÜRKİYE'YE UYARLANAN ULUSAŞIRI TELEVİZYON DİZİLERİ ÖRNEĞİ

Erdoğan, Seza Esin

Yüksek Lisans, Medya ve Görsel Çalışmalar

Danışman: Yar. Doç. Dr. Colleen Bevin Kennedy-Karpat

Eylül, 2015.

Bu tez, Amerika'dan Türkiye'ye uyarlanmış olan *Doktorlar* (2006-2011) ve *Medcezir* (2013-2015) dizilerinin, *Grey's Anatomy* (2005) ve *The O.C.* (2003-2007) orijinal kaynaklarına kıyaslama esasıyla yapılmış bir yakın inceleme araştırmasıdır. Araştırmada uyarlama çalışmaları, kuramı ve, seyirciler ile sektör tarafından tercih edilme sebeplerine kısaca değinilmiştir. Ayrıca, küreselleşme ile birlikte sınırları belirsizleşmeye başlayan televizyon pazarı ve küreselleşme sayesinde gelişen format pazarı ilişkisinden, ve bu kavramların Türkiye televizyon sektöründeki payından bahsedilmiştir. Bu bilgiler ışığında incelenen *Doktorlar* ve *Medcezir* örneklerinin, ulusaşırı uyarlama örneklerine dönüşümü süreci, bu dizilerin kaynak metinleri ile kendi yerel kültürel ve endüstriyel sistemleri arasında buldukları denge, bazı sektörel eğilimler ve bu örneklerle muhafaza edilmisine dikkat edilmiş temalar, sektöre kazandırılmış bazı yenilikler ve gelişmeler ortaya konmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uyarlama, Televizyon, Amerikan Çalışmaları, Küreselleşme,
Dizi Çalışmaları

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Television in Turkey experienced a drastic evolution within the last decade. The range of content provided to the audience expanded with locally produced originals, imported foreign shows or their adaptations with the same format. Turkey even became one of the biggest exporters of television content in the Middle East. However, one thing that has not changed is the primetime addiction of drama series. Primetime television series, mainly dramas, are the backbone of Turkish television. At the beginning of every season, which is approximately the first week of September every year, an average of seventy primetime series air and they are the most preferred programs, with nearly sixty three percent audience share. (The Wall Street Journal: Real Time Türkiye, August 26, 2014)

The content of these primetime series varies, and a considerable amount of these series are adaptations; either from a classic Turkish novel, a remake of a classic Turkish cinema film or adaptations of foreign projects. (Yıldırım, July 1, 2015) Among these successful adaptations, *Doktorlar* and *Medcezir* stand out as two of the highest rated series. These two examples are also adapted from television dramas that were first produced and aired in the United States.

Doktorlar is an adaptation of American Broadcasting Company's *Grey's Anatomy* (2005-), which centers on the lives of surgical interns and their superiors at a

hospital in Seattle, Washington. Now in its twelfth season, *Grey's Anatomy* is one of the most popular medical dramas on American television. Adapted in 2006, *Doktorlar* started airing on Turkish television on Show TV, a national channel, and to this date, it remains one of the most watched series with the most reruns to date. *Doktorlar* also centers on the lives of surgical interns in an İstanbul hospital.

Medcezir is an adaptation of Josh Schwartz's *The O.C.* (2003- 2007), centering on the lives of Newport Beach residents of Orange County, California. A decade later, Ay Yapım adapted *The O.C.* on Star TV as *Medcezir* (2013- 2015). The series tell the story of Altinkoy community, a fictional town in İstanbul, and how their lives change with the arrival of an outsider. Both with its first and its last episode, *Medcezir* became a ratings hit and was praised for its production quality and its plot. (Ranini.tv, June 12, 2015)

What *Doktorlar* and *Medcezir* have in common is that both of these projects that are adapted from the United States to Turkish television display certain characteristic approaches of cultural adjustments and industrial practices in Turkey. The way these projects handle their source texts and the process of adaptation as a transcultural and transnational adaptation comprise of the focus of this thesis.

The main motivation behind this thesis research is to analyze in detail these two drama series and to present a case study of how adaptation process is realized in light of present cultural and industrial approaches. In doing so, this study aims to provide an understanding, specifically, of how these two American examples transform into Turkish television, bearing in mind the market-related, industrial and cultural differences between two countries. Additionally, one other aim of this thesis is to look closely at the examples as transnational/transcultural adaptations.

By looking at *Doktorlar* and *Medcezir* in detail, we can get a glimpse of the adaptation process of American content to Turkish primetime television is carried out, of the adjustments and the omissions made.

One thing I want to make clear is the reason why this study refers to its case studies as adaptations and not remakes. Remakes are generally seen as a production tactic that saves time and effort spent on each production. (Gürata, 2006: 243) Therefore remakes recreate their original texts either with the motivations of paying tribute or saving time and money by recycling an old production. There is no clear information regarding these Turkish series about these issues that can refer them as being remakes. To a certain scale, they do recreate their original texts and their prior success can play a role in their selection to be adapted; however their creative process involves more than recycling a previous idea. Firstly, the chances of Turkish viewers' familiarity with the original texts depend heavily on their access to private networks, such as Digiturk. Therefore it would be misleading to suggest that a content that they are not generally familiar with can be recycled because it has not circulated before for this particular audience. Similarly, to allege that it is an homage to their source texts would also be misleading. Consequently, even though they do share common characteristics with remakes such as adjustments that correspond with conventional moral codes and cultural values and they involve a cross-cultural interpretation process (Gürata, 2006: 244), because of the lack of motivations mentioned above, calling the case studies present in this research adaptations instead of remakes was preferred for its more encompassing stance.

The methodology of this thesis is a basic close reading as well as a research of related dynamics, such as adaptations, globalization of television market, format

trade, and a brief history of these within the Turkish television context, by providing literary review. *Doktorlar* and *Medcezir* were chosen for their audience and market success on Turkish television; as well as because *Grey's Anatomy* stands as one of the most successful recent U.S. medical dramas, and *The O.C.* is a canonical teen drama of 21st-century American television. Differences of formal tendencies, such as episode runtimes, use of music, main themes and cultural signifiers such as portrayal of sexuality, gender representations, as well as a focus of specific characters were used as criteria to analyze these series as American-to-Turkish transnational adaptations.

The second chapter offers a literary review of adaptations. The differing views on what adaptations are, their study in academia, a brief insight into adaptation theory and the reason behind adaptations' appeal for both the audience and the market is mentioned. With its content, this chapter aims to lay the grounds for a viewpoint on adaptations: adaptations are a creative engagement process which can metamorphose both their subject matter and their audiences. They are not mere copies and they accommodate within themselves artistic, creative, cultural and even political relationships with their source texts and their own. Adaptation encourages variation, diversity and room for change. These findings will help answer part of the question as to why this thesis looks closely into its case studies.

While the lure of adaptations help understand one of the motivations behind this research, the third chapter deals closely with the remaining components of the case study at hand. The globalization of the television market, the origins and the boom of format trade, and how the debates of cultural homogenization emerged with these concepts are discussed. The central arguments of this chapter is how these debates

shifted into an understanding of transculturality and hybridity and how *Doktorlar* and *Medcezir* fall into the equation as cultural hybrids between the American and Turkish television markets and cultures. Later, a very brief history of the origins of television is presented, along with a summary of the first interactions between the United States and Turkish television. By way of detailing the origins of these concepts within the Turkish television content, the ground for culture-specific case study analysis is also laid out.

The fourth and final chapter inspects *Doktorlar* and *Medcezir* as the case studies of this thesis. A detailed analysis of industrial practices in Turkish television, such as episodial runtimes, music selection and cultural adjustments made in the portrayal of characters, events and themes are included in the analysis. In this manner, the goal is to identify *Doktorlar* and *Medcezir* as transcultural, specifically American-to-Turkish, adaptations which are hybrids between its source text/ culture and its Turkish local color. Additionally, with reference to Albert Moran's metaphor in *Copycat TV: Globalisation, Program Formats, and Cultural Identity* (1998), the parallelism and the differentiations between these series' American crust and their Turkish filling are demonstrated.

Lastly, the ultimate purpose of this thesis is to put *Doktorlar* and *Medcezir* on the map within contemporary television studies as a case study of adaptation, cultural studies, and television studies. This thesis aspires to contribute to the growing fields of American-Turkish cultural studies and media studies in Turkey focusing on Turkish television. The research process of this thesis also revealed to me that future television studies in Turkey have great potential, for many aspects remain

unexplained and overlooked. Hopefully, with this case study, this potential will be brought to light for further interest.

CHAPTER 2

ADAPTATIONS: A REVIEW

Adaptation is one of the most widely used approaches in media, ranging from performance arts to music, from literature to cinema. The resurrection of a song that was popular fifty years ago with a new version by a new artist; a novel or a comic book turning into a motion picture; a film turning into a television series; a theater play choreographed into a dance sequence; or even the recreation of a famous work in the same medium, elevated through certain modern dynamics such as technology, can sum up some of the features of the adaptation form.

The capabilities that adaptation endows to the process of creation have made it a popular choice in modern media. Adaptation has paved the way for media products to travel and settle in different forms, different geographies and cultures. It has changed the dynamics of many industries ranging from, but not limited to, cinema to literature, television to theatre. Adaptations are both a dynamic form of production and a dynamic subject of study for the academy; albeit still not entirely schematized or thoroughly depicted; raising new points of question and research every day, with its progression and renowned nature.

Nevertheless, adaptation studies have experienced multifaceted and continuous problems. Not only have scholars worked to explain adaptation studies as an academic approach, but they have also had to explain why its theory is difficult and

slow to progress. Additionally, they would have to justify adaptations as a worthy form, struggling with the stigma that labels adaptations as abominations, copies or derivations (Naremore, 2000; Hutcheon, 2006). Many adaptation studies have consequently dealt with what adaptations are not, as much as they dealt with what they are, such as *A Theory of Adaptations* by Linda Hutcheon, *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions* (2013) edited by Bruhn, Gjelsvik and Hanssen, and many more.

2.1 What is Adaptation?

Adaptations as a form in media became a popular topic of study in the second half of the twentieth century. Despite their popularity, however, adaptations in film studies were considered to be an “abomination” by many critics in the first half of the twentieth century (Cartmell, Corrigan & Whelehan, 2008: 1). Consequently, besides working on defining adaptations, scholars also focused on breaking free from the narrow, limiting definitions of the genre that have accumulated so far.

Even though the extent of adaptations goes far beyond the literature-to-film territory nowadays, the study of it started with the analyses of novel to film adaptations. Since adaptations were initially described as reworkings of literature into cinema, definitions tended to develop around this two-way diagram of literature and film. George Bluestone had written in *Novels into Film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction into Cinema* that films “do not debase their literary sources” but they “metamorphose them” into a medium that has “its own formal and narratological possibilities”. (Naremore, 2000: 6)

Still, adaptations, with time and in the hand of the scholars who studied to define it, started to break free from the perspectives that limited them to just literature-to-film reworkings; with the given that they depended on a pre-existing text for their own existence. Dudley Andrew wrote in 1984 that adaptation was the “appropriation of a meaning from a prior text.” (Andrew, 2000: 29) For Julie Sanders, adaptation “signals a relationship with an informing source text or original.” too (Sanders, 2006: 26). Both Andrew and Sanders, then, move on from the presumption that only literature is considered as source texts for adaptations, marking an important shift in adaptation studies.

James Naremore noted that “20 percent of the movies produced in 1997 had books as their sources. (...) Another 20 percent were derived from plays, sequels, remakes, television shows, and magazine or newspaper articles.” (2000: 10) With the proliferation of other media forms, such as television, published media, and cinema becoming more affordable by general public, the range and appeal of adaptations also started to expand. As Brian McFarlane noted, adaptations became a point of “convergence” for different art forms, making it possible for several different audiences to enjoy them. (1996: 10) Slowly moving away from 20th century perceptions and into the 21st century of adaptations, the approach now corresponds with as many art forms as one can think of; from literature to cinema, from cinema to television, from literature to stage performances of all kinds.

With growing popularity, however, came the growing scorn and negative attributes. Some of these views evaluated adaptations as unoriginal, unworthy copies, mere translations or imitations of their predecessors (Hutcheon, 2006). Consequently,

scholars who studied to define the parameters of adaptations, also felt the necessity to pay attention to unravel and dissolve these attributions.

Since its beginnings till today, adaptation studies struggled to change the stigma on adaptations: the stigma that labeled them as copies, imitations or derivations. Thomas Leitch wrote that “Ever since its inception half a century ago, adaptation studies has been haunted by concepts and premises it has repudiated in principle but continued to rely on in practice.” (2008: 1)

These “concepts and premises” Leitch wrote about were the dependency on literature, the limitation of literature-to-cinema as adaptations, and therefore the issues of originality and fidelity (2008). On a similar note, Linda Hutcheon had also stated:

In beginning to explore this wide range of theoretical issues surrounding adaptation, I have been struck by the unproductive nature of both that negative evaluation of popular cultural adaptations as derivative and secondary and that morally loaded rhetoric of fidelity and infidelity used in comparing adaptations to ‘source’ texts. (2006: 31)

Consequently, many of the concerns that adaptation studies dealt with touched upon these issues. Their originality, their fidelity to their precursor text, their artistic and creative role were discussed and therefore the corpus of adaptation studies mainly consisted of researches that aimed to shed light on these issues.

Linda Hutcheon is one of the scholars who defines adaptations by describing and eliminating what they in fact are not. In her *A Theory of Adaptation*, Hutcheon identifies adaptations as works of “repetition without replication.” (2006: 7) The text that is being adopted isn’t something “to be reproduced”; it is rather a text to be “interpreted and recreated, often in a new medium”. (2006: 84) She wrote that

“Adaptations remind us there’s no autonomous text (...) It is both an interpretive and creative act. It is storytelling as rereading and rereading.” (2006: 111)

For Hutcheon, adapting is a process that involves a creative engagement with the original text. It is not simply a repeating act or a mere reproduction. Adaptation requires an intelligent and productive relation because it is a “process of making the adapted material one’s own.” (2006: 20) Therefore she hints at a new product that has its basis in an older, preceding work; yet the adapted work is not a simple retelling of it; but an inventive new product which benefits from its source through a certain subjective, selected style. In short, adapting a text is not “slavish copying.” (2006: 20) Hutcheon writes in her foreword:

One lesson is that to be second is not to be secondary or inferior; likewise, to be first is not to be originary or authoritative. Yet, as we shall see, disparaging opinions on adaptation as a secondary mode—belated and therefore negative—persist. (2006: 13)

Against these “disparaging” opinions that label adaptations as “secondary or inferior” and “derivative” because they stem from or get their inspiration from a prior text, Hutcheon writes that “multiple versions of a story in fact exists laterally, not vertically: adaptations are derived from, ripped off from, but are not derivative or second-rate.” (2006: 169)

To sum up, adaptations are not “secondary” or “derivative”, simple translations of their ancestors. They are not “inferior” or “copy” versions of their originals. (Hutcheon, 2006) Linda Hutcheon finalizes her description of adaptations as “an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works, a creative and an interpretive act of appropriation or salvaging, an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work. (...) Therefore, an adaptation is a derivation that

is not derivative--- a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing.” (2006: 8)

Having dealt with the negative connotations about adaptations, scholars have also paid attention to broadening the extent of adaptations. Literary works, plays, films, performance arts and other media reworking each other have been beneficial in enlarging the horizon and theorization of the study of adaptations. Rather than defining them as reworkings of a prior text, scholars made an effort to establish that adaptations also produce their own process of engagement with their subject matter. This process can include artistic, creative, cultural, political and/or many other aspects.

It wasn't until the late 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century that adaptation studies gained momentum; as it started to move on from the disputes mentioned above, though not abandoning them entirely, and continued with explaining what made adaptations this current, popular and appealing to audiences. In the study of adaptations, their reception, their audiences and their creative process became worthy of consideration as much as their content. For all these reasons, scholars agreed that a change in the way that adaptations are studied was necessary. James Naremore thought that, even though cinema made good use of “twenty centuries of literary culture”; it was “time for adaptation studies to take a sociological turn” and, in a sense, grow out of the already existing criteria. (2000: 35) Naremore also wrote that “what we need (instead) is a broader definition of adaptation and a sociology that takes into account the commercial apparatus, the audience and the academic culture industry” (2000: 10). Over time, newer definitions of adaptation studies emerged with the changing standpoints. Imelda Whelehan wrote:

Adaptation studies is now less about which is the better, the original or the adaptation, and more about engaging with the process and understanding the motivations for an adaptation – whether it be explanation, homage, revision, critique, pure exploitation or something else. Adaptation studies facilitates an understanding of social change, narrative form, cultural difference, commercial imperatives, power relationships and so much more. (2012)

The challenge that the theorization of adaptation posed to the process resulted in the amendment of scholars' perspectives and paved the way for a larger and a more versatile, multi-directional evaluation of adaptations in media. With these new standpoints, James Naremore wrote, adaptation studies would finally move on from the constraints that existed in trying to theorize them. He formulated that:

The study of adaptations needs to be joined with the study of recycling, remaking, and every other form of retelling in the age of mechanical production and electronic communication. By this means, adaptation will become part of a general theory of repetition, and adaptation study will move from the margins to the center of contemporary media studies (2000: 15).

The differing opinions that had existed until this newer idea of adaptations had only been good for slowing down the understanding and evaluations of adaptations. Preexisting views had tended to dismiss or condemn each other and thus provided no progress. Yet with the new, open-minded angles into the subject; adaptation studies could now be utilized better into sociology as well as communication studies. The study of adaptations, the theorization process and their reception evolved in a manner that complimented their abundance. Following methods and perspectives in adaptation studies had to keep up with adaptations' pace for any constructive improvements to be made in the field.

2.2 Adaptation Theory and Its Problems

In *Being Adaptation: Resistance to Theory*, Brett Westbrook wrote:

A grand unifying theory for adaptation studies is not, in fact, possible; the sheer volume of everything involved in a discussion of film adaptation is virtually immeasurable, which means that no single theory has the capacity to encompass every aspect of an adaptation (2010: 42).

The prevalence of adaptations, especially in film, has resulted in such evaluations as Westbrook's. Despite its history of several decades, adaptation theory has made a rather slow progress and the reasons behind it are thought to be numerous. The abundance of adaptations, their reception by both scholars and audiences, their diverse connection with several art forms are some of these reasons. As a result, scholars who made an effort to theorize adaptations also worked to illuminate this slow progress of theorization.

In an interview with Alfred Hitchcock; François Truffaut said that “theoretically, a masterpiece is something that has already found its perfection of form, its definitive form.” (Naremore, 2000: 7) Perhaps, one of the reasons behind why adaptations were deemed an inferior form is because many of them derived highly from these “masterpieces” that had achieved their ideal form; therefore any repetitions or new takes on them were unwelcomed, unsatisfying and even displeasing.

Naremore wrote “all the ‘imitative’ types of film are in danger of being assigned a low status, or even of eliciting critical opprobrium, because they are copies of ‘culturally treasured’ originals.” (2000: 13) Moreover, both Linda Hutcheon and Dudley Andrew underline that it is a natural behavior for humans, therefore audiences, to look for similar patterns and seek “equivalences.” (Andrew, 2000: 33;

Hutcheon, 2000: 10) While Dudley Andrew spoke of the tendency of “matching” (Andrew, 2000: 33); borrowing from E.H. Gombrich, Linda Hutcheon wrote that “in adapting, the story-argument goes, ‘equivalences’ are sought in different sign systems for the various elements of the story: its themes, events, world, characters, motivations, points of view, consequences, contexts, symbols, imagery, and so on” (2000: 10). Similarly, Naremore wrote that “narrative codes (...) always function at the level of implication or connotation.” (2000: 34) He also mentioned binary oppositions and society’s tendency to deconstruct them puts adaptations in the position of copies as opposed to originals. (2000: 2) It seems, then, people’s tendency to compare, connote and associate the work they are experiencing is especially inevitable when the subject matter is adaptations; the genre that borrows from previous, associative material. Because of this given; the artistic, additional creative process that is intertwined with the process of adapting is overlooked or simply goes unacknowledged.

Thomas Leitch also addressed other factors that make up some of the problems in theorization of adaptations. For Leitch, some of these obstacles that presents are the expectation of fidelity to their precursor text, their low-status label because of their comparison to these texts and their canonicity; their narrow evaluation. (2008: 14)

Linda Hutcheon also agrees, stating that in the evaluation of adaptations, “the rhetoric of comparison has most often been that of faithfulness and equivalence.”

(2006: 16) Leitch additionally wrote:

The challenge for recent work in adaptation studies, then, has been to wrestle with the undead spirits that continue to haunt it however often they are repudiated: the defining context of literature, the will to taxonomize and the quest for ostensibly analytical methods and categories that will justify individual evaluations (2008: 3).

In an introduction published for *Adaptation* (2008), Deborah Cartmell, Timothy Corrigan and Imelda Whelehan explained, perhaps in the most spot-on way, the ultimate problems in theorization process. They came up with a ten-clause explanation as to why a journal on adaptation studies could finally be published after so many years of work in the field, accounting for the complications that its theoreticians have coped with. According to Cartmell, Corrigan and Whelehan, these ten problems were “the resentment of dependency of film on literature”, the perception of “film adaptations as abominations”, the “secondary status of film studies”, the understanding of “literature is better than film”, the insistence that “money and art cannot mix” where film does exactly this, “fetishization of individual genius” because films are a product of team work whereas literature praises personal effort, the narrow point of view that adaptations are “copy” works, the view of adaptations as “violation, betrayal, vulgarization” and so forth, the comparison of “bad adaptations versus good adaptations” and the fact that they are “based on a single ‘sourcetext’, resulting in the neglect of other factors in their creation process, such as cultural or social dynamics. (Cartmell, Corrigan& Whelehan, 2008)

In the process of theorizing adaptations, a change of approach was inevitable because the formerly dominant approaches, such as fidelity or the debates of originality, stalled the field’s progress. Therefore scholars have adopted a more embracing stance on the subject, taking into consideration more elements. In a sense, like Kamilla Elliott proposed, instead of trying to theorize adaptations, they adopted a more fruitful and responsive approach:

Adding historical, cultural, contextual, ideological, political and economic aspects of adaptation to semiotic, generic, textual and media aspects has

greatly expanded the scope of the field, as have the intertextual and intermedial theories that have replaced one-to-one translation models with longer representational genealogies and wider webs of intermediality. Adding audience reception and industrial practices to artistic practices has also enlarged the field. The democratization of representation has furthermore brought discredited older media and new media into adaptation studies; changing technologies have further expanded the materials that adaptation scholars must study. And to the *impossibility* of theorizing adaptations in the wake of all of these expansions, postmodern scholars add the *undesirability* of theorizing adaptations under any master system or narrative (2013: 30).

Elliott summarizes the new angle in adaptation studies and adaptation theory in perhaps the best, composite manner.

Since body of work dedicated specifically to television adaptations is very small, deriving from all of these findings can be useful. While there is a change of medium, television adaptations still go through a similar creative process. Television adaptations can still be compared to their original source texts and they can be criticized as adaptations in cinema do. Referring back to some of the ten points mentioned above, television adaptations can similarly be of secondary status compared to their source, its commercial foundations and quality of these productions as abominations can put them in a neglected position and their creative process can be overlooked. Therefore, limiting theory of adaptations to one medium or suggesting an exchange between two different mediums is restrictive and reduces its potential of comprehensiveness.

The step to be taken in order to provide a better analysis and understanding of adaptations was to expand the pre-existing perspectives and to embrace the many diverse dynamics of adaptations, their social and cultural value, their reception and their comprehensive range in all media forms. The theory and study of adaptations accommodate more than literature-to-film evaluations and the disputes of its

worthiness as a creative process. The deserted approaches of the past, the new dynamics of the process and the embracing of audience reception have all provided the field with a more positive stance. Rather than trying to schematize them, scholars finally handle adaptations in a way that is not constrained, and encircle all the other features that are relevant to the subject of adaptations.

2.3 Appeal of Adaptations

Despite the problems of theorization and the scorn they endure, adaptations are still one of the most popular forms in cinema, on television and in literature. Morris Beja noted that “since the inception of Academy Awards in 1927-8, more than three fourths of the awards for ‘best picture’ have gone to adaptations.” (1979: 78) and despite the time that has passed, adaptations continue to dominate Oscars. (Coffey, February 22, 2015) Thinking in a Turkish context, the same is also valid for “90% of the nearly 300 produced in 1972 were remakes, adaptations or spin-offs.” (Behlil, 2010: 2) For audiences, adaptations still have a very strong appeal. Studies of adaptation also pay attention to understand why they are this popular and alluring. In explaining the charm of adaptations, we can provide several reasons regarding both audiences and producers.

For producers of television, every new program carries with it the risk of failure. Since ratings can make or break a production, it is important to make a sound decision in choosing which programs to offer. In this process, choosing to make an adaptation can prove beneficial for a couple of reasons. Several producers believed that programs that have a “proven success” in their original countries is the “most effective way of guaranteeing audiences”. (Bell& Williams, 2009: 23) Similarly,

Janet McCabe and Kim Akass wrote that “prior success is key” because broadcasting material with evident success “offers some chance of duplicating past and existing successes.” (McCabe and Akass, 2013: 10) This “proven success” is “one of the most significant elements in the adaptation process.” (2013: 10)

Previous success also increases the potential of profit because it minimizes the risk of failure. In *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the theory of Adaptation*, Brian McFarlane pointed out the charm of adaptation is thus also financial:

No doubt there is the lure of a pre-sold title, the expectation that respectability or popularity achieved in one medium might infect the work created in another. The notion of a potentially lucrative 'property' has clearly been at least one major influence in the filming of novels, and perhaps film-makers, as Frederic Raphael scathingly claims, 'like known quantities (...) they would sooner buy the rights of an expensive book than develop an original subject' (1996: 5).

Even though McFarlane wrote about novel-to-film adaptations, his theory holds ground for television adaptations also. Adaptations attract audience response, potential of success based on previous acknowledgments of different viewers and it is an alluring choice of production; it is time-saving and less costly compared to the process of creating an original work because the basic outlines of the project comes prepared and ready to implement for its new production team. For the makers of television, adapting works that already exist elsewhere responds to the needs of effective, lucrative production and guarantees audience appeal. In other words, adaptations are a way of minimizing risk.

In evaluating adaptations and their appeal, it is also crucial to take account of another primary target: the audience. The magnetic effect of adaptations for the audience lies in the experience that adaptations offer to them. Viewers seek a point

of convergence, an angle with which they can identify in the story being portrayed. A successful adaptation caters to the needs of familiarity and an effect of surprise at the same time. In short, the audience needs a “hook” to lure them into the story; familiar yet curious enough to keep watching. Malgorzata Marciniak likens experiencing adaptations to “visiting an old friend”. (2007: 62)

Linda Hutcheon paid a great deal of attention to why audiences respond well to adaptations. To answer the reason behind such appeal, Hutcheon says:

Part of this pleasure, I want to argue, comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise. Recognition and remembrance are part of the pleasure (and risk) of experiencing an adaptation; so too is change (2006: 4).

Therefore the variation presented in the adaptation is the “hook” because, for Hutcheon, in experiencing an adaptation “we seem to desire the repetition as much as the change.” (2006: 9)

Through adaptations, the viewers’ need for pleasure, comfort and fulfillment is met. Repetition and familiarity provides comfort and pleasure; and with variation, the expectancy of surprise is realized. Hutcheon supportingly stated that “adaptations fulfill both desires at once”: the desire to return to the known pattern, and the desire to escape it by a new variation. (2006: 173) Hence, adaptations accommodate within themselves “the mixture of repetition and difference, of familiarity and novelty”; qualities which constitute the appeal of adaptations according to Linda Hutcheon. (2006: 114)

Being able to mobilize the feeling of the familiar, such as a memory or a widely known concept, is also another factor regarding why adaptations are this popular. Marking it as both a “pleasure” and “frustration”, Hutcheon says, “the familiarity

bred through repetition and memory” is another key point in experiencing adaptations. (2006: 21) This familiarity and memory is best addressed through localization of the given product according to target audiences. By achieving this localization, adaptations increase their local appeal as well. (McCabe& Akass, 2013: 9)

Having reviewed a brief history of and some of the problems in the evaluation of adaptations in both the academy and the market, one major cornerstone of this research project is partly covered: in order to look closely at television series that are adapted from the United States to Turkey and to provide an analysis of the examples at hand as transnational/ transcultural television adaptations, it is essentially important to grasp the charm of adaptations, and how they are studied. Yet this perspective constitutes only a part of the picture. Looking only at adaptations does not entirely account for the popularity and abundance of transnational television adaptations. Television industry is shaped by dynamics other than audiences, such as globalization of media and the new practices and perspectives that are borne along with it. These new dynamics form the rest of the picture for the present case studies, which are examined in the last chapter.

CHAPTER 3

GLOBALIZATION OF TELEVISION AND THE RISE OF TRANSNATIONAL/TRANSCULTURAL ADAPTATIONS

Understanding transnational television adaptations depends on more than an understanding of why adaptations are popular. There are several other actors at play in this process that show how audience appeal becomes a functioning system that is both lucrative for the industry and popular for the consumers. Moreover, it is also crucial to underline that these concepts complement each other and they act as a unified system.

The reason behind adaptations' popularity worldwide is also about how the world is becoming a globally borderless place with the emergence of communication that transcends physical borders and distances. It is what makes ideas circulate without being hindered and as it does, it helps form a common language between different cultures, peoples and places.

Format trade is the remaining important part of this equation. As ideas circulate and are adapted across the globe, from one place to another completely different place, adjustments are necessary. These adjustments are how ideas change, adapt and alter to fit in to their new environment and survive. Format trade, which will be discussed in detail in the second section of this chapter, acts as a template in organizing these adjustments and forms the language of this trade of ideas.

Turkey has adapted several American television series. Some of the most successful ones were *Tatlı Hayat* (2001-2004) as an adaptation of *The Jeffersons* (1975- 1985), *Dadı* (2001-2002) as *The Nanny* (1993- 1999), *Küçük Sırlar* (2010- 2011) as *Gossip Girl* (2007- 2012), *Kavak Yelleri* (2007- 2011) as *Dawson's Creek* (1998- 2003), *Umutsuz Ev Kadınları* (2011- 2014) as *Desperate Housewives* (2004- 2012), and *Tatlı Küçük Yalancılar* (2015-) as *Pretty Little Liars* (2010-) as the latest example. *Doktorlar* and *Medcezir* are some of the latest and highest-rated examples, and since this thesis aims to analyze in detail the local flavor of these series, it is important to also understand what kind of factors play a role in their adaptation process. Therefore, globalization of television, how this globalization makes it possible for adaptations to travel freely as ideas and how format trade secures the legalization of this process are crucial phases to include in the study.

By way of touching upon the phases of media globalization and format trade in Turkish television, we can do a better case analysis; for it is important to include an understanding of how television market deals with the content that makes a journey across borders and cultures, and with the other developments that emerge in the process of adapting TV content for audiences that are nationally and culturally different. Adaptations require a working harmony between the television business, the targeted demographics, audiences and the local cultures. In this chapter the components of this harmony will be explained.

3.1 Globalization of Television Market

Globalization initially is shaped and molded by economic interests in the world market. The term is closely linked with concepts of market, economy, labor, and

global trade; yet it also refers to the “the growing level of connectedness between individuals, societies and nation states at a global level” and therefore also applies to cultures (Devereux, 2007: 30).

This level of ‘connectedness’ was made possible via improvements in the communications. Starting with the invention of telegraph in 1837 (Moran, 1998), globalization in media has further developed with the launch of satellites, proliferation of television and broadcast channels, and finally with internet and social media. This increased connectedness, however, eventually resulted in debates of cultural homogenization (Moran, 1998; Kraidy, 2002). Studies in globalization also asserted that standardization of content mainly promoted a dominantly white and highly American point of view, that it was a way of advertising and exporting American values and that it served the commercial interests of the United States; mainly because the country was the biggest exporter of television programs. (Moran, 1998) Particularly the world-wide influence of US cultural products with its enormous economic power was considered cultural imperialism. Thomas Guback argued that the European film market’s domination by the US, especially by Hollywood, led to a homogenization that blurred the lines between distinct cultures. This kind of globalization brought forth disputes of homogenization where more powerful cultures dominated other dependent cultures (Gürata, 2002). By making the same or similar content available on a global scale, therefore emerged an issue of standardization, which led to further debates about how this sameness threatens indigenous cultural diversity. The new globalized media scene was consequently connoted to be homogenizing; thus the term cultural homogenization. This resulted in a loss of individual local color, many scholars now defend that instead of this loss of cultural identity and color, what is happening is a

hybridization of these colors. Moreover, Ien Ang suggests that local cultures tend to reproduce themselves by appropriating global flows of mass-mediated forms and technologies. This allows new hybrid cultural forms to emerge all around the world. (Gürata, 2002)

In the face of this strong and influential presence of US culture called media imperialism or cultural imperialism, Ahmet Gürata writes that “there exists strong regional competitors in various parts of the world, such as India, Hong Kong, Mexico, Argentina, and Egypt. These powerful industries are not only successful in their respective countries, but are also distributed widely throughout the world.” (Gürata, 2002) It is possible to place Turkey among these competitors, especially lately, as now Turkish series air in more than 70 countries. Elest Ali, who also used the expression ‘cultural colonialism’ in her article referring to Turkey’s new presence, considers this effect more significant than that of all the Mexican *telenovelas* and Egyptian *musalsalat* put together. (Ali, 2014)¹

However, not all approaches to media globalization are similarly critical. For some researchers, as much as there is a dominating force and vested economic interests in the process, globalization in media doesn’t necessarily result in a loss of local, national traces. The present local and national differences in a specific geography not only interrupt a thorough homogenization; but they also pave the way for a different understanding of this shared, standard content by acting almost as a filter.

Accordingly, more recent theories focus on what is termed cultural hybridization, a perspective on media globalization that endows more harmony between what is

¹ For further information about Turkey’s new role in this issue, the documentary “Kismet: How Soap Operas Changed the World” is recommended (and is available online at <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/witness/2013/11/kismet-how-soap-operas-changed-world-20131117152457476872.html>)

local and what is imported. This hybridization prioritizes an “understanding of the interface of globalization and localization as a dynamic process and hybrid product of mixed traditions and cultural forms.” (Kraidy, 2002: 6). Carolina Matos wrote:

Cultural globalization theorists have thus underscored the need to recognise the blending of local cultures with global foreign influences, switching to an understanding of global culture as being grounded in a process of hybridization, and not homogenization or simply cultural diffusion of American values. (...) The hybridization argument thus contends that the impact of global culture does not lead to the extinction of the local. Hybrid styles are in essence a result of the combination of modern techniques or American influences with national and political traditions or regional identities. (Matos, 2012)

Matos also mentions another differing opinion presented by audience reception researchers who simply rejected the view that audiences directly adopt what they watch without any critical input, simply acting as “cultural dopes”(2012). Matos notes:

They can negotiate dominant ideological messages and make readings that are empowering for their everyday lives. Studies in the audience research tradition have shown how diverse ethnic groups read and make sense of US television exported texts, from *Dallas* to *The Simpsons* and *Sex and the City*, differently, according to their own cultural preferences and socio-economic context. (2012)

Therefore, the viable alternative to the rather pessimistic views on how globalized media devalues the specific local colors is the perspective that provides an understanding of media globalization, which clarifies how the process both looks out for its industrial, economical priorities and also pays attention to making these exchanges appealing for the audiences.

Since the subject matter of this research is television adaptations that travel across geographies, it is important to understand how globalization and adaptation

cooperate in preserving the essence of these television projects, while also making this process profitable for the owners. Although globalized media corporations are owned by a number of people, audience is what makes their products a success or failure in the market. Silvio Waisbord said that “for global television companies, cultural difference is not an obstacle, but if incorporated properly, it could be a boon.” (2004: 378) It is exactly at this point that adaptations and the concept of globalization converges: adaptations make it possible for media corporations to achieve a sense of globalization, by preparing a legal base for the process and thus sparing them the accusations of cultural imperialism or homogenization. In return, media globalization paves the way for systems like format trade to develop and also presents the audience with an array of programs to select from.

It is for these reasons that globalization in the television market made adaptations across geographies this lucrative for media corporations and popular for the audiences. The success of globalization in media is evident in this aspect. Just as fashion, fads or trends, technological consumption etc. became global products, so did television productions. Once the success of a television production manifested success; it became the focus of attention for other countries’ media moguls to bring it to their home countries. By making a local product global, and eventually localizing it again for another culture/geography, adaptation form gained more mobility.

In *McTV: Understanding the Global Popularity of Television Formats*, Waisbord wrote that “in standardizing the structure of television, globalization encouraged the tendency toward imitation and reluctance to promote innovation that underlies commercial broadcasting. (2004: 364)

Observably, both globalization and adaptations suffer from the same connotation in this sense: being imitations and limiting creative input. The two, on the other hand, seem to complement each other rather fruitfully, judging by the fact that format trade “exploded and became a multi-billion dollar industry” in the late 1990s as the number of formats in circulation, number of countries they travelled to and the number of companies distributing and producing them rose rapidly. (Chalaby, 2015: 460)

It is a necessity for stories to evolve, adjust and be mobile in order to be retold and hence survive. Adaptations make possible just that. In studying adaptations, Linda Hutcheon derived remarkably from the studies of adaptation in Darwinian terms. As Darwin viewed adaptation as a necessity for survival of the living, Hutcheon appropriated her studies of adaptation in the same way and viewed adaptation as a survival method for narratives to survive in other geographies, societies and cultures. In doing so, alluding to the term natural selection; she used the term “cultural selection” and she wrote:

(...) perhaps traveling stories can be thought of in terms of cultural selection. Like evolutionary natural selection, cultural selection is a way to account for the adaptive organization, in this case, of narratives. Like living beings, stories that adapt better than others (through mutation) to an environment survive (2006: 167).

Hutcheon also said that adaptation was how stories evolved and mutated “to fit new times and different places.” She thought that “evolving by cultural selection, traveling stories adapt to local cultures, just as populations or organisms adapt to local environments” (2006: 177).

This is where globalization comes into the scene, by making a local product globally attainable to other environments, so it can travel and find new cultures and audiences to live on in, in other words; survive. In the process of making television content global, formats perhaps have been the most efficient survival tool.

Globalization is one of the many important factors in the process of adaptation, especially those that are cross-cultural and transnational. Globalized market favors adaptations instead of necessitating a constant flow of original ideas. The agent which links global television market and adaptations together is the format trade that is carried out successfully. Formats act as a converter, a modifier of ideas and by mapping out a legal process for the producers, it renders possible for these ideas to create its own variants in several diverse cultures, nations and geographies. In order to mobilize adaptations, television market has turned to format trade.

3.2 Formats: Television's Popular Form

Formats act as a tool, a template for laying out the processes of programming and production of ideas, and they have become an indispensable system for exchanging ideas, or adapting them to fit to their new environments in an organized manner. This exchange has been a vibrant trade in television practices as the television market globalized. In other words, formats are the accomplished combinations of globalization and adaptations and their markets are interdependent; the adapted work can only be legally globalized through format trade. Therefore, format trade is nothing new to television market. Giseline Kuipers explains format trade's emergence in the market as follows:

Television import was born out of economic necessity. Producing television is expensive; especially in small countries, filling all airtime with domestic fare is too costly. Hence, shortly after the introduction of TV, European public networks began importing programs from larger countries, such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States, where producers could earn back their investments in large domestic markets and sell their programs at reasonable prices abroad. Thus, smaller and poorer countries became dependent on larger producers, and a world television market emerged with one main center, Hollywood, and a number of regional centers of production on various continents (Straubhaar, 2007). (Kuipers, 2011: 6)

Format trade, up until today, has expanded to become an estimated 3.1 billion-euro industry. Less than a decade ago, in between the years of 2006 and 2008, 445 formats led to 1262 adaptations in fifty-seven territories (Chalaby, 2012: 37). Many of the popular television shows, Chalaby says, “are formatted and cover all TV genres from daytime cookery and decorating shows to primetime talent competition blockbusters.” (Chalaby, 2013: 54) Nevertheless, despite its origins in the 1940s and current acclaim, research of format trade became relatively distinctive in the 1990s; taking “almost twenty years and a booming trade before [finally attracting] broad academic attention” (Esser, 2013: xvii), especially with the work of Albert Moran in the field such as *Understanding the Global TV Format* (2006) and *Copycat TV: Globalisation, Program Formats, and Cultural Identity*.

Formats act as a bridge in between what is global and what is local; hence making way for the glocal. According to Andrea Esser, one of the many reasons for format trade business’s success is the particular way they combine the local and the global (Esser, 2013). Also, by enabling program adaptations to secure a legal path, formats not only help the global television market; they additionally pave the way for a harmony in between cultures, nations and audiences. Formats, furthermore, are the ultimate risk-minimizing and cost-efficient medium in television business.

Formats are without a doubt one of the most essential tools in making the television market global. By making it possible for ideas to travel legally and for the benefit of the industry, format trade has proven lucrative for both producers and audiences. Format trade in the global scene provides the product with the necessary flexibility so it can survive in its new target geography without having to worry about factors like the specific cultural/national differences. In that sense, formats accommodate within themselves the qualities of timelessness and non-spatiality.

Formats are de-territorialized; they have no national home; they represent the disconnection between culture, geography, and social spaces that characterizes globalization. Signs of cultural territories are removed so domestic producers can incorporate local color and global audiences can paradoxically feel at home when watching them (Waisbord, 2004: 378).

This timelessness and the lack of geographical specificity, in a sense, paved the way for what Waisbord calls “the standardization of content.” (2004: 360), a standard that is designed to function regardless of cultural, national or geographical boundaries, for all audiences and producers. One downside in the process of such standardization, Waisbord observes, is that “globalization encouraged the tendency toward imitation and reluctance to promote innovation that underlies commercial broadcasting.” (2004: 364) This way, Waisbord also offers a critical approach to the ways of this market and writes:

Coping, imitation, and jumping on the bandwagon of whatever seems to work at the moment have been typical in the television industry since its origins and, arguably, have become even more common lately as conglomerization has increased pressures for higher profits in shorter periods of time. (2004: 363)

Nonetheless, the profitable nature of format trade for the market and the appeal it has for the audiences is evident and are two sides of the same coin. On the one hand

it satisfies whoever is making this trade by manifesting gainful, and on the other, it enables several different audiences with various experiences of watching television that they can choose from.

Jean K. Chalaby also defines formats as follows:

... [A] format works as a *platform* on which to generate drama. Formats may be international to the industry, but they are always local to the audience. Formats are successful internationally only if they resonate with an audience in *each and every market* in which they air (2013: 55).

What adaptations and formats have in common then, is the necessity of resonating with their audiences. Thus, one of the most important factors for a successful format adaptation is whether they appeal to their audience by making the correct adjustments in the process. A good example to this is Alexandra Beeden and Joost de Bruin's analysis of the series *The Office* and how it failed as an American production after having been adapted from the British series of the same name. Since American production failed to provide this resonance with its audience, it was cancelled shortly after its initiation (Beeden and de Bruin, 2009). An effective implementation of the work that is being transported can make or break a production; in short, how well they "resonate" with their audiences is of utmost importance. Formats need to find the necessary balance by making their global concept accurately local as in the case of *The Office*. Only this way can formats become profitable and effective:

TV formats may be transnational in the sense that they travel and incorporate cross-border rules, but essentially, they apply these rules to create characters and fashion stories that resonate locally. In this sense, they make the local visible and the global invisible (Chalaby, 2013: 55).

In short, formats are “programming ideas that are adapted and produced domestically” (Waisbord, 2004: 359), they are the “ultimate risk-minimizing programming strategy” (2004: 365) and are “culturally specific but nationally neutral.” (2004: 368) They are “less prone to have specific references to the local and national, precisely because they are designed to “travel well” across national boundaries. (2004: 368) They also must follow a set of “rules that are applied across cultures” and “address cultural factors” so that they can “have a genuine local impact” and become internationally successful. “Applied to television industry, formats represent the global commercialization of an efficient and predictable program that can be tweaked according to local tastes.” (2004: 378)

Functions of format trade aren't limited to just market and audience dimensions. According to Matos, formats make it possible for “national variations” of a program to exist and they provide “interconnectivity” among television industries worldwide. It legalizes the programs by adding to their exportability and help contribute to a sense of “cultural homogenization” or “hybridization”, to avoid recent disputes about the issue. This way, formats act according to the ideals of globalization, also moving in harmony with the mantra of global television industry: “think globally, program locally.” (2012)

The trade market for formats goes hand in hand with the process of adaptation. Format trade globalizes the subject matter and makes it possible through a legal process for the product to find various local colors in several different national markets. Perhaps eventually formats owe their popularity to this quality. With adaptations of formats into different markets, ideas become global, universal in a sense. For Waisbord, “the popularity of formats is largely the result of fundamental

institutional changes in the global television, the standardization of commercial practices and rising concerns about copyright infringements. (2004: 367)

All in all, format trade is a process which is appealing for both the industry and the audience, and this popularity proves two things: “the globalization of the television business and the efforts of international and domestic companies to deal with the resilience of national cultures.” (Waisbord, 2004: 360)

3.3 Transcultural/Transnational Television

Within the process of media globalization, and the cultural hybridization brought by it, adaptations not only created a format trade market, but also have paved the way for a kind of televisual experience that is both transnational and transcultural. What format trade does for television is that it makes adaptations globally mobile, flexible and compatible for many different cultures and nations. By way of enabling a selected product to be transferred into another geography, adaptations help to shift and diversify the habit of watching, and producing for, television into a transcultural and transnational experience. In other words, adaptations function in a way that helps television transcend beyond national territories and cultural boundaries.

A media-text removed from its place of origin becomes both transnational and transcultural, as it now engages with a new society, with its different cultural and national understandings peculiar to it. Traveling stories enable a global circulation of culture; thus contributing to a cultural hybridization on a global scale as well. As stories circulate on a global scale, they interact with their new cultural/national environments, and instead of being accepted unchanged, they go through a process

of assimilation in a sense; and as they adapt, they become hybrids as they carry both their original essence and the local color of their new place. This is another reason why cultural hybridization is mentioned alongside adaptations; in order for both of these concepts to function smoothly, they need to go through a similar process of making room for change while also preserving an essence, such as their plot or theme(s).

Transculturality and transnationality, in that regard, can be thought of as an inevitable outcome of this cultural globalization. To think of culture as a notion that applies to specific territories and people would be limiting. For Wolfgang Welsch, culture is a much more “complex” notion and it is “not a closed concept, it is more dynamic to fit into one geography or nation.” (Welsch, 1999) Traditional definitions of culture, like that of Johann Gottfried Herder who puts a “double emphasis on the own and exclusion of the foreign”, provide senses of “ownness” and “foreignness”, thus culture is both “unificatory” and “separatory” at the same time; and Welsch deems these descriptions as limiting. (1999: 2) What’s more, Welsch finds descriptions of interculturality and multiculturalism as “cosmetic” and culturally fundamentalistic (1999: 3). In light of all these comments, Welsch draws a much more inclusive definition of culture by presenting what he calls “the concept of transculturality” (1999, 4). He writes:

Transculturality is, in the first place, a consequence of the inner differentiation and complexity of modern cultures. Cultures today are extremely interconnected and entangled with each other. (...) Cultural determinants today have become transcultural. The old concept of culture misrepresents cultures’ actual form, the type of their relations and even the structure of individuals’ identities and lifestyles (1999, 4).

For Welsch, transculturality is much more “inclusive” than traditional descriptions of culture which are monocultural, and it transcends our “monocultural standpoints” and he believes that “we can develop an increasingly transcultural understanding of ourselves.” (1999: 7)

One of globalization’s much discussed questions was whether it has caused a cultural homogenization and lead to a monotonous, repetitive cultural pattern. As Welsch notes the older definitions of culture to be rather limiting, he similarly favors transculturality because “we are cultural hybrids. Every formation happens with several cultural and national components and thus their cultural formation is transcultural.” (1999: 5) It is at this point that disputes of homogenization once again can be shifted to, in a much more optimistic manner, “cultural hybridization.”

Transculturality endows narrative with a certain type of variety. Not setting boundaries for the subjects, it allows a space for change. Against the views of uniformization on globalization; transculturality proposes a “new form of diversity.” (1999: 9) It is this space for diversity and the chance to create variations of the initial product that make adaptations profitable, appealing and entertaining.

Transculturality also deals with the clash between the global and the local. While cultures are becoming more and more global; there is the desire to be unique and peculiar. Talking about both individuals and local communities, Welsch says:

People obviously feel compelled to defend themselves against being merged into globalized uniformity. They don’t want to just be universal or global, but also specific and of their own. They want to distinguish themselves from one another and know themselves to be well accommodated in a specific identity. This desire is legitimate, and forms in which it can be satisfied without danger are to be determined and promoted. Future cultural forms will have to be such that they also cater for the demand for specificity. (1999: 16)

With this uniformity that stems from the new globalized cultural model, it is perhaps at this point that adaptation form is useful. Adaptations as cultural products transcend local territories with the help of format trade; and at the other end of the deal they present a locally alluring creation. In that sense adaptations both answer to the desires of universality and specificity.

Welsch's description of transculturality resonates well with how adaptations are introduced to the culturally globalized world because it provides a balanced description of the new state of cultures. It does not dwell on old descriptions and it includes a more positive, less restraining approach to a more hybrid and dynamic understanding of culture; making space for both what is local and also embracing its globalized nature. Welsch writes that the concept of transculturality "is able to cover both global and local, universalistic and particularistic aspects, and it does so quite naturally. The globalizing tendencies as well as the desire for specificity and particularity can be fulfilled within transculturality." (1999: 11)

With restricted, particularistic point of view on cultures, adaptation may not be a very desirable practice; for it makes way for cultural products to go beyond their birthplace. Yet from a transcultural standpoint, adaptations seem much more appealing. Transculturality is a concept of "entanglement, intermixing and commonness. It promotes not separation, but exchange and interaction." (1999: 11) Adaptations do just that: they make possible for cultural interactions to happen through the exchanges of selected products, an exchange made possible by the format trade market.

As part of an increasingly transcultural media flow, television also experienced a transnational change. Through a cultural globalization, national fields have also been made available to international markets. (Kuipers, 2011: 2) Deriving from Timothy Havens, Kuipers wrote that “the transnational television field emerged primarily as a result of the trade in television programs.” (2011: 4) While scholars and executives defined international television as a “global market” (2011: 3); the change evidently affected the television market and audiences both. Kuipers wrote:

... [T]hrough (these) nationally delineated TV channels, the whole world entered people’s homes. National broadcasters imported programs, formats, and practices and thus standards and genres, styles and tastes. These imports marked the progressive incorporation of national television broadcasters into a global arena of television trade and production. (...) Television is therefore simultaneously very national and very international (2011: 2).

Similarly, transnational perspective favors a unifying and connecting approach; enabling us to “move beyond the opposition between cultural imperialism and local appropriation, or homogenization versus heterogenization.” (Kuipers, 2011: 15) A hybridization perspective seems more apt for it manages to “intersect” the national and the transnational.

Thus, with a new understanding and experience of television that is now both transculturally and transnationally more diverse, cultural and national barriers could be overcome. Not only can we talk about a less territorially limited market but also audiences whose habit of watching is culturally diversified. Transculturality and transnationality have a synergistic relationship with the concepts of globalization in culture and media. While globalization of television market enabled the development of transcultural and transnational television; television that is now

more culturally and nationally diverse contributes to a less constrained market and to the experience of audiences watching television.

It is essential to understand why adaptations constitute the ideal convergence point for all of the above-mentioned concepts; namely globalization in culture and media fields, format trade market and the transcultural/transnational television transformation. In a great deal, adaptations present an interconnection between the audiences and the market; because even though the concept of globalization was initially associated with economic power struggles (Kuipers, 2011: 2), television executives have to consider what works for the audiences, this was also looking out for their professional interests regarding the market. In short, adaptations have a dual function for they are advantageous for the market and the viewers at the same time.

Giselinde Kuipers elaborates on the tendencies of executives too. Buyers in the sector regard three elements to be essential in the decision making process. For them, a quality product that can function well in all markets firstly has a “production value” and it should be “well made, well-acted and well written.” (Kuipers, 2011: 13)

One final observation to present is the interest of the television executives in favoring American products as they select and adapt their new transcultural/transnational content for the viewers. In regarding the aforementioned three elements for best content, the buyers believe in “the quality of American TV” for it is “dependable enough to guarantee audience success.” (Kuipers, 2011: 10) for they have already proven success with American audiences. Kuipers describes

Hollywood to be the “distinct cultural geography”, the ideal origin of resource for transnational television making. (2011: 11)

In looking at the adaptation process of the case studies at hand, it is also crucial to provide an understanding of how Turkish television deals with concepts of glocalization, adaptation and transnational/transcultural television.

3.4 Turkish Television and Series

After discussing how television has become a more globalized medium, with its formats and style becoming more and more universally recognizable and thereby earning a more transcultural identity, it is also important to elaborate how these processes have presented themselves in Turkish television history. This section will provide a brief understanding into the evolution of Turkish broadcasting system, while also shedding light on how Turkish television has handled non-Turkish content and adapted it when necessary.

Turkish television started broadcasting first in 1952, in a studio of Istanbul Technical University. Initially the screenings aired for one hour in every fifteen days. In 1964, Turkish Radio Television (also referred to as TRT) was founded. In structuring TRT, European models were studied. BBC of the United Kingdom and Germany were especially beneficial in training the new Turkish television and broadcasting personnel. (Radyo Televizyon Tarihi, 2011: 46)

In its earlier periods, TRT broadcast for two hours per day and it was essentially a means for education and cultural cultivation for the public; thus, at its origins, Turkish television wasn't designed for entertainment. In fact, since broadcasting

was considered to be costly and owning a television was a luxury, the transition to regular broadcasting was delayed and viewer numbers were low; in 1966, television sets in the country numbered only about two thousand. In the early 1970's, due to political atmosphere at the time which resulted in heavy clashes between the right and left groups both on governmental and public level, Istanbul Technical University shut down their studios and donated their equipment to TRT, making TRT the one and only broadcasting power until the initiation of private television in Turkey in the 1990s. (Radyo Televizyon Tarihi, 2011: 43) In the 1970's, as the sole television channel, TRT started providing a wider range of programs and eventually began airing seven days a week for more than forty-five broadcast hours in total.

In Turkey, television was powered by Turkish cinema, especially the Yeşilçam productions, popular Turkish cinema from the 1950s and onward, so named because many production companies were located in the Yeşilçam Street in İstanbul. In order to reach a bigger number of viewers, TRT management started producing more original content, working with famous directors and actors of Yeşilçam. The first Turkish movies and series that aired in the country were produced by these people, establishing a strong bond between Turkish cinema and television. (Yağcı Aksel, 2001)

The collaboration between television and cinema and diversification of programs increased the popularity of television, and Turkish television started reaching a higher number of viewers each day. There was a rapid increase in the number of registered television sets, rising from 50.000 in 1970 to 1 million in 1976. (Behlil, 2010: 2) Television series, or serial dramas, which started airing first in the 1950s in the United States, were first introduced to Turkish audiences in the 1970s with this

collaboration of cinema and television, when popular movies were turned into series by famous directors, marking the beginning of adaptation in Turkish television. (Yağcı Aksel, 2001) In 1974, *Kaynanalar* (Turkish for Mothers-in-law, 1974- 2004) started airing and remains to be one of the longest running series with its thirty years and 950 episodes on air. It was followed by *Aşk-ı Memnu* (Turkish for “Forbidden Love”, 1975 and was remade with the same name between 2008-2010) which ran for six episodes and became a big success. Although series like *Aşk-ı Memnu* typically had fewer than eight episodes, the audiences loved this new form and they started sending letters to TRT’s headquarters, demanding more series with more episodes. By 1985, 30% of all content on television was comprised of drama series; also resulting in the increase of runtimes from 25 minutes to an hour. (Yağcı Aksel, 2001: 5)

Meanwhile, television started broadcasting in color in 1984 and TRT branched out with the establishment of TRT 2 in 1986 and TRT 3 and TRT GAP in 1989, marking an end to the domination of single-channel system. These segmentations were made in order to bring diversity to the subjects broadcast, with TRT 2 focusing on news of culture and art, TRT 3 for sports and TRT GAP with a focus on issues of particular interest to southeastern Turkey. Additionally, series that had had fewer than ten episodes evolved into longer serials with series like *Perihan Abla* (1986- 1988). Turkish television now aired more series with longer runtimes and higher number of episodes. (Yağcı Aksel, 2001: 9)

Owing to political tensions present at the time, Turkish television allowed only content that was family-centered and emphasized Turkish values and traditions. Controversial or political content was censored so as to avoid any debates or

reactions. Instead of a character-based approach, series portrayed family-oriented stories; this was the producers' decision, a form of self-censorship, so as to avoid criticism. (Yağcı Aksel, 2001: 9)

Turkish television experienced a turning point with the establishment of private television. In 1990, Magic Box (also known as Star 1) was founded. Star 1 would film their footage in Turkey, then send it to studios in Germany and would then air the footage via satellite to Turkey; thus enabling satellite owners to watch the private broadcast. (Radyo Televizyon Tarihi, 2011: 46)

In the 90's, and with the help of private television, television series became the second most watched program category, with an 86% share after news programming. In the meantime, private television continued to branch out with new channels like TeleON, Show TV, ATV, TGRT and Kanal D. Cine 5 became the first television channel of the country that required subscription. With an increasing number of television channels and the lack of a legislation regarding private television, an addition to the constitution was made in 1993, and eventually the following year RTÜK (The Turkish Radio and Television Supreme Council) was established to monitor and regulate television broadcasting in the country.

By the 2000s, Turkish television had improved to a state that could compete with other world television markets. Having started almost three decades behind the United States, Turkish television evolved quickly and caught up with the emerging needs and implementations of a globalized, market-centered broadcasting industry, especially with the developing private television sector. Turkey is presently an exporter of television products as much as an importer as the world's second highest television importer after the United States (*Hürriyet Daily News*, October

26, 2014). Having started with an educational focus, communication policies became more economically driven, rather than cultural or educational. Care and desire for cultural service was replaced with corporate interests, profit and market worries. (Çaplı, 2002: 46) The series genre, which initially served a moral and social purpose with its focus on family values, became a sector driven by capitalist rivalry, all the while aiming to reshape its audiences in a way that would serve the interests of the market and its pioneering owners. (Tunç, 2010: 39)

Turkish series not only metamorphosed its audiences, increasing the time they spent watching television, and boosted owners' interests; it also had several other social impacts. Series that became audience favorites managed to create their own side-markets, in a sense. The success of hit series resulted in a boom in the sectors of sponsorship, music business, marketing, tourism and advertisement. For example, Middle Eastern fans of *Gümüş* (known as *Noor* outside Turkey) would visit the filming locations as part of their Istanbul tour. The number of casting agencies also sky-rocketed. (Yağcı Aksel, 2001: 2) More importantly, a sense of multiculturalization in the content of these series occurred, with greater numbers of foreign characters. Series like *İkinci Bahar* and *Yabancı Damat*, for example, included non-Turkish characters and the complications they brought with them. While exploring these complications lies outside the scope of the current project, it is possible to assert that the idea of foreignness was, in several cases, mobilized through an emphasis on nationalistic senses. *Yabancı Damat* (2004-2007) and *Survivor: Yunanistan-Türkiye* (2006) are some examples to these cases where the historical Greek-Turkish rivalry was used as a catalyst in creating the knot of the story through the “ultimate” outsider character.

Even though Turkish cinema assisted Turkish television on a great scale when television in its earlier periods, as Turkish television grew stronger it started to impair Turkish cinema in many different aspects. Television, after borrowing its first celebrated actors from cinema, began producing its own celebrities who then made the transition to cinema. This meant fewer opportunities for cinema-trained actors both in TV and film. While it should be noted that further research on Turkish star system is necessary, it is known that Turkish television's first stars came from a cinema background and they were mostly actors and actresses who had conservatory education, like Ayten Gökçer, Şener Şen, Fikret Hakan, Yıldız Kenter, Hülya Koçyiğit and many more. Therefore, in the beginning both cinema and television was powered by these stars. But as television started generating more content, more stars were needed, and soon the booming casting agencies started to cater to this need. As these new television stars started appear in films because of their established name recognition and popularity, the original cinema-television actors and actresses ended up with fewer acting jobs.

Moreover, in order to air more commercials for revenue income, television channels could now fit only one prime-time series after the news instead of two. The regular 90-minute episode run-time stretched to nearly 2 hours; adding on hour-long recaps of the previous week's episode puts a series' ending time at nearly midnight. One episode of a prime-time series episode generally runs at least as long as a commercial feature. The total run time of series on television per week had now exceeded the total hours of Turkish cinema made in one year. Although there were several protests from film makers and actors against these issues, network representatives put the blame for television's overshadowing of cinematic production on high costs of production. (Yağcı Aksel, 2001: 12)

In 2006, Turkey became the country with the second highest rate of watching television per day, after the United States. (Tanrıöver, 2011) Turkish television series, after thirty years, were beginning to attract the attention of other countries. Series export, beginning in 1981 with fifty-two productions sold to nine different countries, boomed in the mid-2000s thanks to Middle-East sales of productions like *Gümüş* (2005- 2007), centering on an arranged marriage, its initial problems, and the romance that eventually blooms. (Tanrıöver, 2011: 94) Several formats and series were exported to numerous countries, most of them Middle Eastern markets. An increase in the number of adaptations became evident (Yağcı Aksel, 2001: 15) and Turkish television became more culturally and globally transitive.

Today, Turkish television has hundreds of national and local television stations. Having completed its fortieth year, based on 2009 RTÜK annual statistics, television series are now the most watched programs with an average of 86.2% per day. (Tanrıöver, 2011: 80) According to research conducted in 2010, while no longer the second highest television viewer in the world, Turkey has an average of four hours and seventeen minutes of television watching rate per day; still placing Turkey in the top-watching list. Compared to 1998, with ten series per week, Turkish television stations offer forty-seven drama series as of 2010, despite having experienced a recession in 2010 due to economic problems in the production industry. (Tanrıöver, 2011: 48)

Within forty years of making and airing television series, Turkish televisions now offer a mix of both local and internationally famous television series, such as local successes *Süper Baba* (1993- 1997) or *İkinci Bahar* (1998- 2001), or *Gümüş* (2005- 2007) and *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (2011- 2014) which became international hits. Some of

the Turkish series are original, some of them are remakes of either Turkish or foreign shows. Especially within the last decade, there have been many examples of adaptations that recreate famous foreign shows with a Turkish cast and crew: *Kavak Yelleri* (an adaptation of *Dawson's Creek* 2007-2011), *Umutsuz Ev Kadınları* (adaptation of *Desperate Housewives*, 2011- 2014), *İntikam* (an adaptation of *Revenge*, 2013-2014), *Acemi Cadı* (adaptation of *Sabrina, The Teenage Witch*, 2005- 2007), *Galip Derviş* (an adaptation of *Monk*, 2013-2014), *Küçük Sırlar* (an adaptation of *Gossip Girl*, 2010- 2011) and *Muck* (an adaptation of *Glee*, 2012). Through these adaptations, with the incorporation and treatment of foreign cultures, geographies and concepts into these productions, Turkish television is put on the map in the worldwide television industry with its globalized quality and culturally diverse characters.

3.5 Turkish Television and Adaptations

The effect of American television, which also constitutes an ingredient of this study, is evident in Turkish television's history with adaptations, as exemplified in the previous section. Because Turkish television was elevated with the efforts of filmmakers of the country, the impact of American products in cinema transferred to television as well. Turkish cinema was deriving heavily from American productions for appealing stories: several famous American movies like *Star Wars* (1977), *Some Like It Hot* (1959), *West Side Story* (1961) and certain American TV series such as *Star Trek* (1966- 1969), *Columbo* (1968- 2003) and *Bewitched* (1964- 1972) were adapted, or remade, to Turkey as movies with similar plotlines. This also helped create the Yeşilçam phenomenon, with these adaptations Yeşilçam's conventional

approach started forming. Since the directors and producers who made movies in Turkey were the ones who helped Turkish television to diversify its content beyond newscast, the impact of American content also continued in the newer medium.

This impact was also strong in the sense that before producing local content for the viewer, Turkish television broadcast American series for the audience. Among these, shows like *Loveboat* (1977- 1987), *Little House on the Prairie* (1974- 1983) and *Dallas* (1978- 1991) became very popular. It is, however, difficult to trace the origins of Turkish television adaptations to their American antecedents. *Kaynanalar* was the first locally produced, originally Turkish television series, yet the audience was already familiar with American productions like *Dallas*. Even though studies regarding series in Turkish television started in 1998 (Tanrıöver, 2011: 48), the interaction of American and Turkish television content dates back to the earliest years of television in Turkey due to blurred lines between producing for television and for cinema.

It is, therefore, possible to assert that an American-to-Turkish influence existed even before the initiation of Turkish television, and thus continued to exist with the rapid expansion of television in Turkey. This influence has become more visible within the last twenty-five years, after the birth of private television in Turkey. American to Turkish transaction became only more distinct. Transnational television became possible with the advent of format trades (Havens, 2006) and legitimized this exchange process. With format trade, exporting ideas and appropriating them based on certain factors considering the new environment; game shows, mini series and especially dramas became the most preferred choice for format adaptations. For many scholars, the form that travels best as a project are

series because they are culturally proximate and provide audience loyalty (Hutcheon, 2006; Waisbord, 2004; Kuipers, 2011, Moran, 2013).

The subject of this thesis is a focus on two of these Turkish series and their American source-texts, and it provides a close look into the projects to understand the dynamics behind their creative adaptation processes as transnational/transcultural television products. Having proposed the outlines of adaptation studies, globalization of television, format trade and its functions, transcultural and transnational television as well as having provided a brief history of Turkish television and its relationship with adaptations, we can now move into a case study where all of these concepts melt together to make the American to Turkish transnational television series. In doing so, major differences, some similarities and distinctive industrial tendencies of Turkish television will be addressed. Explaining the reasons behind *Coupling*'s failure in the United States as an adaptation, Jeffrey Griffin asserted that "successfully repositioning a fictional series in another culture through a new, local version demands the erasing of its original cultural odor and imbuing it with local fragrance" (2007: 64).

By looking at *Doktorlar* and *Medcezir*, adaptations of *Grey's Anatomy* and *The O.C.* respectively, this thesis aims to understand how the repositioning of these ideas are implemented and how the new local, cultural odor is integrated into these Turkish series. The industrial differences between American television and Turkish television will also be discussed to see if/how these two industries have their individual genuine practices.

CHAPTER 4

AMERICAN CRUST AND THE TURKISH FILLING

Since this thesis is about American to Turkish transnational television adaptations, we first reviewed how adaptations have been studied, its literature and some of the reasons why adaptations have been controversial yet still popular for both the television industry and the audiences. In the third chapter, in an attempt to provide an understanding of transnational television, we explained how television became a global concept and how television turned into a market where ideas and concepts circulated in a systematic environment, mainly through format adaptations. In doing so, we dealt with views of cultural homogenization, cultural proximity and cultural hybridization.

With the help of these two chapters, we provided the concepts of transnational television and adaptation and built the necessary ground for looking specifically into American to Turkish transnational television adaptations. Finally in this chapter, these two chapters will help look closely into our case studies and provide an analysis of the adaptation process. For the case study of this thesis, two American series and their Turkish adaptations were chosen as subjects. First one is Shonda Rhimes's *Grey's Anatomy* (2005-) and its Turkish counterpart *Doktorlar* (2006- 2010); the second one is the hit FOX series *The O.C.* (2003- 2007) and its Turkish adaptation titled *Medcezir* (2013- 2015). With a view to understand the

industrial and cultural markers that are incorporated in the adaptation process, these two series and their Turkish adaptations will be analyzed closely.

By doing so, we aim to understand how transnational adaptations occur within the American to Turkish point of view, what is changed, what is adjusted and what is omitted through the process. In order to present a fruitful research and follow an organized manner throughout, certain themes and focus points were chosen. This selection was made based on Arthur Asa Berger's essay titled *Analyzing Television From a Cross-Cultural Perspective* (1992). In this work, Berger listed out several focus points to look at when evaluating cross-cultural products, including character's values, gender roles, dominant themes, stereotypes and class. (Berger, 1992: 16-19)

4.1 *Grey's Anatomy*

The series *Grey's Anatomy* is the prime time medical drama of ABC (American Broadcasting Company) network beginning in March of 2005. It is created and produced by Shonda Rhimes. The show is now one of the highest rated and, with its 12th season greenlit for 2015-2016, one of the longest running television shows in the United States. *Grey's Anatomy* has been nominated for several awards and was received a Golden Globe Award for Best Television Drama in 2007 and gained international success. It has been broadcast in many countries and was adapted for Colombian television as well. Less than two years after it appeared in the United States, it was adapted for Turkish television.

Grey's Anatomy focuses on the fictional lives of surgical interns starting their professional lives with their residency at the Seattle-Grace Hospital located in Seattle, Washington. The main characters are Meredith Grey (Ellen Pompeo), the show's namesake, Cristina Yang (Sandra Oh), Alex Karev (Justin Chambers), Izzie Stevens (Katherine Heigl) and George O'Malley (T.R. Knight). The series focuses on their efforts to balance their personal and professional lives as surgical interns. As the show unfolds, other important characters are doctors Derek Shepherd (Patrick Dempsey), Miranda Bailey (Chandra Wilson), Richard Webber (James Pickens, Jr), Preston Burke (Isaiah Washington) and Callie Torres (Sara Ramirez). The cast, however, experienced some changes and replacements along its eleven seasons.

Grey's Anatomy has been described as being “arguably the best show on network TV” (Burkhead and Robson, 2008). The show is known for its racially diverse and color-blind casting (Fogel, May 8, 2005). For Strauman and Goodier, *Grey's Anatomy*, with the “focus on relationships as the driving force for the plot”, is “the most generically consistent of the new doctor shows” and it is “drawing a broad audience to the genre of ‘medical’ drama” with the soap-opera like quality it bears. (2008: 128-129). *Grey's Anatomy* also

[H]ighlights and often blurs the lines between the personal and professional relationships among Meredith and her fellow interns. (...) As the doctors struggle to understand and treat a patient's condition, they are forced to grapple with lessons that parallel their personal lives. (Straumann and Goodier, 2008: 129)

Even though *Grey's Anatomy* enjoys popular attention and good reception, it also attracts considerable criticism. In *Grey ('s) Identity: Complications of Learning and Becoming in a Popular Television Show*, Kaela Jubas describes *Grey's Anatomy* as

a “melodramatic, romanticized version of life” (2013: 127). Jubas claims that the show resonates well with the audience “by drawing them into emotionally compelling – if not entirely realistic—storylines” (2013: 141). In Jubas’s opinion, *Grey’s Anatomy* also promotes and sustains certain types of racial and gender stereotypes and sexism (2013: 136). Nevertheless, Jubas also acknowledges the show’s strong presence:

Grey’s Anatomy is interesting and unique for its portrayal of learning about work, the social, and the self, particularly in the context of medical profession. (...) It illustrates the challenges that women and members of racialized minority groups face in the workplace and in society-at-large. (2013: 141)

Grey’s Anatomy is still one of the most watched television series and is admired for its characters, music and plotline. This year’s season finale had the second highest ratings. (Bibel, May 15, 2015) The popularity that *Grey’s Anatomy* has enjoyed is not limited to the United States. It first aired in Turkey on Dizimax, one of the subscription channels of Digiturk, a private satellite provider, beginning in July 2005, which was only about four months after its premiere on American television. Nearly two years later, *Grey’s Anatomy* was adapted for Turkish television with the title *Doktorlar* (Turkish for *Doctors*).

4.2 *Doktorlar*

One of the biggest production companies in Turkey, Medyapım, adapted *Grey’s Anatomy* in 2006. It is important to note that besides the international press coverage about the adaptation and a viewers’ prior knowledge of *Grey’s Anatomy*, it is difficult to find definitive proof that *Doktorlar* is a licensed adaptation of

Grey's. Besides the knowledge of people who observed similarities that *Doktorlar* bears with regards to *Grey's* posted on internet platforms such as Ekşi Sözlük (“sour dictionary”, where users create and update entries on topics of interest), one of the few acknowledgements of *Doktorlar's* source text came in an interview with *Hello Life*, promoting the Turkish adaptation for *Private Practice*, called *Merhaba Hayat* (2012- 2013), in which producer Fatih Aksoy revealed that “having successfully adapted *Grey's Anatomy*, Medyapım is honoured to be able to present *Private Practice*, a spinoff of *Grey's Anatomy*, to our Turkish audience” (Roxborough, September 19, 2012).

Doktorlar premiered on Show TV, a national television channel, on December 28th, 2006 and ran for four seasons in four years. Ninety-seven episodes were produced in all, of which the final ten were produced by popular demand, replacing certain actors including Ela Altındağ, the counterpart of Meredith Grey. Reason behind restarting the series was the popular interest and high ratings of the reruns. The series was produced by Fatih Aksoy and holds the record for being the series with most re-runs on Turkish television (Türkiye Gazetesi, October 7, 2014). *Doktorlar* was also broadcast in several countries, mostly in the Middle East, such as United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar and Tunisia as well as Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

Main characters of *Doktorlar* were Ela Altındağ (Yasemin Ergene) as Meredith Grey, Levent Atahanlı (Kutsi) as Derek Shepherd, Zenan Parlar (Melike Güner) as Cristina Yang, Suat Birtan (Bekir Aksoy) as Preston Burke, Kader (Aysun Kayacı) as Izzie Stevens, Hasan (Yağmur Atacan) as George O'Malley, Burak (Mehmet Aslan) as Alex Karev, Fikret (Yeşim Ceren Bozoğlu) as Miranda Bailey and

Haldun Göksun (Cüneyt Türel) as Richard Webber. Evidently, the Turkish adaptation encompassed all the main characters of *Grey's*. The similarities to the original manifest themselves on the surface, yet the depth is controversial and will be analyzed further in the upcoming pages.

For many reporters, online fans, and regular viewers, the accuracy of *Doktorlar's* vision of *Grey's* was undeniable. Emrah Güler of *Hürriyet Daily News* wrote that the series was a “word-for-word remake of” *Grey's*. Yet, in noting the major differences, he continued:

The in-hospital drama and weekly cases that ensued were changed (and made to fit with Turkish culture. (...) The biggest change came as a blow to the spirit of the original series, with the never-ending sexual antics of the attending doctors, residents and interns transformed into mostly conservative games for marital conquests, as marriage (and divorce) became the central motifs of the remake. (Güler, January 5, 2015)

The series was also criticized by real doctors for portrayals of characters and events. A doctor named Yakup Arslan complained that the series made doctors look like they were having romantic affairs within the hospital and that this caused psychological violence against practicing doctors. (Haberler, September 24, 2011)

Doktorlar's similarities to *Grey's* made visible the sharp, clear changes that were made to tone down themes such as sexuality and provide the necessary local flavor. Characters, their relationships, the patient cases and even the appearances of certain characters were obvious in their resemblance; yet *Doktorlar* was still undoubtedly “a totally different series” than its original (Güler, 2015), though still a ratings hit (Roxborough, September 19, 2012).

4.3 *Grey's Anatomy* and *Doktorlar*: An Overall Comparison

Even though all characters and most patient cases portrayed in *Grey's* have equivalents in *Doktorlar*: the patient cases of *Doktorlar*'s first season are mostly the same with *Grey's* first two seasons. There are considerable changes, fine-tunings and alterations made in the adaptation. These changes greatly affect the tone and the plot of the series, and result in a lack of depth in both the story and the characters.

It is not a mere coincidence that the main character of *Grey's* is named Meredith Grey. Even though there are characters present in every episode, this story is mainly Meredith's, emphasized via Meredith's voice-over narration at the beginning and end of each episode. The cases, events, and the daily interactions in her personal and professional life form the core of the show's narration, which also provide insight into the theme of that episode and foreshadow plot points. In the Turkish adaptation, the situation is different. Firstly, the Turkish title translates as "doctors" which no longer refers to the main character, Ela, but rather a show portraying doctors in general. Secondly, and more importantly, in *Doktorlar*, there is no voice-over narration, distancing the audience from Ela and her presence in the story. Lack of these two points result in a loss of meaning for *Doktorlar* although viewers know Ela to be the main character because she is at the center of a thorny love story and receives the most screen time.

Music is also another point of divergence in these two shows. *Grey's* is known for effective music selection and has released soundtrack albums consisting of songs used in its episodes. *Doktorlar*, however, makes use of instrumental music, and there are signature songs that are identified with scenes involving Ela and Levent

and their knotty romance. Besides these few songs by famous Turkish artists, *Doktorlar* does not offer much diversity in the music department.

Another important point is the differences in season and episode runtimes and their numbers. *Grey's* first season ran for nine episodes while *Doktorlar's* first season consists of twenty-six. There are similar differences for all seasons with the note that *Doktorlar* ran for only four seasons whereas *Grey's* has been picked up for a twelfth season. Moreover, each *Grey's* episode lasts 40 minutes as opposed to a 75-minute standard episode of *Doktorlar*. With an additional half hour of air time, *Doktorlar* has more room for character or story development, but instead the extra time is devoted to details of romantic ventures, signature music attributed to these romances, and long pauses between line readings. One final observation about episodes is the titles. Each episode of *Grey's* is named after a popular song, such as the very first episode named after the Beatles song "A Hard Day's Night", and is fairly relevant to the themes of these episodes. Episode titles, along with the narration, function as indicators of the upcoming story. As Patrick Gill states:

(...) *Grey's Anatomy* episode titles have a strong propensity to unify apparently disparate narrative elements and turn them into one sweeping statement of universal applicability. They may arouse the viewers' curiosity and they certainly function as marks of differentiation between individual episodes. (Gill, 2008: 28)

This is not implemented in *Doktorlar*; its simple numbering of each episode neglects another opportunity to offer more to the viewer about that episode's story.

Doktorlar's first season is made up of twenty-six episodes, and more than eighteen of them share the same patient cases and some personal stories with *Grey's*. Portraying this much similarity, where does the local color manifest itself? These

adjustments are demonstrated through relationships, character's personal backgrounds and medical cases. These aspects as well as the points of adjustment made for the sake of providing cultural proximity will be examined.

In spite of the fact that *Grey's* relies heavily on Meredith's voice, the story is also about the personal and professional relationships of certain other aforementioned characters whose lives, stories and experiences are articulated alongside Meredith's. It is possible to witness all of the main characters' backgrounds as the episodes go on. Personal ambitions, challenges endured, distinct personalities unfold with each episode. In unfolding these, certain plot points act as catalysts, whether a patient case or the way interns and residents spend their spare time. One episode of *Grey's* provides insight about Cristina with her own voice-over narration instead of Meredith's, and the revelation of Izzie's modelling career, Richard Webber's history with Meredith's mother or the portrayal of Alex as a macho, insensitive but flirtatious man as opposed to his sentimental, caring relationship with babies and how a lack of these emotions affected his personality are all examples of how *Grey's* is not about just one person. In building the themes of friendship, colleague relationships and revelation of important points, the concept of place proves crucial. This notion of place presents one of the major cultural adjustments in the Turkish adaptation.

The interns and residents in *Grey's* make use of several different places while getting to know each other. The hospital, the on-call room and the break room cannot sufficiently portray this process. We see in *Grey's* that these people visit the Emerald City Bar to relax and grab a drink after work. This use of an outside setting is typical in many television series: Central Perk of *Friends*, MacLaren's of *How I*

Met Your Mother, Monk's Café of *Seinfeld*, Moe's Tavern of *The Simpsons* or simply Cheers. These places serve as a habitual bonding spot for main characters. In his book *The Great Good Place*, Ray Oldenburg named this "third place" or "third space" and argued that these places are crucial in building a sense of place and civic engagement, and that they "foster (...) creative interaction." (1989) For Oldenburg, individuals can maintain a healthy social life by existing in the third space, followed by their home which is the first space, and in their second space which is their work environment. Joe's bar serves a similar purpose as this third space and is especially important to *Grey's*, because it is where Meredith meets Derek and thus provides the first and one of the most important knots in the story: sleeping with the boss.

Doktorlar, however, lacks such a place. Alcohol consumption is not a conventional portrayal in Turkish television and is usually presented through implication. With this in mind, adding the already present complaints about how *Doktorlar* affects real life doctors' reputation in a negative way, choosing a bar similar to the one *Grey's* doctors visit could have drawn criticism. For these reasons, the Emerald City Bar does not exist in *Doktorlar*, but neither is it replaced with something more acceptable, such as a coffee house. Therefore, the chance to offer a bonding place for these characters to deepen their relationships is missed. Certain interpersonal scenes are provided with, at most, a walk by the Bosphorus. In short, a designated spot for relaxation and a means to building stronger relationships for these characters does not exist.

Another difference presented in *Doktorlar* is the aforementioned first knot in the story and perhaps serves as an explanation to the tone of *Doktorlar* in general. Compared to *Grey's*, *Doktorlar* is more about Ela and Levent's unresolved romance

throughout the series and superficially touches other characters. This is confirmed through the finale of the series when Ela and Levent finally reunite and marry after four seasons various obstacles. *Grey's*, on the other hand, starts the day after Meredith and Derek spend the night together upon meeting at Joe's. Their relationship, although on and off, is resolved when they get married, without much drama or a lavish ceremony, at City Hall. Therefore, despite being central characters, Meredith and Derek's relationship is not the sole focus of *Grey's* because it is not stretched across seasons, and its resolution in marriage offers so little spectacle to the show; meanwhile, *Doktorlar's* focus on Ela and Levent's romance prioritizes their story over other characters', by reuniting them in the big finale. This aspect not only shows a difference in the main focus and tone in both series, but it also portrays another cultural adjustment: as opposed to Meredith and Derek's relationship, triggered by an impromptu sexual encounter; Ela and Levent's romanticized and slow-evolving relationship is deemed more morally apt for Turkish audiences.

While Meredith and Derek know each other via their one night stand before her first day as an intern; Levent and Ela get into a fight over sharing a cab under heavy rain on her first day as an intern. Meredith and Derek's setback in their relationship is that their prior sexual engagement goes against the hospital rules. Without the sexual overtones, Ela and Levent's encounter in the cab is merely a serendipitous event, a meet-cute. This presents the first hints at how *Doktorlar* toned down extramarital sexual engagement, a change also evident in the absence of Meredith and George's one night stand, Izzie and Alex's sexual tension, on-call room interactions and many more. In Turkey, extramarital sexuality remains a taboo, thus this further adjustment was made. (*Radikal*, August 22, 2014)

Another telling decision in *Doktorlar* involves depicting Ela's father as a legendary surgeon, as opposed to Meredith's mother and world-renowned surgeon Ellis Grey. A neglectful, perfectionist father who becomes an exemplary surgeon was perhaps more believable in Turkish culture, rather than a neglectful and a perfectionist mother who pursues her career as a surgeon at the expense of her own child. Having a mother who is also surgeon must have been assumed unlikely because it would hinder her from being a good mother to Ela. With this adjustment, a sense of verisimilitude is realized: it would be an anomaly to have a mother who became a legendary surgeon in a period where women's education did not proceed that far along. This unlikelihood is avoided by making Ela's father the renowned surgeon. Ellis Grey's affair with Richard Webber, an interracial affair between two people who are each married to other people, would also have been controversial and was therefore left out of *Doktorlar*.

Grey's portrays characters who are sexually active, polygamous, and able to engage in sex without commitment. *Doktorlar* replaces these themes with romantic complications that continue for every character until the finale. Zenan finding Suat, and inspiring Levent and Ela to finally get their "happily-ever-after" reinforces the theme of love against all odds.

Characters Cristina Yang in *Grey's* and Zenan Parlar in *Doktorlar* are the most important secondary characters in these dramas, and the differences in their portrayal also reflects the different local flavors. Cristina Yang is an Asian-American character who was always the top of her class, experienced a privileged (if somewhat unlikely) upbringing as a Jewish Asian American in Beverly Hills. She is strong, ambitious, driven, unsentimental, hot-tempered, competitive, arrogant

and guarded. (Hye Seung Chung, Kal Alston and Mark Stern, 2008) She is passionate about medicine and shows particular enthusiasm for cardiology from the start. She shows very little emotion, lacks empathy, is protective of her personal space and has poor bedside manners. *Grey's* portrays Cristina as this strong-headed, cutthroat character who softens and shows a more human side of herself over time through her experiences with patients, superiors and romantic partners. In the meantime, however, she does not lose her passion for medicine and proves to be a successful cardiothoracic surgeon who can handle her professional and personal life as a strong woman.

Zenan Parlar is the counterpart of Cristina Yang, in the sense that they share a passion for cardiology, they are both stubborn and rational rather than sentimental. While Cristina portrays a privileged Asian American minority, Zenan is Kurdish and has had a difficult life for financial and cultural reasons. Zenan's Kurdish identity is revealed when a patient brought into the emergency room speaks only Kurdish, and only Zenan can understand her. This points to the Kurdish conflict present in Turkey since 1970s. Cristina's Asian identity needs no introduction because of her physical appearance but Zenan's identity is different; her Kurdish identity is not revealed until, under professional pressure, she has to communicate with a Kurdish patient.

The differences between Cristina and Zenan are multifaceted, although at first glance, they both represent the minority Other. However, Cristina places very little personal importance on her ethnicity, and she deals with very few complications regarding her Asian or Jewish background. Zenan, on the other hand, continuously deals with her identity as a Kurdish woman and a doctor, conflicts that are

particularly emphasized in her relationship with her grandmother and her Kurdish-speaking patients. Stereotypes regarding Cristina apply to her only insofar as having a controlling Asian mother and being a hardworking, successful medical student. On the other hand, although Zenan is not labeled as Kurdish from the start, the culture she brings into the story is crucial, with her grandmother a driving force in her relationship with Suat. Her grandmother represents everything that is Eastern, traditional, and moral, which underscores the clash Zenan endures in her dual identity: a Kurdish woman at the heart of the West and the modern woman who has distanced herself from her Eastern traditions. In that regard, Zenan represents a heavier clash of identity compared to Cristina, in part because *Grey's* has several minority characters bearing the burden of racial and/or sexual representation: Callie Torres, Preston Burke, or Richard Webber. Yet, *Doktorlar's* only recurring minority character is Zenan, limiting the representation of this multicultural theme to her Kurdish background and making it a large part of her personal story.

One other major difference between Cristina and Zenan is the transformation of these characters as their stories unfold. Cristina's stubborn, emotionally distant and guarded character softens through her relationship with Meredith, Preston Burke and later Owen Hunt (Kevin McKidd). Hye Seung Chung writes:

From Season One forward, (...), Cristina remains aloof and detached, feeling uncomfortable when hugged by patients and treating a pregnant cancer patient coldly when she makes the decision to forego chemo and keep the baby against her doctor's advice. Only after the midpoint of the second season does Cristina gradually lower her shield and reveal a soft, vulnerable side through her bonding with Meredith (whom she calls "my person" and commiserates about the difficulty of dating an attending [doctor]) and the other interns, not to mention her relationship with Burke. (2008: 35)

Eventually, Cristina becomes a more human version of herself, yet she also becomes the accomplished cardiothoracic surgeon she aspired to be. Her story is not one of a motherly evolution, but a more broadly human one where she learns to face her emotions. In contrast, Zenan must raise Revan, her daughter with Suat, on her own as a single mother. Cristina is a woman who chooses her career over motherhood and opts for abortion as opposed to Zenan whose professional ambition is shadowed by her romantic affair with and eventual marriage to Suat, even if she eventually balances the roles of mother, wife, and doctor. Therefore the character of Zenan is a superficial replica of Cristina, with a similarly disorganized, stubborn, distant and guarded character, but whose very different experiences as a woman stuck between her Eastern and Western identities eventually produces a woman in search of a husband instead of a world renowned surgical career.

Grey's touches upon issues of homosexuality as well. Callie Torres, an orthopedic surgeon and a Latina, comes out as a lesbian after her brief marriage to George O'Malley. Callie's affair with Doctor Erica Hahn (Brooke Smith) and later her eventual marriage to Doctor Arizona Robbins (Jessica Capshaw) offer one of the most remarkable homosexual couples in primetime American television. Callie Torres not only adds to the diversity of the series, but her relationship with these women also serves to "stabilize" the heterosexual discourse on television (Meyer, 2010: 375). This story is omitted entirely from *Doktorlar*. While choosing to not express a story, *Doktorlar* expresses a cultural understanding in the process: no homosexuality on Turkish television. A similar example to this situation was present in the series *Bir İstanbul Masalı*, "An Istanbul Tale", broadcast in 2003. In the series, Selim Arhan (Mehmet Aslantuğ) was dumbfounded with the revelation that his close friend Zekeriya was homosexual. Selim's personal distancing from

Zekeriya (Emre Karayel), as well as the decision to omit these scenes from *Bir İstanbul Masalı*'s reruns is emblematic of a similar viewpoint about homosexuality in Turkish culture. (22dakika, August 30, 2012)

In a culture where a woman's sphere is home, her appropriate occupation is motherhood, and homosexuality is openly frowned upon, portraying a Turkish approximate equivalent of Cristina who is a mother, a Turkish Meredith who meets her boss on a cab instead of a one night stand, and choosing to omit a story of Callie Torres and her wife Arizona Robbins is first and foremost a necessary adjustment to avoid both public criticism and official censorship.

In summary, *Grey's* portrays the career ambitions, personal emotional journeys, moral and ethical approaches regarding both the medical practice and private lives of carefully depicted characters. The show is careful to offer a diverse understanding of sexuality, religion, relationships, morals, and ethics. *Doktorlar*, on the other hand, portrays a dominant love story over other characters' stories and fails to provide the diversity and depth that *Grey's* manages to depict.

With these in mind, however, *Doktorlar* sustains habitual thematic conventions of Turkish television. It is possible to assume that because *Grey's* aired on a channel that required subscription, the audience it appealed to had different demographics compared to Show TV's *Doktorlar*: the eligibility to subscribe to a channel can hint at better economical, educational and a less traditionally-shaped viewers whereas a national television channel can reach every demographic. This may explain why a private channel gets to air *Grey's* without any filtering while *Doktorlar* opts for adjustments that act accordingly with these thematic conventions. In this sense, Dizimax takes the role of niche television as opposed to Show TV who appeals to a

more diverse demographic. They show clashes of identity, the East and the West, tradition and modernization, sexuality and morals. Eventually, *Doktorlar* underlines themes of monogamy, motherhood, morality while glorifying an ideal of eternal love revolving around firstly Ela and Levent, and secondly around Zenan and Suat. To sum up, *Doktorlar* is not about surgeons and their lives as doctors and persons, but about people who happen to work at the same hospital. As an adaptation, *Doktorlar* borrows its shell from *Grey's Anatomy* but the flavor is observably Turkish.

4.4 *The O.C.*

Fox Network premiered *The O.C.* in 2003 and the show ran for four seasons. Created by Josh Schwartz, the show is a teen drama centering on the lives of Newport Beach residents in Orange County, California. A total of 92 episodes were produced, and the series finale aired in 2007, after gradually receiving lower ratings overtime. Rather than focusing on the wealth and luxuries of a town like Newport Beach, *The O.C.* offered glimpses of community, clashes of class, and characters beyond a group of teenagers and their rich families.

The main characters of *The O.C.* are Ryan Atwood (Benjamin McKenzie), Seth Cohen (Adam Brody), Sandy Cohen (Peter Gallagher), Kirsten Cohen (Kelly Rowan), Marissa Cooper (Mischa Barton) and Summer Roberts (Rachel Bilson). Other important characters are Marissa's parents Julie Cooper (Melinda Clarke) and Jimmy Cooper (Tate Donovan), Kirsten's father Caleb Nichol (Alan Dale) and Luke Ward (Chris Carmack) as Marissa's boyfriend.

The series starts with Sandy Cohen, a lawyer, having to defend Ryan and his brother after stealing a car and getting caught. Sandy helps Ryan avoid time in jail by defending him. Realizing that Ryan, despite his troubled actions, is a smart kid, Sandy decides to help by bringing Ryan to his home in Newport Beach. Kirsten, Sandy's wife, is appalled by the idea that Sandy could bring a stranger into their house and she objects to Ryan's stay. However, as they get to know him and he starts helping around the house Kirsten softens. Seth, who represents the ultimate outsider to his own society both as a teenager and as a Newport citizen, bonds with Ryan as a brother, and the Cohens officially become Ryan's legal guardians. Ryan soon starts high school and becomes a community member. Meanwhile, Ryan builds a close relationship with the girl next door, Marissa, which soon evolves into a romance. With Ryan befriendng the ultimate popular girl, Seth also tries to befriend his longtime crush, Summer. The series, eventually, focuses on Ryan's story as he becomes a citizen of Newport Beach; no longer the stranger despite all the problems he has with this society which he is in no way familiar. It's a story of finding a family and a home other than the one you were born into.

Ryan Atwood is the epitome of a stranger, the outsider. He is a member of the low-class Chino City and is involved in criminal activities, violence, drugs and alcohol. His father is in jail and his mother is an alcoholic, always involved in some relationship that Ryan does not approve of. His brother Trey is in no way a good example because the car theft he drags Ryan into is the reason they meet Sandy Cohen. Upon moving to Newport Beach, Ryan becomes a quiet, observant teenager who everyone calls the "kid from Chino", who does not belong, and he is constantly given a hard time because of his background. Yet with his protective and brotherly attitude towards Seth and his relationship with the Cohens, Ryan soon becomes a

loved member of the house. Having had to stand up for himself in his Chino life, Ryan's aggression becomes a problem in his new society but towards the middle of the first season, he starts to blend in.

Ryan proves to be different from the native teenagers of Newport Beach. He is studious, he does not dwell on material wealth, and his loyalty to his new family and friends helps his integration. With his entrance to this new society as the kid who stole a car, Ryan transforms into a responsible person with strong bonds to his family and friends. More importantly, Ryan brings balance to the Cohen household.

Kirsten's father is Caleb Nichol, one of the wealthiest businessmen in Orange County, and she works at his company. Sandy is a lawyer who advocates for less fortunate people like Ryan. Kirsten and Sandy's romance is strongly emphasized in the story, but their clash is with their society that reflects to their own family. They do not truly appreciate the kind of town that Newport is: materialistic and shallow. Sandy comes from humble beginnings and Kirsten's family stands for wealth. Sandy earns less than Kirsten and despises Caleb as a person, leaving Kirsten stuck between these two men. Shortly, Kirsten is a genuine Newport Beach resident married to a man who represents the opposite of materialism. Sandy stands for justice, mercy, and he is the voice of the victims. This clash is channeled elsewhere with Ryan's arrival. Seeing Ryan and difficulties of his life, Kirsten grows fonder of both Ryan and other men in her house because of the transformation she sees in them.

Ryan's addition to the Cohens is important for everyone. Because of Ryan, Sandy has the chance to become a better man by helping more people, Seth is no longer a bullied nerd, and now has the protection of a brother, and Kirsten builds a better

connection with her family. In return, Ryan also has a different idea of life with the opportunities that the Cohens provide him: Sandy becomes the protective and thoughtful father he never had, Seth becomes the friend and a brother who is always there for him and Kirsten is the mother who Ryan knows will never abandon him, as opposed to his biological mother who kicked him out of the house, and eventually disappeared after seeing him fully integrated with the Cohen family.

Seth Cohen, prior to Ryan's arrival, represents the outsider with an interest in comic books, video games, and indie music; he thinks that no one knows he exists, especially Summer whom he has loved since childhood. This, however, changes as Seth starts to blend in with new friends alongside Ryan. Even though Seth was born into the society, he could never really be a part of it until Ryan came along. Therefore, Ryan fills several voids and cracks in many people's lives.

Marissa Cooper and Summer Roberts are two of the most popular girls in Newport Beach. Summer is known for her flirtatiousness and Marissa is dating the water polo captain, Luke. Ryan helps Marissa transform and reject the superficiality of their community and with Ryan and Marissa's blooming relationship, Summer also joins the group and this makes it possible for Seth to become friends, and eventually a couple, with Summer. Because of Ryan, two girl best friends and Seth the misfit become a group of four close friends.

As *The O.C.* became one of the most popular teen dramas in American Television (Barone et al., April 16, 2014), it received international interest and was broadcast in many countries, including Turkey. *The O.C.* aired on CNBC-e, a cable and satellite platform channel, a year after its premiere in the United States. The official adaptation of the series was brought to life a decade after its original.

4.5 *Medcezir*

Medcezir, Turkish for Ebb and Tide, was produced by Ay Yapım for Star TV, a national channel. It was produced by Kerem Çatay and written by Ece Yörenç in 2013. The series ran for two seasons with a total number of seventy-seven episodes. As opposed to *The O.C.*'s runtime of forty-four minutes per episode, *Medcezir*'s each episode was a hundred and twenty minutes; nearly tripling *The O.C.*'s overall screen time. Unlike *Doktorlar*, *Medcezir* was declared by Warner Brothers to be an official adaptation and received media coverage in the United States as such. (Weisman, September 17, 2013). *Medcezir*'s finale aired on June 12th, 2015. Both the first and the last episodes of the show were at the top of the ratings the night they aired. (Dizisi, September, 2015)

Characters of *Medcezir* were Yaman Koper (Çağatay Ulusoy) as Ryan, Mira Beylice (Serenay Sarıkaya) as Marissa, Mert Asım Serez (Taner Ölmez) as Seth Cohen, Selim Serez (Barış Falay) as Sandy Cohen, Ender Serez (Mine Tugay) as Kirsten Cohen and Eylül Buluter (Hazar Ergüçlü) as Summer Roberts. Asım Şekip Kaya (Can Gürzap) played Caleb Nichol and Sude Beylice (Şebnem Dönmez) played Julie Cooper. Other recurring characters were Faruk Beylice (Murat Aygen) as Jimmy Cooper and Orkun Civanoglu (Metin Akdülger) as Luke Ward. One major character that *Medcezir* developed entirely differently from *The O.C.*, for reasons that shall be elaborated below, was Ender's sister Sedef Kaya (Defne Kayalar) who in *The O.C.* was Hailey Nichol, a character that appeared early in the run but did not figure in most of the episodes.

One of the first changes is the fact that while Newport Beach and Chino are actual places in California, Altinkoy (Golden Bay in Turkish) and Tozludere (Dusty River

in Turkish), which are equivalents of Newport Beach and Chino respectively, are fictional places created for the series. This perhaps felt unrealistic as to how an American wealth of the California bay would transfer to such a place like Istanbul. Tim Newcomb of *Time* had written that they were “rather doubtful there’s actually an Orange County anywhere near Istanbul, or all of Turkey, for that matter” when they announced the news for the adaptation (Newcomb, October 9, 2013). Newcomb perhaps referred to the low possibility that any recreation of Newport Beach would be insufficient in portraying the wealth, class, and specific culture that Newport represents, and how Chino and Ryan serve as its polar opposite. However, to represent the clash and irony of Newport society as wealth-oriented and seemingly happy, the location and surroundings do not have to be exactly the same, and in that sense Newcomb’s comment is dismissive and superficial. Altinkoy and Tozludere present the clash that Newport Beach and Chino does efficiently. The wealth and different lifestyle of Newport Beach compared to Chino is just as present in *Medcezir*’s Altinkoy. As opposed to Ryan from Chino, Yaman is from the slum that is Tozludere and Altinkoy stands as a perfect picture for the elites of Istanbul with their unique spacious villas and sports facilities. In short, *Medcezir* captures the clash of class and the differences between two communities of the same city even though the location is very different from Orange County.

4.6 *The O.C.* and *Medcezir*: An Overall Comparison

Some important differences and similarities are present between both series. Many of the *Medcezir* main characters share the same occupations as the characters of *The O.C.*; Ender works for her father while Selim is a lawyer. Asım Şekip Kaya is a

businessman and is driven by money. Yet while the young characters of *The O.C.* are teenagers in high school, *Medcezir* portrays its characters as freshman university students. Whether this age adjustment results in different viewing habits calls for deeper research; however this change allows *Medcezir* to avoid debates about its narrative credibility. Some had criticized *The O.C.*'s cast for their relatively advanced age for playing high school students (Lawson, September 30, 2009); however, the actors of *Medcezir* are around the same age as their characters.

As the Turkish version of Ryan, Yaman is almost exactly the same. Even though his father's whereabouts are unknown and he is presumed dead as opposed to Ryan's imprisoned father who later becomes involved in his new life in Newport Beach, the fact that he grew up without a father is unchanged. Yaman is as silent, observant, smart and quick tempered as Ryan is. He is physically aggressive and easily ticked off, having had to protect himself from mental and physical violence that he had to endure. Moreover, upon his inclusion to the Serez family, he serves a similar purpose as the new outsider and misfit, bringing people together both in the family and in the community over time. Selim Serez finds Yaman in need of legal support after he and his brother Kenan steal a car and crash it. Selim brings him home over Ender's objections, puts him in the guest house, and Yaman befriends Mert quickly. Just as Ryan did, Yaman becomes an important part of their lives and soon becomes friends with Mira and Eylül, also making it possible for Mert to connect with Eylül. The rest of the story is aligned very similarly to *The O.C.*, but the strength of *Medcezir* as an adaptation is portrayed in the voluntary adjustments made and in the way that productional contingencies, like the departure of an actress, was handled as the story unravels and ends.

Medcezir deals in detail with how the series portrays several important women in this story and makes some important alterations and additions. With these nuances we once again witness a change towards more culturally credible female characters as we did in the case of Ela and Zenan in *Doktorlar*. However, *Medcezir* presents us with stronger female figures and the changes they reflect do not result in the loss of female characters' voice. In some cases, the changes in *Medcezir* even elevate these female characters beyond their roles in *The O.C.*

For instance, Yaman's mother, Nevin Koper (Sibel Taşçıoğlu) as opposed to Ryan's alcoholic mother who abandons him sticks with her sons until the series finale. What puts Nevin in the social underclass, instead of alcoholism, is her job as a singer at a Turkish nightclub, known as "pavyon", a milieu usually associated with the mafia that signifies a lowbrow entertainment and therefore connoting that Nevin is morally compromised. Nevin is married to Hasan, who is disliked by Nevin's sons as a stepfather. Even though Nevin gets drunk at one of the charity events just like Ryan's mother, no further evidence presents Nevin as an alcoholic. She even stops working at the nightclub and eventually takes a job in Altinkoy as a nanny. In *Medcezir*, then, we are given a mother figure who stays with and supports her children despite her own setbacks, as opposed to Ryan's mother in *The O.C.* This adjustment is similar to *Doktorlar's* Zenan becoming a mother in search of her husband, and it reflects the prominent cult of motherhood and the preoccupation with "good" mothering within Turkish culture. With Nevin's constant presence as, Yaman does not have to consider Ender as an adoptive mother in the same way Ryan sees Kirsten. In both *Medcezir* and *Doktorlar*, motherhood is made a priority for women, and a mother stays with her child/children at all costs.

With Yaman's father assumed dead, as opposed to Ryan's imprisoned father, it is easier for Yaman to become Selim's son. The relationship between Yaman, Selim and Mert is highly similar to Ryan, Sandy and Seth's. Ryan's father is released from jail and returns to Ryan's life, eventually dating Julie Cooper. Yaman's father is initially presumed dead because of his engagement with the mafia, although it is revealed that he may be alive. The difference is that while Ryan's father integrates into Newport Beach alongside his son, Yaman's father never becomes a part of his life or a part of Altinkoy community. Yet the way Sandy/Selim becomes a father figure for Ryan and Yaman is given equal importance in both series.

The adjustment made for the character of Yaman's brother Kenan also is important to the plot. Trey, Ryan's brother, is the bad example who influences Ryan. Yet Trey as a character is much more troubled than Kenan: heavy drug use, an attempt to rape Marissa that puts him in a coma after Marissa shoots him in self-defense. The lack of complication caused by Ryan's father and his relationship with Julie Cooper is replaced with Kenan's affair with Mira's mother Sude Beylice. Even though the father is not included, the complication presents itself through Kenan. As opposed to Trey, put in a coma for his sexual assault; Mira shoots and paralyzes Kenan after she finds out about his affair with her mother. The affair is worth noting because Sude eventually has Kenan's baby at the end of the series, similar to Julie Cooper and her baby. Another crucial point is that Kenan draws a much more responsible man and a brother portrait compared to Trey. Though they both spend time in jail, Kenan later gets a job and is generally protective of Yaman. This contrasts with Trey's troublesome character, his drug addiction, sexual violence and his superficial connection with Ryan. The only knot Kenan causes in *Medcezir's* story is his relationship with Sude.

Some other character changes manifest in other major characters as well. Seth and Mert are very similar; they are both misfits and enjoy a rather refined selection of things: making music, drawing comics and sailing compared to the popular culture of their communities. Seth and Mert are labeled as nerds because of their love for science-fiction and video games. Some minor differences are Seth's promotion of underground indie music, such as the band Death Cab for Cutie. Mert however does not contribute to this kind of cultural promotion but is rather shown singing at times to amuse family and friends. His selections are rather Turkish and arabesque in that sense as opposed to Seth's American bands.² Mert also becomes a part of the friend circle upon Yaman's arrival just as Seth does with Ryan's addition to their lives.

Seth's love interest Summer Roberts is one of the popular girls in her community and is frequently shown flirting with boys. She is portrayed as a superficial girl confident with her sexual life, dumbing herself down by using uncomplicated grammar, and not revealing too much about her interests and knowledge. However, Summer proves to be different than what she appears to be in her conversations with Seth, admitting to Seth on their first sexual encounter that she is in fact a virgin. By the end of *The O.C.*, Summer has become the intelligent witty girl, goes to Brown University and is an environmental activist. Her romance with Seth leads to marriage as well. On the other hand, Eylül of *Medcezir* is a character with much less depth, whose story does not involve as big of a transformation as Summer's. Her love for fashion and shopping is emphasized, and she is not a flirty girl with excessively sexual small talk. At the end of *Medcezir*, after serious relationship

² It is important to mention that featuring the band Death Cab for Cutie can be considered a cross promotion strategy as Death Cab for Cutie was at the time signed with Atlantic Records, owned by Warner Music. *The O.C.* was production company was Warner Bros, therefore it is possible to detect a parent-company relation. *Medcezir* does not promote such synergy.

issues, Mert proposes to Eylül, thus the ideal of pure, innocent love perseveres; this contrasts with Seth, who was stuck in between the possibilities of a romance with either Summer or Anna, a character who was loved so immensely by *The O.C.* fans that Josh Schwartz initially wanted to create a spin-off focusing on Anna (Whitham, April 20, 2015). Mert is never distracted from his love for Eylül aside from a brief and regrettable affair with his publisher. Even though both Seth and Mert are united with their love interest at the end of both shows, Mert's storyline with Eylül hints at a more monogamous, ideal romance compared to Seth and Summer.

Another character change regards *The O.C.*'s Luke and *Medcezir*'s Orkun. Luke was Marissa's initial love interest and their relationship carried a strong connotation of the most popular girl dating the most popular guy at school. Luke is a snob, has very little concern for others and he is the alpha of his pack. He is not faithful to Marissa, and is eventually caught. Orkun is exactly the same in these senses, but their difference lies in the fact that Orkun becomes a recurring character as the villain who threatens Yaman and Mira's relationship out of jealousy and spite. Luke, on the other hand, is driven away from Newport Beach upon the revelation that his father is homosexual. Luke also has a brief affair with Julie Cooper, which in *Medcezir* becomes Orkun's father's affair with Hale (Meriç Aral)'s mother. Consequently he falls of the stairs and dies while having an argument with his wife. The figure of the outed father, who because of his sexuality loses his value both as a father and as an elite member of the Newport Beach community, is traded for an unfaithful heterosexual father who finds his punishment through poetic justice. His death hints at a conventional theme in Turkish television: the man who commits adultery is punished, and the woman he has the affair with has to live with the fear

of her unfaithfulness's revelation. In their case, departing from monogamy results in their demise.

Significantly, even though *The O.C.*'s and *Grey's* approaches to portrayal of homosexuality are different, as Luke's family is driven away upon the revelation of his father's sexual orientation whereas *Grey's* incorporates homosexuality as an important theme throughout, both of these shows include a representation of the subject of homosexuality. Neither *Doktorlar* nor *Medcezir* include such representation.

What *Medcezir* does with female characters is worth broader attention. Both Mira as a character and Sedef's inclusion in *Medcezir* through Ender's death is extremely important in how the series handles adapting a popular show to Turkish television by portraying and elevating powerful women with depth of character instead of creating a toned-down version of potentially controversial plot points and source characters from *The O.C.*

Marissa Cooper's life changes when Ryan moves in next door with the Cohen family. Her balance is shaken simultaneously as she grows attracted to Ryan and her father goes bankrupt. All the while, Marissa battles drinking and drug problems, almost overdosing when she sees Luke cheat on her in Mexico. Her good intentions as a friend are abused by visiting characters and her relationship with Ryan is always tested. She does not show any set of particular skills and she is heavily burdened with the problems brought on by her family and friends. At the end of season three, Marissa is killed in a car crash, written off the series because actress Mischa Barton wanted to leave the show. As Ryan and Marissa's relationship constitutes a major part of the series, this is an important change for *The O.C.*,

which the series addresses by showing Ryan depressed and constantly struggling with his emotions. Ryan never gets seriously involved with anybody else.

In *Medcezir*, Mira Beylice is the daughter of Faruk and Sude Beylice. Just like Marissa, she is the popular girl dating Orkun and her life shifts with Yaman in the picture. As her relationship with Yaman blooms, she experiences similar problems regarding her father's bankruptcy and her mother's overbearing nature, just as Marissa does. In their relationship, Yaman and Mira experience very little intrusions from others besides Orkun. Ryan and Marissa's relationship, however, is shaken by numerous and significant problems caused by minor characters such as Theresa, Ryan's former girlfriend from Chino, and her pregnancy. Even though Mira drinks and does whatever else other teens are doing, she does not experience excessive alcohol or drug problems. She has a strong relationship with her sister Beren (Miray Daner), as opposed to Marissa and her barely present sister Kaitlin (Shailene Woodley, and later Willa Holland). We see a character with musical skills reflected in her relationship with Yaman as they become a favorite singing duo in community events. Mira is the go-to organizer of events just like Marissa but she is more easy-going and accepting of Yaman's behaviors and the culture he comes from. Yaman and Mira occasionally have dinner at Yaman's favorite places near Tozludere, which is not the case with Marissa and Ryan. As opposed to Marissa's sudden death in *The O.C.* Mira and Yaman become and remain the ideal couple everyone roots for, and finally get their happy ending with a ceremony on the Altinkoy beach. At the end of *Medcezir*, Mira went under a serious surgery, recovered and they continue their happy lives with their friends and family.

The happy ending is perhaps a representation of the ending that Turkish audiences want to see. *Doktorlar* characters Ela and Levent, and Zenan and Suat get their happy endings even after a continuous chain of unpleasant events, as mentioned in the previous section. In the case of *Medcezir*, the same is true for Mira and Yaman. Yet the happy ending does not always occur in Turkish television; one of the most-watched rejections of this marriage requirement was *Aşk-ı Memnu* (tr. *Forbidden Love*, 2008-2010, an adaptation of a classic Turkish novel, produced by Kerem Çatay and written by Ece Yörenç) which remains, along with *Doktorlar*, one of the most watched and most re-run television series in the country.

Another major point regarding female characters is the equation of Kirsten of *The O.C.* and Ender of *Medcezir*. The love, faith and unity that these two women show their families are very similar and portrayed in detail. Ender is deeply in love with her husband, she tries her best to make her hard-to-satisfy father proud of her and feels underappreciated in return, she becomes a caring second mother figure to Yaman, and she is important in the community as a businesswoman and a socialite. Just like Kirsten and Jimmy, Ender had a relationship with Mira's father Faruk prior to her marriage with Selim. Still, Ender's story differs greatly from Kirsten's. Mine Tugay, the actress playing Ender, wanted to be written off the series like Mischa Barton from *The O.C.*, so Ender engaged in an affair-like situation with a business-partner that left Ender feeling guilty of emotional infidelity, unlike anything Kirsten and Sandy experienced. Ender died in a car crash in the last episode of the first season, similar to Marissa's departure. When the series returned for a second season, it opens on the Serez men, now including Yaman, returning from a three-month sailing the sea to grieve in peace and bond after Ender's passing.

Just like Kirsten's sister Hailey (Amanda Righetti), Ender's sister Sedef is a free-spirited woman who contrasts with the hardworking, ambitious and underappreciated Ender. Sedef comes back into Ender's life after a stay in the United States that involved some personal troubles she hides to avoid criticism and debate. Sedef clicks with the youth of *Medcezir* quickly. In *The O.C.*, Hailey, whose whereabouts are unknown, comes home because she is having financial troubles and finds it hard to blend in with the Cohens. Her opposite nature to Kirsten and her irresponsible behavior eventually makes her leave the house and work as a stripper/dancer at a night club. Hailey remains a minor character through her relationship with Jimmy Cooper, and does not return to the series for the last two seasons.

Yet, Sedef Kaya's addition to the plot becomes permanent after Ender's sudden death. Seeing that Serez, Mert and Yaman will find it hard to adjust to their lives without Ender, she decides to stay. Introduced to the audience as an independent, non-traditional and controversial character with her night life, her secrets and her carefree attitude towards life and people; Sedef is transformed into a successful businesswoman like Ender, with whom she contrasted greatly in the beginning, an indispensable addition to the Serez household and a confidante for Selim, Mert and Yaman. Sedef's transformation, however, is not one of becoming motherly or a care-taker. It is one of becoming a person more interested in problems other than her own as she evolves from a self-centered woman to a sensitive, caring person who supports her family. She does not function as a replacement for Ender; perhaps she does fill a gap brought by Ender's death, but she does so with her own character and voice. In time, Selim and Sedef grow close and it is implied that Selim has feelings for her. Towards the end, Sedef perhaps notices and feels the same, but

they never come together as a couple. This avoids the potential for controversy if Sedef had become involved with her sister's widower or Selim having a relationship with his late wife's sister. The void in Selim's life after Ender's passing is filled with his shaky relationship with Deniz (Aslı Oran), a reporter, and Sedef constantly flirts with either Faruk Beylice, though this never turns into a relationship, or other minor characters because of the strong female figure that she is.

Promoting Sedef as a recurring character as opposed to visiting character Hailey Nichol is indicative of another industrial practice that shapes Turkish television series industry. The absence of a mother figure constitutes a gap in the plot and whoever is added to the story is not just a new addition but tries to fill this gap. Not replacing Mine Tugay with another actress who could still portray Ender is another indicator that popular shows do not want to put their audience through a second phase of getting used to a character. Productions that have tried this, like the last ten episodes of *Doktorlar* with a new Ela (Leyla Gökşun) end up losing audiences and ratings, which resulted in cancellation of the show *Doktorlar*. Similarly, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (2011- 2014, Turkish for Magnificent Century) replaced its female protagonist due to some problems with the lead actress Meryem Uzerli, who played Hürrem Sultan (Roxelana). This change was handled by aging Hürrem Sultan and casting Vahide Perçin as an older Hürrem; the story was also moved forward in time by aging or replacing all other actors. In Turkish television, adding a character who can bring a new story to the plot is more desirable than replacing actors/actresses or adjusting the scenario, as seen in the drastic changes made to *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*. In the case of *Medcezir*, Ender's death paves the way for Sedef's transformation, and it presents the audience with a new character who fills the gap created by Ender's absence. It is an overall tendency in *Medcezir* to never lose the

mother figure, as can be seen from Nevin's constant presence in Yaman's life as opposed to Ryan's disappearing mother. Perhaps Sedef was initially modeled to also fill the void that Ender left upon her death. Yet Sedef's function is not just filling this gap because she proves to be an important character and a female lead that is hard to see in Turkish television. Sedef also contributes to the social message that women can be successful in business world; this stands as a good social message that several big companies and non-governmental organizations are trying to spread: women's sphere is not limited to home and their only job is not only to be a mother. In that sense, Sedef also stands as a wish fulfilment for women in Turkish society. Additionally, Sedef stands also in comparison to her next door neighbor Sude Beylice, the epitome of the ideal socialite of Altinkoy: stay at home, look beautiful and happy, and help your community do the same by organizing events that people will talk about.

With Ender's death, *Medcezir* producers turned a minor visiting character into a recurring major character, transforming Sedef into a strong, independent and bold female character who does not dwell on tradition, societal values or gender limitations imposed on women. Sedef's unmatched spirit is also enhanced through her costume, hair and make-up, exhibiting her as if an Amazon woman at times. (See figures below). Especially in figures 1, 2, 4 and 5, it is possible to detect gold and metal pieces that resemble armor, alongside her boldly styled hair.



Fig. 1. A screenshot of Sedef Kaya, *Medcezir* episode 75 (a)

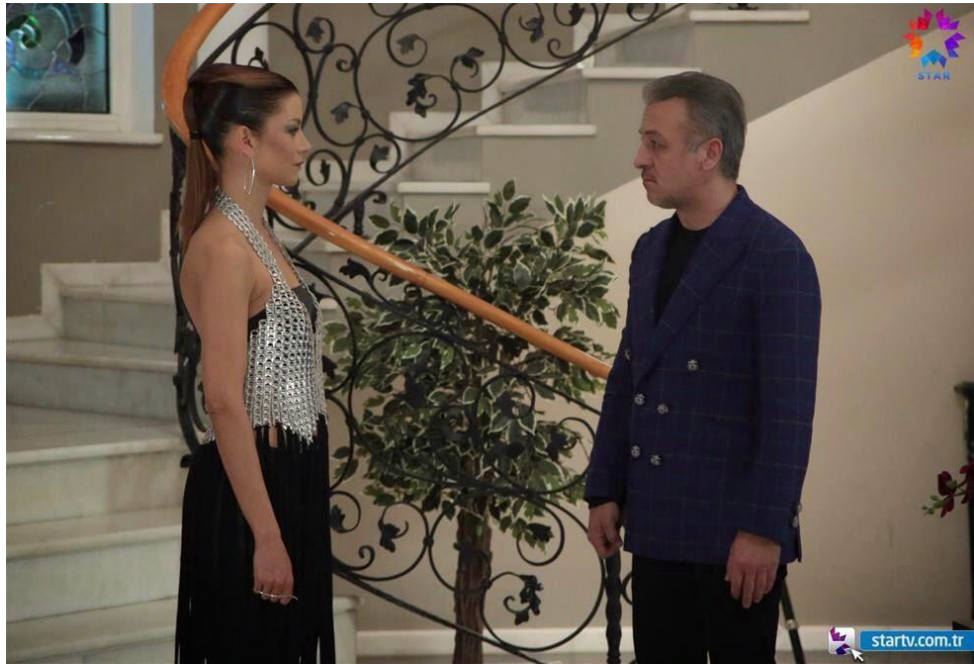


Fig. 2. A photograph of Sedef Kaya, *Medcezir* episode 55.
<http://gayectukar.blogspot.com.tr/2015/03/medcezir-sedef-kaya-stili.html>



Fig. 3. A screenshot of Sedef Kaya, *Medcezir* episode 75 (b)

Her style is unmatched by any other character and she is also someone that no audience member would see on the street. A character like Sedef is very rare in prime time Turkish television and the fact that her character is modeled after Hailey Nichol is especially important because Sedef owed her rise in *Medcezir* to production contingencies but rose above this situation. Originally, Sedef was made a recurring character to fill a gap after Mine Tugay's departure. Nevertheless, she proved to be more than just a substitute and presented us with a strong twenty-first century female figure.



Fig. 4. A photograph of Sedef Kaya, *Medcezir* episode 51.
http://nemarkabu.com/Files/Product/crop_taklit-kurk-ceket_65168562_thumb.jpg



Fig. 5. A screenshot of Sedef Kaya, *Medcezir* episode 75 (c)



Fig. 2. A photograph of Sedef Kaya, *Medcezir* episode 13. Retrieved from http://bendeistiyom.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Yesil_Beyaz_Elbise.jpg



Fig. 3. A photograph of Sedef Kaya, *Medcezir* episode 59. Retrieved from <http://bendeistiyom.com/urun-etiketi/sedef-kaya/>

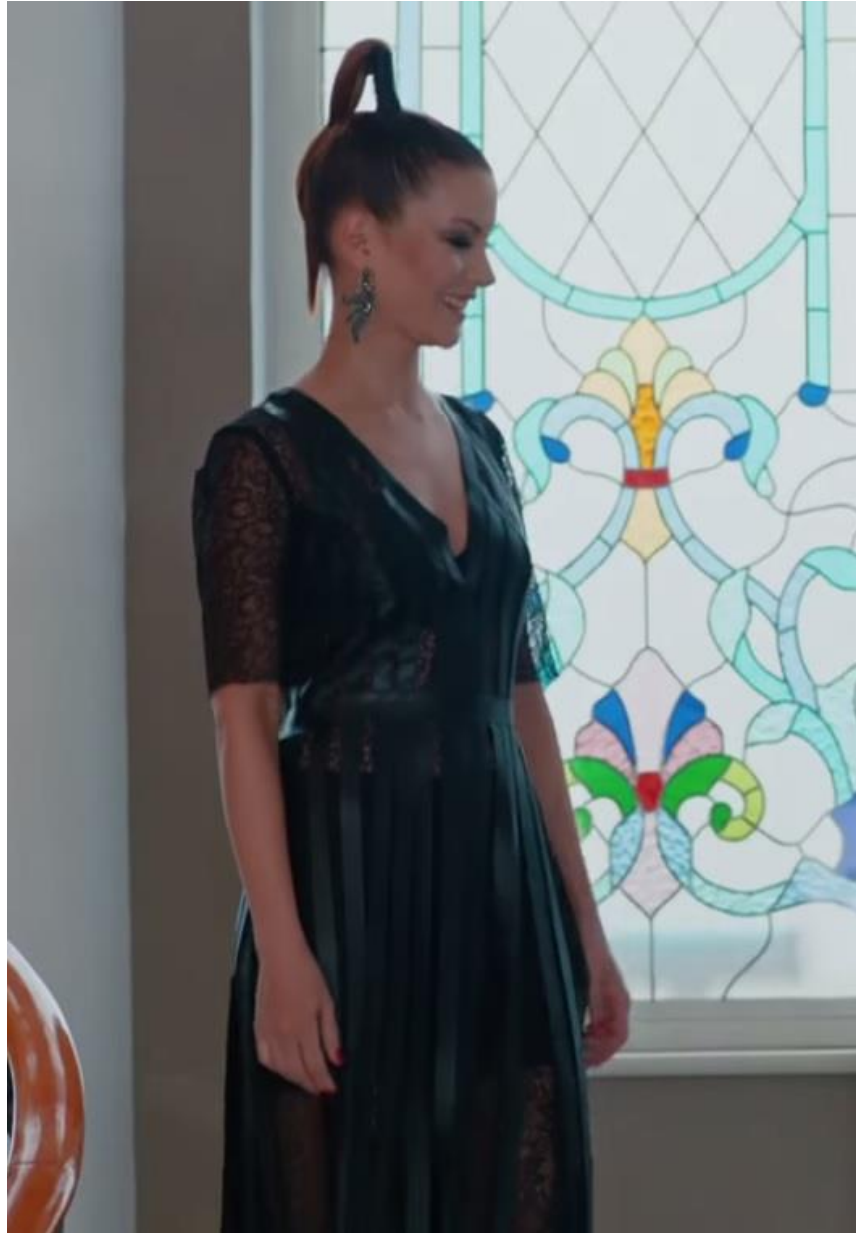


Fig. 4. A screenshot of Sedef Kaya, *Medcezir* episode 64

Aside from character changes in *Medcezir*, there are some omissions made for the sake of audiences' cultural identification. In *The O.C.* Sandy Cohen is Jewish while Kirsten is Christian, meaning Seth grows up with a mix of both religions and cultures. Consequently, to meet both traditions Seth comes up with a mixture of Christmas and Hanukkah: Chrismukkah. Seth's combination of these two seemingly different concepts also reflects the show's class message: two opposites have more

in common and they can come together just fine. The Chrismukkah concept became a popular catchphrase, even getting mentioned in shows like *Grey's*. (2:12) This concept of religious holidays would not have resonated with the audience because 99.2% of Turkey is Muslim and less than one per cent of the society are member of Judaism or Christianity (Türkiye'de Dini Hayat Araştırması, 2014), thus it is omitted, and the festive spirit replaced by New Year's celebrations.

One final adjustment to mention is the omission or change of Newport Beach's vivid charity organizations and societal events. As opposed to numerous charity events, balls and galas depicted in *The O.C.*, there are only a few of these events in *Medcezir*, most of which are hosted by Asım Şekip Kaya's firm. Events that culturally do not exist in the Turkish society, like the debutante ball that teen characters attend in *The O.C.*, are replaced with other personal celebrations like birthdays and business openings.

Medcezir depicts a westernized, modern society in Turkey. Even though depicting alcohol use and sexuality are generally censored on television, *Medcezir* makes use of these themes comfortably through implication. Characters are shown not drinking but drunk, or portrayed in bed before or after intercourse; Yaman and Mira, and Eylül and Mert experience their sexuality, though monogamously, and young people drink at the parties they attend. Sude and Kenan's affair, Sedef's signified interest in Faruk and Orkun's secret sexual partnership with Hale are all additional examples. All the same, Yaman is Mira's first sexual partner, just as Mert is Eylül's. As Mira marries Yaman and Eylül accepts Mert's proposal by the end of the series, it is insinuated that these women have only one sexual partners and reinforces the theme of monogamy. This stands in contrast to *The O.C.*, where

Marissa loses her virginity to Luke as a teenager after seeing Ryan being intimate with another woman. Therefore even though *Medcezir* depicts the westernized lives of liberated people, some mild conservatism is maintained.

As an adaptation of an American series, *Medcezir* had to deal with content that was not easy to transfer. Producers of *Medcezir* had to adjust a scenario and make it work for Turkish audiences by toning down certain themes like sexuality, sexual orientation and portray a lifestyle that has not been delivered successfully before. *Küçük Sırlar*'s portrayal of Manhattan's elite of Gossip Girl lost its credibility from the start when Turkish high school students went to school with luxury cars, a decision that ignored the reality that high school students are not old enough to drive in Turkey. Therefore, the challenge of adapting *The O.C.* credibly for Turkish audiences had to be done more meticulously. *Medcezir* found this balance regardless of these challenges: it conveys familiar themes of previously successful Turkish series and offers a happy ending, and also provides the audience a story with strong characters and events that the viewers could identify with, despite the fact that the portrayed class and their lifestyle is not common to most of the viewers.

In her article for *Radikal* newspaper's blog, Defne Akman appraised *Medcezir* as an all-encompassing portrait of society with its class, sexuality, moral dilemmas and gender themes. Akman suggests that *Medcezir* is a breath of fresh air that depicts life as it really is, as opposed to other prime time series that respect traditional constraints in their conscientious avoidance of sexuality, portrayal of women and a vicious cycle of relationships. In Akman's opinion, *Medcezir* is credible and loveable, featuring characters that can be identified with; all this despite *Medcezir*'s

fictional setting, omission of themes like homosexuality, toning down of religious signifiers and its depiction of uncommon wealth. For this reasons, Akman considers *Medcezir*'s ending as a farewell to the western, occidental life on Turkish television: a quality that she thinks other current teen dramas lack. (*Radikal*, June 4, 2015) With this quality, *Medcezir* also departs from *Doktorlar*, where themes like sexuality, sexual orientation and identity issues were minimized to avoid controversy and criticism.

Medcezir also takes an original approach to depicting technology and incorporating popular culture in primetime television. Whereas *Doktorlar* makes use of repetitious thematic music, *Medcezir* used several popular songs in both English and Turkish, one of the most important of which is Turkish singer Levent Yüksel's 'Medcezir'. By having Yaman and Mira sing and perform together, producers not only got the chance to promote popular songs diegetically, through their characters; but this joint performance also emphasized the idea of Yaman and Mira as the central, ideally compatible couple. With this point, *The O.C.*'s promotion of indie music is replaced by Yaman and Mira's music sessions and a mix of popular Turkish and English songs. The difference in music selection in between the television industries of the United States and Turkey is important at this point as well. On the one hand we have *Doktorlar*, with its very limited selection of music, and on the other we have *Medcezir*, redefining the approach of music selection in Turkish television series by introducing a mix of licensed pop songs and original music, including an original theme song that creates that feeling of genre familiarity.

One final point is how *Medcezir* uses technology to turn the ten-year gap between its première and the heyday of *The O.C.* into an advantage. In 2003, when *The O.C.* first aired, the technology was limited to laptops and flip-style mobile phones with Summer declaring that camera phones are “the autograph of the twenty-first century.” (1:22) Even though it has only been ten years, camera phones are now a given and smartphones are everywhere. *Medcezir*’s characters communicate through text, use Skype, and even fly a drone to handle their business. Perhaps an Ay Yapım signature, the audience of *Medcezir* can read each text and see who was calling simply by looking at their television, a style also used in Ay Yapım’s new project *Tatlı Küçük Yalancılar* (2015-); the Turkish adaptation of American series *Pretty Little Liars* (2010-). By incorporating common telecommunications technology, *Medcezir* transcends gap that separates it from its source text.

Costumes and fashion sense of characters are also used for advantage. Eylül has a fashion blog and instead of commercial breaks, Eylül talks about the advertised product or company and encourages viewers to either tweet or use other social media and take part in her blog. This transmedial activity that incites an engagement with *Medcezir* beyond television also adds to the quality of the series. According to Henry Jenkins, this kind of extension serves purposes of “providing insight into the characters”, “adds a greater sense of realism” and “expands the potential for market property” (Jenkins, March 22, 2007). Will Brooker similarly suggests that this invitation for a multiple-platform experience of the show generates a “participatory, interactive engagement which constructs the show as an extended, immersive experience”. (Brooker, 2001: 456) This way, it makes a “distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole” (Bonomo, 2010: 35) Eylül’s blog, called “Eylül’ün Notları” (Eylül’s Notes) serves these purposes as well. Eylül as a fashion blogger

not only promotes certain products and expands the market appeal, it encourages a participatory culture by inviting *Medcezir* audience into taking part via the internet and it also adds to Eylül's presence as a character; by seeing Eylül's notes on the blog, Eylül's presence is taken beyond a girl in a television show to become blogger with whom viewers can communicate. Additionally, like many other prime time series, *Medcezir* also uses hashtags on the bottom right of the screen to increase social media presence of the series. It is also possible to see several blogs talking about what *Medcezir* characters are wearing in a particular episode. This way, *Medcezir* also affects and creates interest in a sort of fashion sense. Due to a lack of these possibilities in the production era, these aspects were impossible to feature in *The O.C.* Utilizing technological advancements by incorporating them in the series, Ay Yapım aims at more than passive media spectatorship with *Medcezir*.

With the use of technology that *Medcezir* encouraged, the fandom and shipping favorite couples in Turkish series became also more distinct. Selim and Sedef's unrealized romance was not shipped immensely, probably due to the aforementioned strangeness of their situation of Selim being Sedef's sister's widower. However, as Mert and Eylül struggled to get back together and up until Mira and Yaman's happy ending, fans of *Medcezir* used the web and especially social media platforms to promote these couples' relationships and their own desire to reunite them. One example to this is the "yamira" hashtag and several fan pages and profiles created on platforms like Instagram ³. We can see a similar attempt of shipping by the number of YouTube videos made for Ela and Levent, and Zenan and Suat's knotty romances. In both *Doktorlar* and *Medcezir*, we can see that shipping takes place either through fan-made videos of the main couples or on

³ (https://instagram.com/medcezir__yamira/)

forums' conversations. Still, the more contemporary approach of *Medcezir* as a production that incorporates social media makes it stand out in comparison to *Doktorlar*. It is also important to note that Yaman and Mira's collaboration as musicians also enhanced the idea that they were the utmost compatible couple who were meant to be together.

Ay Yapım's efforts to bring the "privileged upscale utopia" of Orange County to Turkey were at first met with suspicion (Woods, 2013: 18). Besides the wealth and class issues it represented, Newport Beach also is a place with an "in-built offer of an ironically distancing viewpoint" from the very society that is really because it stands on its very "own delicate balance of critique and pleasurable surrender." (Woods, 2013: 25-27) The Cohens represent this dilemma with their place, and thus surrender, in Newport Beach; yet especially through Seth and Sandy, there is a distance they display via their stance and this perhaps stands for the critique that Woods talks about. Yet Altınköy meets these expectations and Serez family's inclusion and distance to the people of Altınköy stands as a representative of the fact. Serezs are an important part of this community, yet they are not completely comfortable with its order; Selim's critique towards Asım Şekip Kaya is evidence of this. Since Asım Şekip Kaya/Caleb Nichol stand for the order and wealth of their town, both Selim's and Sandy's distance towards their father-in-law and thus the community is indicative of this balance of critique and surrender.

Some of the intriguing points of *Medcezir* as an adaptation was its matching communal atmosphere with *The O.C.*, the fine-tuning for the appropriate 'Turkish family' representation and some gender role adjustments. (Bilgin, September 14, 2013) Other distinct observations are naturally the difference between aerial shots

of Newport Beach and Altinkoy, of which the latter does not come close to competing with Orange County. Nevertheless, the dimensions and depth that *Medcezir* added to their characters, and the fact that obligatory adjustments were turned into advantageous, even exemplary cases for Turkish television gives *Medcezir* its individual voice and presence.

One of *The O.C.*'s catchphrases was "Welcome to the O.C., bitch" (1:1) as Luke says after he and his friends beat Ryan and Seth, indicating that Orange County was a place with its own spirit and implying that Ryan and Seth were both misfits in this society. An article about what to expect from the Turkish adaptation wrote "'Welcome to Turkey, bitch.' Do it", indicating that this scene was a must-have ingredient to the story (Highfill, September 13, 2013). Even though this line did not transfer exactly for censorship reasons, it did transform into "Welcome to Altinkoy, stiff". This way, Altinkoy represents itself perhaps not as an equivalent to Orange County but as a community with its own rules and ways, just like Newport Beach.

Medcezir tried to capture the essence of *The O.C.* and in doing so, contributed to the story in several ways. The series is innovative, technologically savvy, departs from traditional themes on an acceptable level, and offers several characters favored by audiences even though they are original characters written specifically for *Medcezir*. Ay Yapım not only adapts an American story to Turkey, but they also give it depth with in the process. Though the places, characters and even the cultures are different, *Medcezir* conveys the essence of *The O.C.*, also giving its audience the happy ending they crave.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this thesis two Turkish television series were inspected closely as adaptations of United States television series. In this process, main striking differences and similarities were outlined. In doing so, cultural, national and industrial perspectives were outlined. The goal, consequently, was to do a case study of *Doktorlar* and *Medcezir* and through these series, demonstrate how the adaptation process in Turkey handles material from the United States. With such a focus, an elaboration of different cultural and industrial approaches was made possible.

Adaptations were viewed as copies of their original source texts. In the beginning of adaptation studies, towards the middle of twentieth century, this view of adaptations as copies left adaptation studies in a situation of dealing with scorn and belittlement. However, as adaptation studies expanded, more and more scholars reported that adaptations did not slavishly copy an idea or a story; but rather they went through a process of creative engagement. Adaptations started to be evaluated as reworkings of a source text, but with a creative and artistic process that metamorphosed this source text. It was recreation, but with interpretation, variation and intertextual engagement. The finished adaptation was a product of its own. Towards the end of twentieth century, adaptations started to be looked at with a more sociological approach and its commercial and audience reception aspects were focused on as

well as their academic, theoretical qualities. Scholars like Linda Hutcheon and James Naremore helped move adaptation studies from a theoretical, formal point of view and into a more sociological approach that took into consideration other dynamics such as audiences, television market and their creative engagement process. The debates of originality, replication and derivation lessened and the reasons behind adaptations' appeal were studied. It was concluded that the elements of familiarity and surprise increased the allure of adaptations for viewers and that for an adaptation to be successful, this resonance had to be provided.

Therefore I propose that *Doktorlar* and *Medcezir*, similarly, are examples to this creative process as they get their inspiration from their source texts, but they incorporate their own individual flavor and color. They are a product of their own.

The subject of this thesis, however, is not merely a look at adaptations with a nation-specific standpoint as American vs Turkish. The objective is to understand the case studies of this thesis as examples of transcultural, and industrially peculiar adaptation products that bear some of the characteristic of their own environments. Therefore, simply a recap of adaptation studies and their appeal explains one part of the argument aimed in this research.

Still, the subject of this thesis is to understand transcultural/transnational adaptations; and the remaining part of the argument in looking at this research's examples is answered through an understanding of how transcultural adaptations were made possible.

A rapidly globalized state of communications, technology and markets extend the horizon of adaptations. A transcultural/transnational adaptation is possible because with the globalization of the world, ideas circulate more freely. Format trade acts as

a moderator by organizing and legitimizing the process of adapting ideas across the globe. Therefore adaptations extend their scope, through globalization, and with the help of market strategies, like format trade, and they become transcultural, transnational ideas. In this process, formats serve as a filtering power and help with achieving the local color. This cooperative process constitutes the equation of current transcultural/transnational adaptation study. All of these findings are also put to perspective within the Turkish television history and industry. It was concluded that Turkey is becoming one of the countries that incorporate media globalization and use it to their advantage in their market presence. Turkish television's relationship, which was present since the initiation of television in the country, with content adapted from the United States stands intact with several American dramas adapted for Turkish channels.

One of the crucial outcomes of this research is that adapted ideas do not necessarily result in standardization. Debates of cultural imperialism, especially within a United States perspective, persist; yet views of cultural hybridity or promotion of local cultures also gain importance. Adaptations are artistic creations that transform their content in light of certain cultural, industrial and sociological parameters even though their roots are the same. What comes out of the adaptation process as a product is a hybrid product that carries with it a local cultural, industrial and societal color.

I declare that the reason behind choosing *Doktorlar* and *Medcezir* as examples for such study is that they manifest as good hybrid examples. Interestingly, however, their approach to their content are different and these examples reveal different and intriguing results about the present sectoral practices in Turkish television. It is

possible to say that these two examples also stand in contrast with each other as far as the end product that they present to the audience and the industry. *Doktorlar* remains loyal to its source text on a great scale whereas *Medcezir*'s plotline diverts in detail.

By comparing these examples to their American source texts, it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that these two countries have peculiar operating systems. While the United States developed a system of episode names, the pilot system that aims to measure the potential of a new project, releasing soundtrack albums made of music used in the episodes and publishes other merchandise; Turkey does not follow a similar pattern at all. The industry presently revolves around long runtimes and frequent re-runs. These differences in practice sometimes result in a loss of further possible connection with the audience; as was established with the case of voice-over narration by Meredith and its lack thereof in *Doktorlar*.

Doktorlar is a very similar copy of its source text *Grey's Anatomy*. The characters, the plot and even the events are the same. However, *Doktorlar* stands as an epitome of how the industry handles content for audience pleasure. While *Grey's Anatomy* is a drama with personal and professional conflicts, medical accuracy and is resemblant of real sociological complications such as race and gender, *Doktorlar*'s plot revolves around personal romantic problems and does not propose other sociological, occupational or personal depth. *Doktorlar* stands as a replica of *Grey's Anatomy*, stripped off of its multi-layered complications regarding these doctors' lives as medical students, as individuals, as partners and especially as female characters. It loses its depth further with the lack of voice over narration, with

barren musical selections and a promotion of societal values like motherhood and monogamy.

Medcezir, like *Doktorlar*, is also faithful to its source text *The O.C.* However, *Medcezir*'s implementation of its original idea is innovative as an adaptation in contemporary Turkish television with the way they blend thematic conventions in Turkish television with progressive technology features. Even though showing an elite Istanbul society matching that of Newport Beach's was seen unlikely (Newcomb, 2013), Ay Yapım's fictional society reflected a similar vibe with the unity and harmony established among the characters. The time gap of a decade between *The O.C.* and *Medcezir* was utilized in a way that instead of copying Orange County citizens, *Medcezir* introduced a tech-savvy, young, contemporary community that keeps up with modern advancements. It also contributed to a convergence culture by stimulating audience presence and participation on multiple platforms; blogs and other social media. As opposed to Newport Beach's teens with alcohol and drug addictions, *Medcezir* portrayed characters in their late teens as responsible, friendly and talented individuals.

Unlike *Doktorlar*, *Medcezir* did not try to tone down or erase themes like sexuality. What we see in *Medcezir* is a new found balance between a traditional stance of what is generally deemed apt in Turkish television, one which does not compromise any moral or traditional values, and a westernized portrayal of characters, events and themes. In addition, *Medcezir* also handled certain contingencies to their advantage. Mine Tugay's departure did not result in a loss of a main character; it instead introduced a new, strong and unique female character like Sedef that is rare to see in primetime television series. Yet it also catered to the needs of certain

themes which are considered important for traditional values. Mother figure was never taken out of the picture. Even though premarital sexuality was involved, it was implied that characters eventually married to or was proposed by their first and only sexual partners. In short, *Medcezir* tried to establish a balance between its source text which included American views of life, and harmonized it with Turkish cultural values and moral codes.

Medcezir also hints at the strong presence of production company Ay Yapım as an innovative and characteristic force in the industry. Ay Yapım's most famous projects like *Aşk-ı Memnu*, and latest projects like *Tatlı Küçük Yalancılar*, as well as *Medcezir*, all reflects the progressive and distinctive quality of the company with their style; these projects help redefine the practices of industry through their music selection, their marketing and multi-platform presence on both television and the internet.

A comparison between the two examples also contributes to the debates of fidelity in adaptation studies. In *On the Origin of Adaptations: Rethinking Fidelity Discourse and "Success" --- Biologically**, Gary R. Bortolotti and Linda Hutcheon had suggested that "fidelity to the 'original' could, in fact, be seen as irrelevant to the actual evaluation of the 'success' of an adaptation" (2007: 444) On a similar note, then, having stated that *Doktorlar* was structurally more faithful to its source text and *Medcezir* was less, this study also agrees with the notion that faithfulness does not necessarily make a good adaptation and is not directly related to its success. As the text which is less loyal to its original, *Medcezir*'s ingenious approach to its source text is more striking for the contributions it makes to the television series industry in the country. It integrates technology and concrete

audience response and in doing so, becomes a transmedial product. The different approach to music use in the episodes also help *Medcezir* stand out from its fellow television dramas in the industry alongside depicting multifaceted characters. Finding a balance between the portrayable and the potentially censorable material with their subtle strategies, it manages to present characters that break free from traditionally and culturally acceptable characteristics and themes, but still manages to depict a socially credible and reasonable story that corresponds to present codes and values.

All in all, this thesis aimed to put the American-to-Turkish adaptations of television series under a magnifying glass and analyses the practices, the tendencies and different approaches between two countries with cultural, national and industrial focus points in mind. By way of comparison, the different approaches within Turkey's primetime television series were pointed out as well. Therefore this study also deals with changing methods within Turkey's television series industry on a small scale too. Still, as its primary purpose, this thesis aimed to provide a case study of *Doktorlar* and *Medcezir* series as transnational television series adapted from the United States and Turkey.

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