

BETWEEN ACCEPTANCE AND RESISTANCE:
A CASE STUDY OF TURKISH SOAP OPERAS IN EGYPT

AYŞE ÇİPAN

AUGUST 2014

BETWEEN ACCEPTANCE AND RESISTANCE:
A CASE STUDY OF TURKISH SOAP OPERAS IN EGYPT

AYŞE ÇİPAN

AUGUST 2014

BETWEEN ACCEPTANCE AND RESISTANCE:
A CASE STUDY OF TURKISH SOAP OPERAS IN EGYPT

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
ISTANBUL SEHIR UNIVERSITY

BY

AYŞE ÇİPAN

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN CULTURAL STUDIES

AUGUST 2014

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Cultural Studies.

Examining Committee Members:

Assist. Prof. İrvin Cemil Schick
(Thesis Supervisor)

Prof. Mahmut Mutman

Assist. Prof. Aslı Telli Aydemir

This is to confirm that this thesis complies with all the standards set by the Graduate School of Social Sciences of İstanbul Şehir University:

Date

Seal / Signature

I here by declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declared that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

First Name, Last Name :

Signature :

ABSTRACT

BETWEEN ACCEPTANCE AND RESISTANCE: A CASE STUDY OF TURKISH SOAP OPERAS IN EGYPT

Çıpan, Ayşe

MA, Department of Cultural Studies

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. İrvin Cemil Schick

August 2014, 107 pages

Depending on their quality and popularity, television series can reach beyond the country in which they are produced. In this way, they contribute to both a common culture and a global economy, via television or the internet. Turkish soap operas started to have a significant share of the world soap opera market in the past decade. They are sold abroad and reach a vast audience. This study focuses on the reasons why people watch and enjoy Turkish soap operas in the Middle East, especially in Egypt. I have used Mikhael Bakhtin's concept of the *carnavalesque* and Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* as my theoretical framework. To analyse these hypotheses, 22 informants have been interviewed and 101 Egyptians surveyed. Admiration for Turkish soap operas, especially in Muslim countries, has been evaluated in terms of Islam, prohibitions and breaking rules, and Bakhtin's concept of the *carnavalesque* has been rebuilt as an inner *carnavalesque* that cannot be externalized especially for Egyptian audiences. Survey and interview results show that Turkish soap operas act as private spheres in which Egyptian audiences rest and keep their head above water for a while, as well as identifying with the characters to some ways. This study finds that while Turkish soap operas generally get credit and sympathy from Egyptian audiences, there is also a number of people who set their face against Turkish television series on the basis of a variety of objections.

Keywords: Turkish soap operas, Egypt, carnivalesque, Bakhtin

ÖZ

RIZA VE RET ARASINDA: MISIR'DA TÜRK DİZİLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

Çıpan, Ayşe

MA, Kültürel Çalışmalar Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi : Yard. Doç. Dr. İrvin Cemil Schick

Ağustos 2014, 107 sayfa

Televizyon dizileri –kalite ve popülerlikleriyle bağlantılı olarak- günümüzde üretildikleri ülkenin sınırlarını aşmaktadır. Bu durum gerek global ekonominin gerek globalleşen bir üst kültürün televizyon ya da internet üzerinden, diziler vasıtasıyla oluşumu noktasında dikkat çekici bir durumdur. Türk dizileri de son on yıllık dönemde dizi piyasasının önemli oyuncularından biri haline gelmiştir. Bu tez Türk dizilerinin ülke dışına satılması ve hızla artan izleyici kitlesi dikkate alınarak Ortadoğu coğrafyasında ve özel olarak Mısır'da Türk dizilerinin izlenme ve beğenilme nedenlerini araştırmaktadır. Bu beğenin nedenselleştirilmesinde Mikail Bakhtin'in *carnavalesque* kavramı kullanılmıştır. Ek olarak Pierre Bourdieu'nun *habitus* kavramından yararlanılmıştır. Hipotezleri analiz etmek için Mısırlı yirmi bir informantla mülakat ve yüz bir Mısırlı katılımcıyla anket çalışması yapılmıştır. Türk dizilerinin özellikle Müslüman ülkelerde beğenilmesi İslam, yasaklar ve yasakların delinmesi üçgeninde değerlendirilmiş ve Bakhtin'in *carnavalesque* kavramı Mısırlı seyirci özelinde içselleştirilerek dışavurumun gerçekleştirilemediği içsel bir *carnavalesque* olarak yeniden kurgulanmıştır. Röportaj ve anket sonuçları Türk dizilerinin Mısırlı seyirci için bir rahatlama ve kendinden uzaklaşma alanı olarak tanımlanabileceğini ancak bunun yanında aynı alanda kendisinden izler bulabileceğini göstermiştir. Bu çalışma Türk dizilerinin Mısırlı seyirci tarafından genel bir beğeni ve sempati topladığını ancak Türk dizilerine şiddetle karşı çıkan ve karşı çıkışlarını farklı sebeplere dayandıran grupların da var olduğunu tespit etmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk dizileri, Mısır, karnavalesk, Bakhtin

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like sincerely to thank my supervisor İrvin Cemil Schick for his encouragement and priceless guidance throughout my work. This thesis owes greatly to his patience, support, and trust. It has been a privilege to work with him. I would like to thank Professor Mahmut Mutman and Dr. Aslı Telli Aydemir for their advice and encouragement.

I am also indebted to my Egyptian friends Eman, Selma, Hala and Ayman for their help. I am grateful for their friendship. I would like to thank all my students at the Cairo Yunus Emre Culture Centre and at Fatih Sultan Mehmet University for their support and friendship.

I am forever in debt to my parents for supporting me with their affection and trust. I would like to thank my sisters, Neslihan and Elif Şeyma, for their support. It enriches my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iv
Öz	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	vii
List of Interviewees and Abbreviations	ix
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2	10
TELEVISION AND SOAP OPERA	10
2.1. Television and Daily Life	10
2.2. Television in Egypt and its Role in Daily Life	13
2.3. The History of Soap Operas	14
2.4. Turkish Soap Operas in Egypt	19
2.5. Who Watches Turkish Soap Operas?	28
2.6. Survey Results	31
CHAPTER 3	40
A LOVE-HATE RELATION	40
3.1. Turkish Soap Opera Mania in Egypt as the Carnavalesque	40
3.2. One Side of the Medallion and Bakhtin	44
3.3. Turkish Soap Operas and the Islamic Cultural Sphere in Egypt	49
3.4. The Other Side of the Medallion	51
CHAPTER 4	55
CARTOONS AND FILM	55

4.1. What is the Aim of Cartoons?.....	55
4.2. Turkish Soap Operas as Seen by Cartoonists.....	55
4.3. The Influence of Turkish Soap Operas on Egyptian Cinema	80
CHAPTER 5	83
CONCLUSION	83
BIBLIOGRAPHY	87
APPENDICES	93
Appendix – A: Sample Caricatures.....	93
Appendix – B: List of Turkish Soap Operas Exported to the Middle East and Shown in Egypt	98
Appendix – C : Survey Sample.....	102

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES AND ABBREVIATIONS

- AA: Housewife, aged 63, female, married (2013 in Turkey)
- AB: Businessman, aged 37, male, single (2011 in Cairo, 2013 in Turkey)
- AD: Unemployed, aged 25, male, single (2014 in Cairo)
- DA: Assistant professor, aged 34, female, single (2011 in Cairo)
- RE: Student, aged 19, female, single (2012 in Cairo)
- EE: Housewife, aged 29, female, married (2013 in Turkey)
- ER: Unemployed, aged 22, male, single (2014 in Cairo)
- FA: Housewife, aged 37, female, married (2012 in Cairo)
- HA: Housewife, aged 30, female, married (2014 in Cairo)
- HB: Graduate student, aged 32, female, single (2011 in Cairo, 2013 in Turkey)
- HM: Doctor, aged 30, male, single (2014 in Egypt)
- MY: Shop assistant, aged 26, male, single (2014 in Cairo)
- MA: Shop owner, aged 35, male, married (2011 in Cairo)
- ME: Professor, aged 64, male, widow (2012 in Cairo)
- MI: Engineer, aged 35, male, single (2012 in Cairo)
- MH: Student, aged 16, female, single (2012 in Cairo)
- MS: Teacher, aged 28, male, single (2012 in Cairo)
- MZ: Engineer, aged 31, male, single (2013 in Turkey)
- NA: Businessman, aged 32, male, single (2012 in Cairo)
- RG: Student, aged 21, female, single (2012 in Cairo)
- SA: Shop assistant, aged 21, female, single (2011 in Cairo)
- SH: Graduate student, aged 28, female, single (2013 in Turkey)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Soap operas are not just for entertainment. They also have political, cultural and social meaning. There are many soap operas which are hugely popular, such as Dallas, Friends and Rosalinda. Turkish soap operas have, in the past decade, been among the most successful, especially in the Middle East, Central Asia, Eastern Europe and South America. Since the first Turkish soap opera, Nour, appeared on an Egyptian TV channel in 2008, Egypt has also been a stage for the irresistible rise of Turkish soap operas.

My experiences as a Turkish instructor in Cairo in 2010 led me to focus on this topic. I was in a different country, among people with different customs and traditions, even though we shared the same religion and a similar history. There were five different classes with a total of approximately one hundred students at the Yunus Emre Culture Center where I worked. I was surprised by the large number of people who wanted to learn Turkish. On the first day, I wanted to get to know my new students and find out why they were interested in learning Turkish. After a short conversation about my students and myself, I asked why they wanted to learn Turkish. The students were young, twelve out of twenty in the class were studying Turkish Language and Literature at university, and they needed some help with the language. Two of them had jobs in Turkey and they needed to learn Turkish for their business trips. Six students, all women and housewives, were almost addicted to Turkish soap operas and after they had started to watch these soap operas they felt very curious about Turkish people, Turkey and the Turkish language. We can infer that they were in class as a direct result of Turkish soap operas. After these women mentioned the soap operas, all the other students agreed that they they love Turkish soap operas. For me, this was a strange reason to learn a language, but after a few months, I noticed that Turkish soap operas were extremely popular among Egyptian people, especially women. Every time I said "I am from Turkey" to an Egyptian, their first reaction was always "I love *Muhanned*" (the name of the character, played

by *Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ*, in the soap opera, *Nour*). Every time I went to shopping, young Egyptian women were asking about Turkish soap operas and their final episodes. In stores, I saw men watching Turkish soap operas as they wait for customers in Cairo. In short, Turkish soap operas have a big influence on Egyptian people and their daily lives.

A few months after I started working in Cairo, I had to go to a photographer with one of my Egyptian friends. An old couple was running the store. When we entered the store I saw the man reading the Holy Quran while his wife was searching for a good television program. Since my friend was Egyptian, I did not need to speak to them. I just waited for her to finish her work. We waited for 15 minutes as they took her photos. According to Egyptian custom, people talk to each other as they wait for something. So we had a chat. They asked me where I was from and when I told them there was a familiar smile on their faces. They said, in unison, "She is from *Muhanned's* country!" and started to ask me about Turkish soap operas: "What is the finale of *Ashk-ı Memnu*?" "Have you ever met *Muhanned*?" "Are you from Istanbul too?" "Did you ever visit the production studios?" "Do you know *Al-Awrak Al-Mutasaketa*?" "Have you ever watched *Asi*?" I found it strange that an old couple knew so much and were so curious about Turkish soap operas and their actors and actresses. This scenario was repeated throughout my time in Cairo, every time I said "I am Turkish", and I got used to it.

Mazen Hayek, Director of Marketing, PR and Commercial Affairs at MBC Group, spoke at the Second New Arab Woman Forum in Beirut (NAWF) about "85 million viewers (for the *Nour* series finale) above 15 years of age in the Middle East and North Africa region, out of whom 50 million are female."¹ This popularity is not limited to the Middle East. According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, more than 70 Turkish soap operas have been exported to 75 countries in the past decade. On average, worldwide, 4.54 per cent of all soap operas produced are exported. In Turkey this ratio is more than 20 per cent. This means that the Turkish soap opera market is worth 150-200 million dollars. In the early 2000s, each episode of a

¹ Beirut hosts the 2nd new Arab woman forum (NAWF). 11 September 2008, <http://www.ameinfo.cpm/168434.html>, (15 January 2012).

Turkish soap opera was exported for an average price of 35-50 dollars, today this has increased dramatically to a figure between 500 to 200.000 dollars per episode.²

The focal point of this research is to understand the reason for this popularity. This popularity has contributed to the attractiveness of Turkey and to tourism. Today, a great number of Egyptians follow Turkish soap operas on TV and on the Internet. Egypt has a population of 80 million Muslims and 10 million Copts, with a great history and a critical strategic and political position in Arab world.

Scholars who undertake research on soap operas are generally American or European. Their research mainly focuses on existing soap operas, soap operas that started on the radio and moved to daytime and prime time broadcasting, as well as on their plots and their influence on audiences. The important researchers in this field are Ien Ang, Dorothy Hobson, Christine Geraghty and Robert Clyde Allen. *Dramas of Nationhood*, about Egypt and Egyptian soap operas, by Lila Abu-Lughod, discusses the role of Egyptian soap operas in building the notion of nationhood in Egypt. The only book about foreign soap operas in Egypt is Katherine Dillion's *Friends Watching Friends*, which looks into Egyptians' perception of the United States and Americans through the American soap opera 'Friends'.

Turkish soap operas are widely analysed, but generally not by scholars. There are numerous newspaper, blog and magazine articles and short documentaries in Egypt, as well as other countries. There are also a few academics who have written about Turkish soap operas, such as Christa Salamandra, Dima Issa, Paul Salem, Ahmet Uysal, Aida Mohammed. Their work is mainly about Turkish soap operas as a soft power and discuss them in terms of politics and economics. However, there is very little on deep cultural, political and social features, and Egypt is not specifically mentioned in these articles. Because of Egypt's politically complicated and unstable situation, concentrate on its political role in the region. However, I have not come across specific research about Egypt or other Arab countries concerned with the question "Why do they like these soap operas?" Therefore, my main purpose in this

² <<http://www.kdk.gov.tr/haber/turkiyenin-dizi-film-ihracati-150-milyon-dolari-asti/362>> (15.08.2014).

study is to fill this gap, look at the cultural, political and social aspects of the question, and find some answers.

Lila Abu-Lughod answers the question “How did the story of soap operas or series start in Egypt?” as follows:

In a family with almost no access to television (because the father considered it corrupting) and where only one girl had completed high school, in a community in which many adults proudly resisted institutions and ideologies of an alien Egyptian state associated with “people of the Nile Valley”, afternoons in the mid-1980s found the young women huddled around a radio, shrugging off their mothers’ rebukes, to listen to love stories involving computer dating or office romance in an urban dialect that they all associated with an elsewhere. ... This encounter with radio soap operas in the Western Desert led me quite quickly to television, because everywhere else in the country, it was the more popular media form: by the mid-nineties, almost all Egyptian households were said to have television sets.³

European, Brazilian and also American soap operas were available in Egypt, but none enjoyed the popularity of Turkish soap operas. The question is, therefore, “Why are Turkish soap operas so attractive for Egyptians?” The greater success of Turkish soap operas compared with American, European or Brazilian soaps is related to the fact that there is a common culture and the same religion. ME, a professor at Cairo University, said, "European or Brazilian soaps do have romantic stories and good looking actors and actresses, but they do not have weddings and engagements, family gatherings in the holy month of Ramadan, mosques and funerals similar to ours. While watching a Turkish soap opera, we can find many things which are very similar to our traditions here in Egypt. We want to see these."

Almost all Turkish soap operas have very good post-synching in the Syrian dialect, the most comprehensible dialect of the Arabic language, and watching these soaps is

³ Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Dramas of Nationhood*, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2005), p. 5.

easy even for people who are not literate or educated. The rate of literacy in Egypt is 58 per cent according to a US State Department report.⁴ Post-synching means that Turkish soaps are watched even in Upper Egypt, where people are generally not literate. Subtitled soaps are not preferred, as sub-titles are in Standard Arabic and this is very hard to understand, especially for uneducated people, in Egypt. MH, a 16-year-old, said, "When I watch a soap opera with subtitles, I feel as if I am in an Arabic grammar class, and I do not feel like watching it." All Turkish names in the soap operas are changed to Arabic ones during post-synching. For example, a leading woman character, *Gümüş*, becomes *Nour*, and *Mehmet* becomes *Muhanned* in the soap opera *Nour*. Hearing their language and watching characters who have familiar names make the audience feel that these characters are "one of us". After discussing television and soap operas worldwide and in Egypt in Chapter 1, I have tried to explain these similarities of language and custom using Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*.

In *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt*, Lila Abu-Lughod introduces us to Egyptian debates concerning people's identities as members of a late twentieth century postcolonial nation state by examining the cultural knowledge circulating in and around popular dramatic serials broadcast on state television during the month of Ramadan. In this thesis, the situation is different in a number of ways:

Firstly, Turkish soap operas are broadcast not just during Ramadan. Turkish soap operas are much longer than their Egyptian counterparts. Normally, a Turkish episode lasts between 75 and 90 minutes, and a series comprises about 75-100 episodes in total. However, Egyptian televisions cut them and shows 45 minutes each time. Thus, Turkish soap operas comprise 150-200 episodes in Egypt.

Secondly, Turkish soap operas have romantic stories and Egyptian women in particular find them very enjoyable. Egyptian movies and soap operas do not have romantic relations or, if they do, these are very limited. In Turkish soap operas, love is the main theme and everything is built around this. All characters do something to

⁴ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5309.htm>, (13 January 2012).

destroy love or to succeed in love, and this conflict constitutes the main story. In general in Turkish soaps, there are beautiful women and handsome men, the leading man is always very kind, romantic and supportive of his wife, while the ideal woman is always good looking, cares about her body, her family and her husband. There is strict censorship in the Egyptian movie sector, and watching romantic Turkish stories is greatly enjoyable and exciting for Egyptian women. Kissing is censored out in Egypt, as in most Arab countries, while Turkish soaps openly show tenderness and kindness between husband and wife. For some Middle Eastern women, this is eye-opening.

Turkish actors and actresses have fans in all Arab countries and also in Egypt. Since Egyptian women started watching these pleasant relations and see kind Muslim husbands, their expectations have changed. "The effect of this show is that some Saudi women have demanded a divorce from their husbands," says Nadia Bilbassy-Charters, senior political correspondent for MBC TV, the Arab network that broadcasts Turkish soaps. "They see Muhanned treating his wife well and they think 'How come my husband doesn't treat me the same way. He's a Muslim, like my husband.'"⁵

Technological developments also help the popularity of Turkish soap operas. Facebook is the most common social network in Egypt, and the popularity of soaps is obvious on Facebook where there are numerous fan pages for Turkish soap operas, actresses and actors. Egyptian people are interested in Turkish actors and actresses' private lives and what they wear. Young women in particular always follow their trends. Egyptian women do not use their own photographs as profile pictures because of religious reasons or family culture; they use beautiful Turkish actresses' photographs instead of their own. If we search common Egyptian female names such as Eya, Sarah, Doa, Reham or Eman, we find Turkish actresses on their profile pictures. RG, a 19-year-old, said, "My religious beliefs do not allow me to put my own photograph on Facebook, but I want to put a beautiful photo, and I think the most beautiful girls are Turkish, so I use *Asi's* (*Tuba Büyüküstün's* name in the soap

⁵ "Turkish Soaps Find Fans in Arab World", 29 April 2010, <<http://www.cbc.ca/news/arts/tv/story/2010/04/29/turkish-soap-operas.html>>, (18 January 2012).

Asi) or *Samar*'s (*Beren Saat*'s name in the soap "*Ashk-ı Memnu*") photographs as my profile picture. It is popular in Egypt, and everybody likes them."

Watching soaps online has also become very common in recent years. Thanks to the Internet, Egyptian people who like Turkish soaps are able to watch new episodes, which are not broadcast on TV. There are numerous websites to watch Turkish soaps with Arabic and English subtitles.

The popularity of Turkish soap operas and Turkish actors and actresses in the Arab world has meant that the advertising sector has started to use these icons for their brands. Many brands of cosmetics, such as Pantene, Rexona, etc., feature Turkish actresses in their advertisements, paying vast sums of money. Lebanese singer Rola Sa'ad recorded a video clip featuring *Muhanned* and became very popular in all Arab countries.

Personal advertisements also make use of Turkish actors' popularity (See Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1: A second-hand iPhone advertisement in Egypt.⁶

⁶ In the advertisement, the part in bold states that it is an iPhone for sale. That is fine (except for the picture, which is not an iPhone), but there is extra information in brackets, where it says that the phone is Muhanned's.

Egyptian women dream of Turkish actors and this can cause problems in their family life. Women have pictures of *Muhanned* on their mobile phones and his posters in their houses, and this has caused some men to sue for divorce. A Jordanian daily reported the case of a husband who divorced his wife after she had uploaded *Muhanned*'s picture onto her cell phone.⁷

In Egypt, according to the Islamic rules, taking a lover is unacceptable sociologically and *haraam* in religious terms, but watching someone who has a lover is not in the same category. Here, Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque is relevant, and Chapter 2 is mainly about the link between this situation and the theory. In carnivals, according to Bakhtin, people forget their duties, responsibilities and all hierarchy in society, and they live the moment. When it ends, they return to their lives. This provides relaxation for most people. Soap operas have similar characteristics. Audiences forget their daily lives, problems and duties as they watch a soap opera and they experience the forbidden or the unacceptable through watching the characters. This also provides relaxation for the audience.

There are, on the other hand, groups which do not support Turkish soap operas in Egypt. Life in Turkish soaps looks European, with fashionable clothes and dresses, premarital sexual relations, abortion, single and independent mothers. Religious groups in particular oppose Turkish soaps because they believe that these depict a wrong way of life. After a rise in the number of divorces in Arab world, sheikhs gave speeches stating that watching these soaps is a kind of sin and these soaps destroy Islamic traditions and rules.

A second problem is that which arises between the Egyptian movie sector and Turkish soap operas. The Egyptian movie and television sector is the most powerful in all the Arab countries. It produces many movies and soaps every year. After Turkish soaps became popular, Egyptian soaps lost their popularity, and this has resulted in a marketing problem for the Egyptian movie sector. Some Egyptian television channels have banned Turkish soap operas, especially after recent political tensions between Egypt and Turkey, and some groups in society refuse to watch

⁷ "Turkish Soap Star Sparks Divorces in Arab World",
<http://www.alarabiya.net/save_pdf.php?cont_id=52291> (19 January 2012).

Turkish soap operas a. I shall discuss the reasons for both the popularity and the hatred of Turkish soap operas.

Egyptians who are known for their sense of humor make reference to Turkish soap operas in their cartoons. In the final chapter of this study, cartoons and movies about Turkish soap operas are discussed. Not all the cartoons discussed are in the Egyptian dialect, but all Arabic speaking countries can understand them. I have selected them from the social media and from the websites of newspapers and magazines. Chapter 3 thus provides a view of Turkish soap operas from Egyptian eyes, instead of those of an outsider.

I have been working on this study since 2010, the year I was in Cairo working as an instructor of Turkish. The first thing that drew my attention was the students' desire to learn Turkish. After I had started on my MA thesis, I visited Cairo three times in 2012 to carry out interviews with Egyptians. I then continued with an online questionnaire and interviews with Egyptian tourists and Egyptians who live in Turkey. The interviews were important and enjoyable. During these interviews, I ate delicious Egyptian meals with an Egyptian family while watching the Turkish soap opera *Al-Awrak Al-Mutaqasa* or *Harem Al-Sultan*. Thanks to my thesis, I have made great friends who love Turkish soap operas and are always willing to talk about them. However, not everybody allowed me to interview them. In 2014, during a street interview via telephone, I came across an Abdel Fattah El-Sisi supporter who, when she heard what the interview was going to be about, started to shout and revile Turkey, Turkish people and Prime Minister Erdoğan. My findings show that there has been a noticeable change in the Egyptian perception of Turkey in the last decade. The online questionnaire was mainly about Egyptians' television habits, Turkish soap operas and Turkey's image. I also interviewed officials of television and production companies which export Turkish soap operas. Through these three years, I have watched more than fifteen Turkish soap operas, and regularly followed the fan pages of soaps, actors and actresses via Facebook and soap opera blogs. I have read thousands of comments on Turkish soap operas, especially *Ashk-ı Memnu*, *Harem Al-Sultan*, *Asi* and *Fatima* and read many declarations of love for *Muhanned*, *Semer*, *Lames* and *Karem*.

CHAPTER 2

TELEVISION AND SOAP OPERA

“Man is the child of his customs and habits, not of his nature and constitution.”

Ibn Khaldun - *Muqaddimah*

2.1. Television and Daily Life

The media plays an important part in building people's daily lives. Initially written, the media has become spoken and visual with the invention of radio and then television, and is now a domestic utensil. Among all media, television has a place apart. It has become a family member, and allures the viewers.

Apart from being a technological device, television is, in the most general sense, a device to entertain and to transmit information. It is also a way to pass leisure time. In addition, it is a power which can affect and divert the viewers and society as a whole. For the producers it is a job and a way of money making.

The effect of television upon people and their lives is incontrovertibly strong. Unlike newspapers and magazines, television is in continuous communication with its audience. Television is a box which talks, attracts attention with the help of colorful images, ties in with the consumption economy through advertising, and informs about the world via news. When an audience holds the remote control device, it can feel the master of television, with the power to choose the channel, not choose another, zap and continue with another program. Together with the proliferation of television channels, it was considered to be a way of bringing families together and a

miracle that decreases the rate of divorce in the United States.⁸ It was also criticised for making people silent, at least when watching television.

Television helps people pass not only their spare time, but also their half-spare time (dinner times, housework times or cooking times). Watching television does not require a special effort or attention, people come home tired from work and lie down on the sofa to watch it. People do not consider this time as wasted, they think of it as time when are resting. It is common for families listen to music, watch the news, a soap opera or a reality show while having dinner. This situation should not be perceived -making television the scapegoat- as one which makes people silent, ruins relations among individuals, weakens family relations and affects communication. “The media ruins society” is an expression more appropriate for a literary work than a serious analysis, as this miscommunication stands for a different communication model. It creates a new topic which family members watching the same programs talk about, comment and share.

There is a strong link between television and daily life. Particularlyly when it first started to become widespread, television used to belong more to neighborhoods than to individuals in the United States.⁹ This was also the case in Egypt and Turkey in the early days, when television sets were expensive and considered a luxury. As air time was limited in those days, the television sets that existed in one or two homes had the effect of planning the daily lives of neighborhood residents. Lila Abu-Lughod observed in the south of Egypt that streets and roads lapsed into silence and all you could hear was dogs barking in the evening hours when soap operas or movies were broadcast.¹⁰

Daily life and daily life activities need to be mentioned before we analyse the link between daily life and television. The link between spare time and daily life depends on work. Daily life in a productive working life is a combination of working hours

⁸ Susan Brings, “Television in the home and family” in *Television: An International History*, edited by Anthony Smith and Richard Paterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) p.110.

⁹ Ibid., p. 111.

¹⁰ Op. cit., Abu-Lughod, p. 3.

and spare time. Spare time emerged as a need with the emergence of working for payment in modern industrialized countries.¹¹ Individuals who split their day and work away from their homes need private time for themselves or their families after working hours. Marx states that work is a need for human beings.¹² For modern people, working is a primary need to meet all other needs, in other words, it is even a necessity to have spare time. People need breaks, recreation, rest and fun and to get these they need to work. In this way spare time comes forth spontaneously. Various places and methods support and ensure this split; foremost among these are cafes, fair grounds, festivals, amusement parks, radio and television. The need for spare time brings along other physical needs, because spare times needs to be separate, on the surface at least, from daily life and must gain a unique place. Spare time may be defined as having fun, passing time, and recreation; it must not add any further burden to people who already have charges and responsibilities. Key words used to define spare time are relaxing, resting and entertainment.

Henri Lefebvre argues that Chaplin gives us a reverse image of modern times.¹³ By the use of a human being, Chaplin creates a series of images that describes his sorrows, difficulties, victories and, in short, all his life. This is where the reverse image is limitless. We explore a fake world with Chaplin. The main reason why this world is fake is that even though there is no such a world it represents itself as a reality and that reality is replaced with an exact opposite. The represented world is not real because in the real world good people are not always happy and the bad are not always punished. The movie satisfies people's pursuit of and need for happiness by providing them with a fictional happiness.

Television is a primary means to reunite fictional lives with the audience and is a part of daily lives. The popularity and everyday effect of television is far greater in developing countries. There is no other medium that has as strong a relation with its audience. As Hall argues, "Television is implicated in the provision and the selective

¹¹ Henri Lefebvre. *Critique of Everyday Life – I*, translated by Işık Ergüden. (İstanbul: Sel Publication, 2010), p. 38.

¹² Ibid., p. 41.

¹³ Ibid., p. 41.

construction of social knowledge, of social imagery, through which we perceive the 'worlds', the 'lived realities' of others, and imaginarily reconstruct their lives and ours into some intelligible 'world-of-the-whole.'"¹⁴ Television is the most accessible mass media, especially in developing countries, and Egypt is one of these television-based countries.

2.2. Television in Egypt and its Role in Daily Life

In the East, the production of soap operas parallels the presence of radio and television in daily lives. As in the West, here too the story starts with a radio transmission with cliff-hangers, including thrilling and fast moving elements such as love, relationships, the conflict between good and bad, and betrayals. The need and habit to tell and listen to stories and the desire to spy on other people may be considered as the reasons why people follow these stories on a daily basis. These programs become part of daily life, broadcasts that people watch as they do their work or that people plan their work in accordance with.

For Western people, television is a tool that working people use when they have dinner, and afterwards to pass the time till bedtime. However, it is somewhat different in Egypt. Working hours and working times are different from the West. The working day does not start early in Egypt. Government offices, and even private companies, do not start work early in the morning. The day starts even later for artisans. People prefer to stay at home till the afternoon, especially in the hot summer months. Barbers' shops, drapers, stationers and outfitters open their shops a little before noon. Closing time is also different in Egypt. In Cairo, life goes on till late at night, even in the suburbs. It is possible to go to the neighborhood grocery store and shop even after midnight. In these circumstances, television goes beyond being something to watch at home; it becomes a tool that shopkeepers waiting awake in the shop all night or the keeper of a coffeehouse use to entertain themselves and their customers.

¹⁴ Stuart Hall, "Culture, the Media and the Ideological Effect" in *Mass Communications and Society*, edited by J. Curran, M. Gurevitch and J. Woollacott (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), p. 140.

Television is a simple tool and sometimes just its sound is sufficient to attract an audience. When I was living in Cairo, there was a telephone store in my neighborhood. When the owner of the store realized that I was from Turkey he wanted me to see the television beside the cash box. The old television was on an armchair and Al-Awrak Al-Mutasaketa was on. Saying “Musalsalat Turki helw awy!” (“Turkish soap operas are very good!”), he told me he admired Turkish soap operas. For him, having a television broadcasting different programs and dealing with a variety of subjects was important, but it was more fun to follow an exciting story on a daily basis.

2.3. The History of Soap Operas

As far as content is concerned, television has two different textual fictions: news which are defined as more ideological, more economic, more political and more serious, and fictional floor shows such as soap operas, reality shows, talk shows and game shows. While news programs are accepted as representations of real or nearly-real life, other programs are thought of as the presentation of a fictional world.

The terms *soap opera*, *melodrama* and *telenovela* are used to mean continuing programs on TV. In general, they are all TV series, but also there are some differences between them, such as their broadcasting times, plots, musical features, etc. In this study, I use the term “soap opera” for all Turkish TV series, as they all share such common features as their romantic plots, longevity and daily broadcasting. However, melodrama, which emanates from South America, has had a worldwide effect on its audiences. In 1976, David Thorburn wrote: “... television melodrama has been our culture’s most characteristic aesthetic form, and one of its most complex and serious forms as well, for at least the past decade and probably longer.”¹⁵ After almost 40 years, this remains true. The term melodrama is used for a combination of a dramatic text and musical accompaniment or background. It also denotes a romantic drama that makes sensational appeals to the feelings of its audience. Melodramas, especially Mexican and Brazilian melodramas, have enjoyed great

¹⁵ David Thorburn, “Television Melodrama”, *Television as a Cultural Force*, ed. Douglas Cater, Richard Adler (New York: Praeger Publisher, 1976) p. 595.

popularity all over the world because they influence their audience in some basic ways. In melodrama, music controls the audience and directs it to next step. Music decides when the audience feels grief or happiness. Given that audience for melodramas is largely made up of women, this control over feelings also means control over female subjectivity.

This great popularity and influence are related to economics and these products are part of the cycles of consumption and reproduction. Adorno and Horkheimer argue, “The man with leisure has to accept what the culture manufacturers offer him. Kant’s formalism still expected a contribution from the individual, who was thought to relate the varied experiences of the senses to fundamental concepts; but industry robs the individual of his function.”¹⁶ This forced acceptance may be viewed as the effect of industrial hegemony. Even if television programs are created within the culture, this culture is industrialized, and the culture industry works for all parts of society. Popularity conceals the main target of the culture industry and this destroys people’s choices even when they are not aware of it. The popularity makes it appear like people’s own choice and will.

Fictional or fictionalized stories are diverting and amusing to read and watch. On television, the genre of fictional story we most frequently come across is the soap opera. Soap operas help people meet other individuals and lives that the audience does not and, almost certainly, cannot have. For a short while, the dull routine of their lives changes and is enlivened. Audiences like soap operas especially because they can see or hear through the eyes and ears of a god-like narrator. Audiences have knowledge of each character, can see the scenes through the eyes of all the characters and can anticipate dangerous situations. This god-like status raises the individual to a higher level not in his own life but someone else’s, and this standpoint makes it easier to connect to the story.

Television soap operas and entertainment programs are at the heart of every broadcasting schedule. They are the cornerstone of television, and act both as a

¹⁶ Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception”, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. (New York: Continuum, 1993) p. 124, <<http://ada.evergreen.edu/~arunc/texts/frankfurt/hork/hork.pdf>> (03.09.2014).

window through which the audience see non-existing aspects of their lives and a mirror in which the audience know and recognize themselves. Soap operas are also effective in defining the nation in modern societies.

Today, it is difficult even to imagine that there are people who do not watch soaps or have no idea about the stories of the popular soaps. Soap operas are among the most widely discussed subjects in daily lives and they are broadcast at prime time when all family members are at home. MZ, a computer engineer, says:

I do not like Turkish soap operas, so I do not watch any of them. But soap operas are always watched at home. My mother and my two sisters are addicted to them, so even though I do not watch them, I always see them, I know their names and even know the names of the actors and actresses. (MZ., engineer, aged 31, male, Feb. 2013, Istanbul.)

Given that soap operas are an important part of daily life, we need to discuss the history of soap operas along with the history of television. There is considerable research done on how the soap opera emerged, what the bases of storylines are, how they affect people and society, why they are immensely popular, and how they are followed. But much of this research is on United States and the United Kingdom and based on Western soap operas and audiences.

There are television soap operas that most of us have never watched and were not even born when they were broadcast, but we often refer to them. Dallas is the best known example. In Turkey it is common to refer to complicated love and betrayal stories as being “like Dallas”.

Susan Brings uses the expression “voyeur” in relation to soap opera audiences.¹⁷ Soap operas are watched because audiences find the story and the characters important. It becomes a need to peek, in some ways, into the new lives that they can follow along with their own boring, lonely and tiring lives. Soap operas, mostly, find a way to make this pursuance possible. For example, the time span of the stories in

¹⁷ Op. cit., Brings, p. 117.

soap operas continue in line with real life, current issues and popular names are used and excitement is provided in a cycle which rises and falls throughout the storyline.

The soap opera was born in the 1930s in America in the form of daytime radio programs. Not surprisingly, the main targets were women listeners who buy and use soap powder at home, and they were hooked with exciting and romantic stories. Cantor and Pingree explain that “The story of soap opera (and of all other programming) after radio became a ‘mass media’ in 1930 is the story of American manufacturers’ need to find nation-wide consumers for their products, and of a few individuals’ applied creativity and imagination in response to that need.”¹⁸ The name ‘soap opera’ came from soap powder manufacturers which sponsored daily radio programs, but other major sponsors included five brands of breakfast cereals, seven brands of tooth-paste, a great variety of drug products and home remedies, food products and beverages.¹⁹

In the first soap operas in the USA, all characters were upper-middle class and the stories were about their loves, pain, and family relations. The lives of the characters were very unlike those of the audience. The main character (generally the leading female character – all love stories in soaps relate to this woman) was not like anyone’s mother, or indeed like anyone the audience knew, but she had the same job, being a wife and a mother, and the same maternal feelings, which reflected the dominant cultural norms of the 1950s. Class or age were not barriers to these maternal feelings. In 1960s, the characters changed; lower middle and working class people appeared, with everyday lives that audiences could easily share.

Dorothy Hobson explains that “All successful soaps have a history which is part of the cultural history both of its audience and of the population as a whole.”²⁰ In answer to the question of why soap operas are followed and liked, she argues that productions made in the country where they broadcast or in culturally similar

¹⁸ M. G. Cantor and S. Pingree, *The Soap Opera* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1983) p. 34.

¹⁹ Willey 1961, quoted in M. G. Cantor and S. Pingree, *The Soap Opera* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1983) p. 37.

²⁰ Dorothy Hobson, *Soap opera*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003) p. 199.

countries can achieve success. However, this argument cannot explain why American soap operas are watched all over the world and why Korean, Indian and Turkish soaps reach audiences in different geographical areas and cultures. The idea that only soap operas which reflect the cultural history of the audience and society in general are successful implies that people just search and like what is similar to themselves or they do not adopt what is different from themselves and try to keep away from it. Soap operas, together with other significant cultural icons, particularly television programs, are part of the “structure of feeling”²¹ which unites the audience and links the experience of watching cultural forms with our own life experience. Even though it is hard for the audience to find exactly what it has in its own life, it will remember similar stories from news and newspapers. For this reason the storylines of soap operas are not impossible or imaginary; they are reflections of the audiences’ own life and the lives of others. However, in some cases, especially with books, movies, soap operas in which the audience remotely participate in the storyline, people want to learn and read about what is different, not totally but at least in some ways, because this situation does not directly affect their lives and values but satisfies their curiosity about what is different. This is the reason why soap operas and movies reach audiences all over the world.

A superior culture has come into existence, especially as a result of globalization. The curiosity and attention of people is kept permanently alive through the use of advertising. Hubson points out that another reason why soap operas are watched and succeed is that they follow a timeline and that the act of watching soap operas has become a part of collective life.²² The desire to plan activities on a timeline, getting used to doing the activities in accordance with that timeline, and following a continuous story for entertainment, especially when people do not have a lot to do and feel tired in the evening, is nothing strange. The habit of watching soap operas as part of a daily routine is a way of passing the time while drinking tea, having dinner, cooking and when the neighbors visit. As airtime is already determined, it is possible to make plans accordingly. Moreover, everyone at home, young and old alike, has an

²¹ R. Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1971) p. 64. from Hobson, p.200.

²² Op. cit., Hobson, p., 199.

idea about the general storyline of the soap opera, all know the characters and are informed about the critical changes in the plot without paying particular attention.

From pop music to soap operas and movies, all these popular productions play a crucial role in the development not only of personal but also of collective memory. The stories of soap operas consist of scenes that society is familiar with, if not in terms of the characters, at least in terms of their storylines. They do not necessarily come across these stories in their own lives, but they can hear of or observe similar stories in their own surroundings. Details of the private lives of others affect people's attitude towards the story, they either like or hate it. In soap operas involving characters such as doctors, policemen, lawyers and businessmen; private lives, mistakes, proper behaviors, decisions and doubts are given prominence, because ratings will go up when audiences feel close to the characters. This is true even of Hollywood action movies. Even when we watch the breathtaking adventures of an FBI agent, we know that there is a woman he loves, he has some weaknesses and people can use him, and all these remind us of the reality that he is not only an FBI agent, but also a human being.

Some soap operas may have such functions as raising awareness, giving information or guiding people, although not necessarily. Some popular soap operas give information of interest to people or include scenes from which people may draw lessons. While in some soap operas this is done clearly, in others events are shown which serve as a model. For example, finding a donor for a patient in need of a transplant in an episode and conveying the relevant phone number, address, name of the foundation to the audience is an explicit method of giving information. Helping a patient waiting for a transplant and saving his life at the end puts emphasis on the importance of transplants in an implicit way.

2.4. Turkish Soap Operas in Egypt

Before discussing the success of Turkish soap operas in Egypt, it should be pointed out that relations between Turkey and Egypt go back a long way. Bilateral relations became stronger in the later years of the Ottoman Empire, and resulted in the

publishing of Turkish books and periodicals in Cairo when censorship made it impossible in Istanbul.²³

In the years following the foundation of the Turkish Republic, relations between the two countries continued, with widespread interest in Turkey in Egyptian music and movies, long before the popularity of Turkish soap operas in Egypt in the 2000s.

The cultural policy of the young Turkey was to change everything, especially the minutiae of everyday life, such as attire, daily routines, etc. As Atatürk explained, “We shall take our nation to the blessings of civilization along the shortest path, and make them happy and prosperous, and we have to do it.” A series of fundamental changes were thus applied, in the name of modernization, in the public and cultural spheres. All these reforms, the replacement of the Arabic alphabet with the Latin, the adoption of the Gregorian calendar, Western headwear, a new system of measurements, deeply affected Turkish society and everyday life. The reforms in the field of music was particularly interesting. Music was considered to be an important tool in the effort to Westernize. Music was to be Europeanised and also remain national, but removed from its old roots. In 1927, all music schools and institutions which taught Turkish music were closed down and banned. At the same time, Western style music schools were opened, and state radio stopped transmitting Turkish music. The minister of internal affairs, Şükrü Kaya, wrote of the intention to “...ban *alla turca* music on radio and to have our music played by musicians who know Western styles, using Western techniques...”²⁴ There was no Turkish music broadcast on the radio for three years. This was the golden age of Egyptian radio for Turkish listeners, whether they knew Arabic or not -usually not- as they felt an instant connection with Arabic music which has a similar mode and tempo to the Turkish music they could no longer hear on local radios. In 1935, there were 8082 official radio broadcast receivers in Turkey, of which 2838 were in rural areas. Turks had two choices: turn off the radio, or tune in to Egyptian broadcasts.

²³ İ. Arda Odabaşı, “Türkiye’de Sansür Eglenceleri”, <https://www.academia.edu/1196643/Comte_de_Persignac_Jacques_Loria_Turkiyede_Sansur_Eglenceleri> (15.08.2014).

²⁴ Virginia Danielson, *Mısır’ın Sesi*, (İstanbul: Bağlam Publications, 2008) p. 10-1.

Between 1936 and 1948, 130 Egyptian films were shown in theaters in Turkey.²⁵ In 1948, importing Egyptian films to Turkey and playing Egyptian music in public performances were banned. The reason for the popularity of Egyptian music and cinema was that these gave Turkish people the chance to enjoy music which was similar to their own, but banned at home and hard to access. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is of relevance here. *Habitus* refers to practices and feelings that a society does unconsciously, without thinking, and a combination of all the ways people do or feel these. *Habitus* is not a structure with fixed rules, on the contrary it is living concept that takes a different shape without being noticed.²⁶

The external regulation of music in the early Republic could not affect the internal lives of individuals. The regulation ran contrary to habits formed over the years, and changing this *habitus* through top-down reforms was not effective or natural. The *habitus* is created as a social, not an individual, pattern. It is not permanent, prepared or fixed, and can change over time. *Habitus* refers to the values, lifestyle and expectations of particular social groups that are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life.²⁷ Not only can *habitus* explain the interest of Turkish people in Egyptian music and movies, but also the interest of Egyptian people in Turkish soap operas since the 2000s. Turkish soap operas may seem not to be related to *habitus* in terms of their subject and the physical aspects of their characters. However, Egyptian audiences hear Turkish soap operas with a Syrian dialect, and the words used in daily life such as "İnşallah", "Maşallah", "estağfirullah," "Allah ybarek fik" are used more than the original Turkish forms; thus the Egyptian audiences feel themselves close to the Turkish soap operas and they get the feeling that they are watching something completely familiar. This explains why they like Turkish soap operas. By contrast, Indian, American and Mexican soap operas are

²⁵ Ibid., p.37.

²⁶ Cihad Özsüz. "Pierre Bourdieu'nün Temel Kavramlarına Giriş" *Sosyoloji Notları*, Vol. 1 (April, 2007) p. 122.

²⁷ Stephanie Lee Mudge, "Precarious Progressivism - The Struggle over the social in the neoliberal era", Phd Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2007.
<http://books.google.com.tr/books?id=HeW-IC6wkpQC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false> (03.07.2014).

subtitled in Egypt. Moreover, Turkish soap operas make reference to religious matters from time to time, which also makes Egyptian audiences feel familiarity. The audiences are aware that they are watching a “Muslim” character.

I love Muhannad, I watched all his soap operas. He is always very kind, romantic and he adores his wife. We do not have such men in Egypt. No one has a husband like him in Egypt. From time to time we discuss this and say our husbands are Muslims and Muhannad is also a Muslim. We wonder why our husbands are not like him. (HA., housewife, aged 30, female, April 2014, Cairo)

Lila Abu-Lughod argues that television programs with the highest ratings are dramatic soap operas and movies which “...guarantee that the eyes will be filled with tears and the audience will be surprised.”²⁸ In Egypt, soap operas have a basic structure in which the focus is on love, family bonds and class distinctions, and these enchain the audience mostly in an emotional way. When the quality of cinematography, exterior shooting and landscape scenes of Turkish soap operas are added to this general structure, we may infer that Turkish soap operas meet the demands and needs of Egyptian audiences.

Turkish soap operas which are shown in Arab countries and also in Egypt can be considered under four headings:

First, countryside soap operas which are generally about family life and strong relations within families such as *Asi*, *Kasr Al-Hob*, *The Fall of Leaves*, *Al-Awrak Al-Mutasaketa* and *Sila*. Here, strong ties between family members and their lives generally make Egyptian people feel comfortable because they have similar relations in their own lives. The scenery is often spectacular and this makes people curious about Turkey.

Second, soap operas full of action, about conflicts between two sides, such as left and right, or bad and good, such as *Vadi Al-Ziab* and *Ezel*. Although these contain violence, both men and women watch them. Men enjoy the action and the story,

²⁸ Op. cit., Abu-Lughod, p. 111.

while women like the handsome actors in leading roles. RG, a 21-years--old, said: “I watch *Ezel* everyday, I don’t care about the story or the fights, but I care about Ezel, he is tall and so handsome.”

Third, historical soap operas. Those about Ottoman history, such as *Harem Al-Sultan*, are particularly attractive for Egyptians. Men who are interested in history and the Ottoman Empire especially want to watch these, while women like the costumes worn in the Sultan’s harem.

Fourth and last, and most common, soap operas which comprises just basic romantic stories, such as *Al-Ashk Al-Mamnu*, *Nour*, *Baiya Al-Werd* and *Senewat Al-Dayaa*.

Soap operas that share some principal similarities have a general interest. Those with the highest ratings, such as *Al-Ashk Al-Mamnu*, *Senewat Al-Dayaa*, *Nour*, *Fatima* and *Esmiyyetha Feriha*, are shaped around love stories and the characters have all the good characteristics. Another popular soap opera with a historical storyline is *Harem Al-Sultan*. However even this historical soap opera included love affairs which make the story more attractive. Egyptian interest in *Harem Al-Sultan* is related not only to the love affairs, but also admiration for the strong characters and especially the women in the story.

We watch *Harem Al-Sultan* as a family, even an extended family, and certainly women love this soap opera. For example, my grandmother also watches it. We really enjoy watching a powerful lady. I think these women serve as models to a good number of women, I am pretty sure that our women develop some tactics on the basis of these soap operas. How does Hurrem explain her demands to her husband, how can she convince him, these provide important tips for family life. I also have many friends who appreciate the tactics of the characters in this soap opera. (HB., graduate student, aged 32, female, Jan. 2013, Istanbul.)

The popularity of Turkish soap operas in Egypt, and in Arab countries in general, started with *Nour* in 2008. There had been a few Turkish soap operas broadcast before *Nour*, but none of these were successful. It was with *Nour* that interest in

Turkish soap operas increased rapidly. Three to five to 5 million people followed each episode of *Nour*, and the final episode was watched by an audience of 85 million.²⁹ Why such popularity? What are the distinguishing features of this soap opera?

Nour is both far from and close to Islamic culture. It has modern elements as well as elements of Islamic culture.

American, European and Mexican soap operas are also available in Egypt. However, after Turkish series started to be shown on television, we started to watch them. I think the reason is that even if they look more European than we do, they are Muslims, and we have similar cultural and social traditions. (ME., professor, aged 64, Jan. 2012, Cairo.)

Nour is the story of a young woman who moves to Istanbul from Anatolia after marrying a rich man. The storyline focuses on the woman and demonstrates the power of women, underlines that women can stand on their own two feet, and that a relationship based on the equality of women and men can result in a happy marriage. Although *Nour* (the main character of the story) comes to Istanbul from Anatolia and is a stranger to many elements of her new life, she closes the gap in a short time with the help of her intelligence and takes her place within the family. It is an arranged marriage as a result of pressure from her family, but she makes her husband love her. She becomes an economically independent business woman by using her skills and intelligence. This success was found interesting in countries where women do not take an active role in business.

When I started watching *Silver*, I was at high school. She is not a very beautiful woman -I mean the women in *Forbidden Love* (*Ask-i Memnu*) are more beautiful- she looks like an Egyptian woman, but she was smart and her achievements excited me. She was not like the women I see

²⁹ Christa Salamandra, "Muhannad Effect: Media Panic, Melodrama, and the Arab Female Gaze" *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 85, No 1, (Winter, 2012) pp. 45-77, p. 49.

everyday, she was different. (RE., student, aged 19, female, Jan. 2012, Cairo.)

In Egypt, successful women and women taking an active role in social life, especially in business, are not very common. As they watch this soap opera Egyptian women see that there are women like them who have achieved success, and this gives them an opportunity to share in this success. Though the audience do not achieve the success which the heroine of the soap does, they can take credit for this success and feel happy.

An important part of this soap opera is the romantic love between *Muhanned* and *Nour*. It is necessary to underline the word 'romantic': *Nour* is regarded as the symbol of romantic love in all Arab countries. *Muhanned* has the main role in this romantic affair. In general woman are known to be the ones who are or want to be romantic, but a man in favour of a romantic relation or in a romantic relation is unusual. This blonde, blue eyed, fit and handsome male character who always buys gifts for his wife, surprises her pleasantly, visits his wife in her office with flowers has been influential in revising the male image in relationships. The acceptance of *Muhanned* as an ideal partner is not just because he was the first romantic male character shown on Egyptian television. There are various romantic male characters in other soap operas and movies. But the difference of *Muhanned* is that he was speaking Arabic and playing a Muslim male character in a Muslim production. Moreover, this soap opera was broadcast everyday and met the audience as a family member.

I watch Turkish soap operas for sure. I am always at home, I have children. I watch Muhanned most. (Even though Muhanned is the name of the character, here this name is used to define all the soap operas in which Kivanc Tatlitug acts). I like *Muhanned*, I like the story a lot. Their love stories are great. (HA., housewife, aged 30, female, April 2014, Cairo.)

Although *Nour* was the cornerstone of the scenario, the sustainability of this story which lasts for 100 episodes necessitated various small byplays. Most of the byplays

touched mostly on various problems. The beginning of the story shows Muhanned's beloved, who his family hate, expecting a baby. She marries into a family and within the family she comes across family members who, for example, love somebody else, cheat their partners, have babies from other women or co-habit outside marriage. For Egyptians, all these byplays are unacceptable in both religious and cultural terms. The audience do not prefer to experience such behavior as they might result in bad situations, however watching people experience all these, witnessing these experiences at least in an imaginary world has carnivalesque effect on people.

Another reason why people like this soap opera is that all this cheating and illegitimate children are kept secret from the grandfather and much effort is put into hiding all these things from him. The grandfather is a moral figure, he wants the people around to obey his rules. He acts as a barrier that holds the family together and he prevents people from exhibiting even worse behavior.

I think that the most important character in the story was not Muhanned or Gumus, it was the grandfather. He was like the Ottoman Empire. I love the Ottoman Empire and he had such power. When he comes in, all the others respect him. He is valued as an elder. This is a good. Older people know a lot and there is much for young people to learn from them.
(MI., engineer, aged 35, March 2012, Cairo.)

Al-Ashk Al-Mamnu starred the most popular actor and actress in Egypt, Beren Saat and Kivanc Tatlitug. It captivated the audience more by establishing a relation with the cast than through the scenario. *Al-Ashk Al-Mamnu* has a complicated fiction. There is a rich family at the center of the plot. The father of this rich family, Adnan Ziyagil, loses his wife. While visiting the grave of his late wife, he meets Samar visiting the grave of her late father and he wants to marry her. Grieving her father's death and to spite her mother, Samar accepts Adnan's proposal. Up to this point, it seems like a simple love story with an age difference. However, there is a forbidden love and betrayal at the center of the story. Adnan's nephew falls in love with Samar. For Adnan's daughter Nihal, her cousin Muhanned is the man of her dreams. This complicated love story ends up Samar and Muhanned falling in love, and their betrayal of the other characters. To stay within the family, Muhanned proposes to

Nihal, but as a result of Samar's jealousy, the truth comes out. Samar commits suicide, Nihal faints as she discovers the truth, Muhanned disappears. The story ends with the disappearance of bad people from the family. Although Muhanned and Samar seem like bad characters, they have some characteristics that make it possible for the audience to love them. The love between them is especially important for the audience:

I like Samar and Muhanned, they love each other. I hope that they will come together at the end of the story. I wish them to be happy, they match each other. Adnan is a good person, but he is old. He can get married to the teacher as they are the same age. (AA., housewife, aged 63, female, Feb. 2013.)

Fatima, one of the most watched Turkish soaps in Egypt and many other countries, is interesting especially in terms of its story and was the subject of a documentary, *Kismet*, by Greek director Maria Paschalidou in which she analyzed the effects of Turkish soap operas in Arab countries and the Balkans.³⁰ *Kismet* underlines that this soap opera is a source of inspiration and power for many women and that there are women who suffer from sexual abuse, harassment or rape in their own lives and are obliged to keep silent. It also points out that Turkish soap operas have more than 300 million watchers around the world, which makes it necessary to study them seriously.

In Cairo, where sexual abuse and assault are widespread, the victims need to remain silent.

Like many women in Cairo, I also experienced harassment. It is widespread in Egypt because there is no sanction against it and if a woman reports it, the woman is found guilty. Even though she is not guilty, she is not accepted as clean. The possibility of getting married decreases, actually disappears. For this reason, women who suffer such things remain silent and try to resolve the situation on their own, some of

³⁰ <<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/witness/2013/11/kismet-how-soap-operas-changed-world-20131117152457476872.html>> (05.08.2014).

them get psychological help. (HB., graduate student, aged 32, female, Oct. 2013, Istanbul.)

2.5. Who Watches Turkish Soap Operas?

When the audience profile is analyzed, it is not possible to say that features such as age, education, socio-economic situation and sex are not determinant. Television audiences do not specify their perception of television regarding their interest and enjoyment. According to Meyrowits, “People watch the actions that they do not want to read about in a book or a magazine and that they never pay for. They feel they are at the cinema.”³¹

Television does not discriminate between different age groups. All subjects handled can be watched by all age groups. Meyrowitz takes this a step further and says that as people watch and get to know characters in different age groups, they can understand their behaviors and add these behaviors into their own behavior banks.³²

This is true not only for age based differences, but also for denominational differences. Rich families in soap operas are watched by people from all economic groups. Moreover thanks to television, children can learn about other mothers, fathers and teachers than their own. While all programs have a target audience, television resolves the sexual difference on screen. In fact, in the Arab world, where the living spaces of men and women are totally separate, the inner lives of men and women and their details can be watched with the help of television.

There is a common view that soap operas are woman’s space. This is one of the reasons why soap operas are studied especially by feminists. The view that the emotionally stimulating content of the soaps is more effective on woman is often

³¹ Joshua Meyrowitz, *Die Fernseh-Gesellschaft*, Beltz Verlag, Weinheim, Basel, 1987, p.117 from Rıdvan Şentürk, “Television and Magazine Culture” *Selçuk İletişim*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Jan., 2010) pp. 174-190.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 181.

accepted.³³ The belief that there is a strong link between women and emotionality supports the hypothesis of Williams that television soap operas result in “dramatization of consciousness”.³⁴ When the watcher starts to link her own life with those on screen, the sorrowful story involving tears will become her own story – at least during the broadcast. This has been studied by Lee Ang, Geraghty and Hubson. Affairs, marriage, divorce, children and family life are the primary materials of soap operas, and it is thanks to these that women can establish one-to-one relations with their own lives and enjoy watching.

Women are the primary audience of soap operas in Egypt. However, Egyptian is different as there is also a great number of men who watch soaps. Working hours start late and finish early in government agencies, people spend their evenings in coffee houses or at home and shopkeepers have a television, albeit small and old, in their shops. These factors enable men also to watch soap operas.

I studied Turkish Language and Literature in Cairo. I learned Turkish at school, I was able understand it, but I did not have any practice. I started watching Turkish soap operas online without dubbing. I started watching them not to forget my Turkish and improve it, but then I liked their scenarios. Though I do not follow Egyptian soap operas, there are Turkish ones that I follow on television. (ER, unemployment, aged 22, male, Jan. 2014, Cairo.)

I love Turkey and reading and learning about Turkish history. So I attended the Turkish courses at the Yunus Emre Institute. Before it was broadcast in Egypt, I already knew *The Magnificent Century*. I was curious so I watched it online at the beginning. Now I never miss any of the episodes. (MI., engineer, aged 35, March 2012, Cairo.)

³³ Catherine Lutz, “Emotion, Thought, and Estrangement: Emotion as a Cultural Category”, *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (Aug.,1986), pp. 287-309.
<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/656193>> (10.08.2014).

³⁴ Raymond Williams, “Drama in a Dramatised Society”, *Raymond Williams and Television*, ed. A.O’Connor, (London and New York: Routledge, 1989) pp. 2-13.

Of course I watch soap operas, mostly Turkish ones. What is Fatmagül's Fault?, Forbidden Love and Muhanned are among the Turkish soap operas I follow. I do not watch The Magnificent Century, everybody loves it, but I don't. Also I watch (here she cannot remember the name of the soap opera, turns to her friend and they remember the name) Lost Years (Kaybolan Yıllar). A soap opera needs to have a good story, I like the stories of Turkish soap operas. (Her friend interrupts and says "of course, love stories" and laughs). Not love stories, I like interesting stories that interest everybody. Sometimes people think women in Turkish soap operas wear obscene clothes. I think it is nonsense, because even in Egyptian movies, actresses wear similar clothes. For sure, the characters in Egyptian movies do not represent Turkey as a whole, but represents a part of it. I think this is not a problem. (MY, shop assistant, aged 26, male, April 2014, Cairo.)

I do not just sit and watch soap operas, I do not have time actually. However, when I come home, as I wait for dinner or when I sit right across the television at night, it is impossible to escape from them. I see soap operas and the actors. There are also billboards on the streets. I always read their names. It is clear that they are Turkish, because they are different from the Egyptians. Also, Turkish actresses are always on TV advertisements. (NA, businessman, aged 32, male, March 2012, Cairo.)

Clearly, it would not be true to say that soap operas are just woman's spaces. Of course, the number of women is high. Housewives leave televisions turned on as they do housework and soap operas that have continuity and a suspenseful story are the reasons for this. It is also the time during which women have a rest, put their problems aside and learn about other lives and people. Women think about the episodes, guess what is coming next and from time to time discuss the characters with the neighbors or the with the women working at the shops they visit.

Watching soap operas is a routine activity for people who have a television or internet. Especially housewives, families with the habit of meeting in the evenings in a room with a television and young people who watch television or use the internet

can watch soap operas with subtitles or dubbed in their own language. The question of “Why do people watch soap operas?” is easy to answer. People need to listen to or tell stories. Reading suspenseful books can also become a habit for people. The main feature of these books is that they do not involve a tiring fiction or do not require extra effort to understand the story. They use daily language and are not literary or philosophical texts. Rather than getting new information or adopting a different viewpoint, their main aim is to have a good time and to be part of an exciting story. The habit of watching soap operas is similar. When watching a soap opera, fixing the eyes on the story, as required when reading, is not necessary. Television offers ready-made audio and video. This facilitates following a story on television. In fact it is possible to watch while washing dishes, cooking, helping children with homework. It is not surprising that soap operas which are easy to follow through an accessible device like television, become part of daily life. In Egypt, it is no different. Television is among the most basic household goods and can be found in almost every home. The tension between good and bad, or between good and some other external factor is the most important factor in making it possible for soap operas to be watched for weeks, for months and even for years. As the soap gets longer, this tension continues with new characters, storylines or flashbacks.

2.6. Survey Results

Throughout this work, various interviews were carried out on the attitude of Egyptians to Turkish soap operas. Face to face and one-to-one interviews are important not only to understand the ideas and feelings of the interviewee, but also to ask further questions on the basis of their answers. However, the results of surveys completed anonymously were also interesting.

A total of 101 Egyptians participated in the surveys. Most of them were born in Cairo or live in Cairo. Twenty of the 101 were students at the Yunus Emre Institute. The participants, of whom 83 per cent are women, are all literate. The participants range between 16-50 years of age, though most are in the 20-28 range.

While the average income of the survey participants range between 0-500 Egyptian pounds, 62 per cent of all participants have an income ranging from 500 to 5000 Egyptian pounds. Three participants had incomes exceeding 5000 Egyptian pounds. Compared with the interviewees, survey participants are more educated and more middle class.

Of the survey participants 70 per cent live in a flat, 22 per cent live in detached houses and others stated that they live in student dormitories. While 19 per cent of all participants live with 0-3 other people, 81 per cent share a flat with 4 to 10 people. All the participants have a television at home and the number of televisions they have ranges from 1 to 4; 11 per cent of do not have an internet connection, while all the others do; and 12 per cent are married, while the remaining 88 per cent are single.

It is striking that although 10 per cent of the participants stated that they never watch soap operas, they answered the detailed survey questions about Turkish soap operas and their cast. This might be because the general idea of watching a soap opera on a regular basis is not approved of or that watching them is seen as useless activity. While 35 per cent of the participants stated that they watch soap operas everyday, 26 per cent stated that they watch them 1 to 3 days a week, 29 per cent stated that they watch them 3 to 5 days a week. While 52 per cent of the participants stated that they watch a single soap all week long, the remaining 48 per cent stated that they watch various soap operas at the same time. However, participants who say that they watch a single soap opera all week long were able to answer a number of questions about other soap operas. Most of the participants prefer short series composed of 30 episodes, while the percentage of the people who prefer longer lasting soap operas like the Turkish ones did not exceed 31 per cent.

As soap operas are linked to the television that has become a part of family life, 60 per cent of all participants stated that they watch soap operas together with their families, while 38 per cent stated that they watch alone. The remaining 2 per cent stated that they watch together with friends. Those who watch alone mostly use the internet instead of television.

Turkish soap operas are watched regularly by 93 per cent of the participants, while 7 per cent stated that they do not. However, participants who stated that they do not watch Turkish soap operas also answered questions about the names and cast of these soaps. This shows that knowledge about Turkish soap operas reaches everybody and they attain a place in the memory thanks to billboards or television advertising. All the participants from the Alexandria Yunus Emre Institute watch Turkish soap operas. Watching these is recommended by the instructors to students learning Turkish as a foreign language. The coordinator of the Institute, Sinem Aydoğdu, stated that Turkish soap operas and movies are recommended to the students as they can learn daily language by watching. She also said that they regularly organize Turkish movie nights for the students.

Along with Turkish soaps, 57 participants said that they watch Egyptian soaps, 25 American soaps, 17 Korean soaps, 15 other Arab soaps, 13 Indian soaps and eight Mexican soaps. According to the survey, Turkish soap operas have a larger audience than Egyptian soaps. Turkish soap operas are popular thanks to their scenarios, characters and the natural beauties of Turkey which are used frequently.

One of the main reasons why people like Turkish soap operas is the use of nature. Egypt is full of deserts, there is not much to show. In countries like Dubai and Qatar, soaps are filmed indoors. The scenery in our soaps is different and special for the audience living in those countries. Also, seeing unusual faces instead of the ordinary Egyptian image excites people. For example, Muhanned is blonde, has colorful eyes and is really handsome. To be honest, images are more important than the content. The clothing of women, their decollete dresses are among the chief points. The otherness of women's clothing is also alluring. (Ömer Dağ, STV Middle East Sales Representative, April 2013, Istanbul.)

Contrary to the interviewees, according to the survey participants the least appealing features of Turkish soap operas are beautiful women and handsome men. Only four out of 101 participants stated that the beautiful and handsome cast is effective in making them watch soaps.

While dramatic and romantic soaps are preferred by 91 survey participants; action soaps are preferred by only 10. It should be pointed out that *Vadi Al-Ziab*, which is very popular in Syria, does not have high ratings in Egypt, and other soaps, like *Ezel* and *Kalb Shucea*, are less favored than romantic soaps. Firat Gülgen, Head of Calinos Holding Company, one of the most important exporters of Turkish soap operas, explains how Turkish soaps are chosen by audiences:

We are culturally similar. There are no such as those in “Lost” or “CSI Miami” in these countries. However, there are fathers like the one in *Al-Awrak Al-Mutasaketa*. As they watch our soaps, audience say “Yes, this is my story”. We are like them. Love, intrigue, family drama are in demand in all these countries. Sit-coms and action soaps are not. Broadcasting is a “simple-stupid” job to a certain degree. You should not produce complicated and disorienting stories, people should be able to understand your stories easily.³⁵

Romantic, sweet and brave characters are the most appreciated and loved characters, whereas funny, arrogant or troublesome characters are the least liked. The survey participants were asked to give the names of actors/actresses they know: 98 per cent of all respondents know Beren Saat and 83 per cent per cent know Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ. These both play romantic characters. Beren Saat was played a romantic character in *Al-Ashk Al-Mamnu*; a smart and brave character in *Fatima* with the highest ratings in Egypt. Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ played a romantic and affectionate husband in *Nour*. He continued as a womanizing romantic character in *Al-Ashk Al-Mamnu*. Since then he has played a variety of romantic roles.

When the the participants were asked to name the first Turkish soap opera to come to their mind, most named *Al-Ashk Al-Mamnu*. This was followed by *Fatima*, *Harem Al-Sultan* and *Ala Mer Al-Zaman*. *Nour* was ranked fifth. Then came *Esmiyyetha Feriha*, *Senewat Al-Dayaa*, *Asi*, *Ezel* and *Tair Al-Namnama*. *Ezel* and *Vadi Al-Ziab*, action soap operas, came last.

³⁵ “Kıvanç in the Middle East, Kenan in the Balkans”, <<http://www.calinos.com/haberler-detay-page07.html#U-EZX4CSwZc>> (05.08.2014).

The first Turkish actresses to come to mind were Beren Saat, Tuğba Büyüküstün and Hazal Kaya; while Songül Oden who played with Kivanc Tatlitug in *Nour* came sixth. The fact that the first three actresses in the list play in the most popular soaps and that they also act in films undoubtedly affects their ranking. Moreover, with the proliferation of social networks, it is now possible to follow their fan pages and be informed about their private lives. These fan pages, mostly on Facebook, share tens of photos or videos a day and followers are asked to choose the most beautiful, the best or the most successful among them by comparing their hairstyles, smiles or crying. Followers write thousands of answers to these comparative and visual questions. These three actresses have become unforgettable thanks to this vast amount of knowledge and visual information. The reason why participants do not remember Songul Oden is that she did not act in any other soaps after *Nour* and that after *Nour* for a long time, and then shared the leading role with three other desperate women in *Nisa Hairat*. As social networking sites were not so popular in 2008, it was difficult for the audience to follow Songul Oden closely. Another actress in the list was Meryem Uzerli, who played in *Harem Al-Sultan*. This soap has high ratings in Egypt and its leading lady is therefore remembered.

Soaps are mostly sold at trade fairs. Illustrated catalogs, the scenario of the soap and a summary of a few episodes are prepared and presented to the customers. The outstanding point in Middle East market is that people are interested more in the actors and actresses than the scenario of the soaps. For example, if Tugba Buyukustun is in it, they buy the soap; the theme is not so important. Nearly all the soaps in which she acts are sold at fabulous prices. The most important factor which determines the price and sales is the cast. (Müge Hanilci, ATV Content Sales Representative, March 2014, Istanbul.)

When the first Turkish actor which comes to mind is asked, Kivanc Tatlitug is in the lead. Engin Akyurek follows, with 12 respondents. Many participants have underlined that the most important reason why he comes to mind is his affectionate and romantic manner. Engin Akyurek, who played the lead in *Fatima*, was described as “brown haired, like us, not handsome” by some of the participants; however his

good and affectionate character was thought to be “totally different from Egyptians”. Akyurek is followed by Halit Ergenc, Kenan İmirzalioglu and Bulent İnal. The leading actors of soaps with dominant female characters, such as *Asi*, *Esmiyyetha Feriha* and *Tezekker Habibi*, were at the bottom of the list, while their partners were at the top.

The participants were asked a question about how they see Turkey; 55 said that they find Turkey modern; 22 said they find it Eastern and 22 find it Western. Only five said that they find Turkey traditional. Most of the participants gave double answers and defined Turkey as either ‘modern western’ or ‘modern eastern’. Here, the interesting point is that Turkey is perceived as a modern country, before consideration of eastern or western. Turkey is described primarily as a modern country and then, depending on the person’s criteria, Turkey is either pulled closer to Egypt or pushed farther away from it. Here, the criteria of the participants is of vital importance. People who think Turkey is far from Egypt mostly base this on religious considerations, the use of alcohol, relations between men and women, the freedom of women and illegitimate children, all of which they disapprove of. On the other hand, respondents who refer positively to the West state that hygiene is important in Turkish soaps, the houses and streets are clean, people live in good conditions. It is possible that these features are associated with the West. Turkey was found to be traditional in a few comments and in these comments respect for elders, eid visits, taking off shoes at home were regarded as traditional aspects. It is clear that Turkey is not precisely accepted either as Eastern or Western. However, nearly all the participants shared the idea that Turkey is a modern country.

At ATV, we had great hopes for *Peace Street (Huzur Sokağı)*. We thought that a soap opera involving conservative characters and defending Islamic values would find a place in Middle East; however the results are the contrary. Export to the Middle East is still on the agenda, but not definite yet. It is not in demand. There are two reasons for this: first, the actors and actresses are not known in that region, and secondly, the audiences want to see different things on screen. They have conservative women using headscarves and Islamic stories in their own

soap operas. Audiences want to see different lives, different people.
(Müge Hanilci, ATV, March 2014, Istanbul.)

The survey participants state that the thing point they like in Turkish soaps is the life style. This is followed by the behavior of people towards one another, their physical appearance and religious rituals. To the question “Do you want to go to Turkey?”, 3 per cent of the participants answered “no”, 50 per cent answered “yes” and 47 per cent stated that they had been to Turkey.

Given this generally positive attitude to Turkey, the answer to the question “Would you like to marry a Turkish man/woman or would you support such a marriage?” is surprising: 61 per cent stated that they do not want to marry a Turkish man/woman and would not support such a marriage. An interesting point here is that participants with lower levels of education and/or lower income answered “Definitely yes!” There may be two reasons for this. First, the question is not realistic for the second group of people, it is only imaginary and it is always easy to talk about improbable situations. Nearly half of the participants have visited Turkey, have obtained at least a high school degree and 20 per cent of them are students at the Yunus Emre Institute; thus the question is more realistic for them, compared with the others. Marrying a Turkish citizen might be a question that they considered before. If a person feels that he can make this situation come true, he might approach the matter more cautiously. Secondly, the interviewees know Turkey from soap operas, they do not have many Turks around. This means that according to this group, Turkish people and their lives look like what they see in the soaps. The lives reflected in the soaps have many ups and downs, are exciting, and good characters always win at the end of the story. The characters are always well groomed and beautiful, all the places and scenes are attractive. This vision might make such a life attractive. However, the people who answered the survey have been to Turkey before or have some idea about it, and, as a result, they are aware that the characters and lives represented in the soaps do not exist in Turkey. Thus people who completed the surveys were able to exhibit a more realistic attitude.

While 59 per cent of the participants stated that they prefer watching soaps on television, 40 per cent said they watch series online; only 1 per cent of them watch

soaps on DVDs. Forty per cent of participants, most of whom said that they have an internet connection at home, stated that they do not follow fan pages on social networks, while 60 per cent stated that they do. Most participants who follow fan pages for Turkish soap operas do it on Facebook. There are other participants who follow soaps and actors/actresses via Twitter and other blogs. There are many albums involving photographs taken from soap operas and the private lives of actors/actresses on fan pages; while the most liked and commented shares are the comparative photographs of actors and actresses. (See Figure 2.1) As these shares are about which actor/actress is more beautiful or handsome, fans can comment about the actors and actresses they like most. (See below, Figure 2.2)



Figure 2.1: Turkish soap opera images on Facebook get thousands of “likes” within hours.



Figure 2.2: “Which one is more beautiful?”

Participants who use photos of their favourite actors and actresses as profile pictures or cover photos, were asked whether they use the photos of actors and actresses on their own account. All the participants did not respond to this question, 29 of the respondents said that they do not, while 17 said that they use a photo of an actor or actress on their own accounts.

I have nearly 600 Egyptian friends on my own Facebook account and I’ve been observing their profile photos since 2010. More than half of them always or occasionally use photos of Turkish soap opera actors or actress as profile photos. It was noticeable that after the political tension between Turkey and Egypt in June 2013 and the cooling of relations between the two countries, only one Egyptian friend of mine had the photo of a Turkish actress as a profile picture; while the others changed their photos.

CHAPTER 3

A LOVE-HATE RELATION

3.1. Turkish Soap Opera Mania in Egypt as the Carnavalesque

There are many studies on why soap operas are watched on television. However, a question which is harder to answer and more significant is, “Why are Turkish soap operas so popular and favored in Egypt?”

In Egypt, soap operas are produced in packages of 30 episodes, especially taking the holy month of Ramadan into consideration, and if they get high ratings, they continue the following year with the second season of the same soap. They are mostly comedies and their scenarios are built mainly on the lies of important people. In Egyptian soap operas, illegitimate babies, illicit cohabitation and a woman living alone is either not shown or shown as improper behavior which is punished sooner or later. In Egypt, where tradition is a strong influence on people and behavior, their attitude towards Turkish soap operas, in which characters people drink alcohol, attempt illicit cohabitation, have illegitimate babies and women are represented as modern and free, is inconsistent with their traditions. Fırat Gülgen, an important name in soap opera exports, says, about people’s interest in Turkish soap operas,:

A month ago I had a reporter from Al Jazeera as my guest, and he came with his 20 year old nephew. He said that he has been watching Turkish soap operas on the internet. He asked me this question: “In the soap opera that I watch, there was a high school student. She told her mother that she was pregnant. Her mother was not angry, she just explained to her that this should be kept secret from the father. I could not understand this. Is this how families are structured?” I think this is a subject on which many of us need to think. If there are certain dividing lines, why do Middle Eastern countries have such interest in our soap operas? I have

been asked this question often. Everyone is surprised about this interest in the Middle East.³⁶

This can be explained by the pleasure of watching other lives and things that the audiences cannot do themselves. The soaps allow them to move beyond their own lives which are limited by culture and society. When the story ends they feel pleased for having watched and feel comfortable for not being the subject of this different world. This situation is similar to Mikhail Bakhtin's *carnavalesque* in some ways.

The term *carnavalesque* is used by Bakhtin to explain the atmosphere full of chaos and humor in literary texts. The term provides some tips about the soap opera-audience relationship from a different and wider angle.

The main features of carnivals can be listed as follows:³⁷

- There is no hierarchical structure in carnivals.
- King becomes clown, clown becomes king and these are interspersed with praise, curses, deification, insolence, and celebration rituals.
- The purpose of carnivals is to have fun and laugh.
- Values are trivialized and humiliated (such as hanging the cathedral bell on a mare).

It would not be realistic to argue that Bakhtin's *carnavalesque* reflects or explains exactly the relation between Egyptian audiences and Turkish soap operas. However, Bakhtin's statements on the carnival tradition and the relation between people and the carnival indicate that the relation between the soap opera and its audience is similar in many ways.

“Here we are giving an extended definition of the term ‘*carnavalesque*’... on the other hand some forms are destroyed, disappear.”³⁸ Bakhtin argues that the term

³⁶ See interview with Firat Gülgen, <<http://www.calinos.com/haberler-detay-page06.html#U-EYcICSwZd>> (05.08.2014).

³⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*. (USA: Indiana University Press, 1984.)

carnavalesque has diverged from its initial meaning and changed. This change is seen in other entertainments related with carnivals, as much as in carnivals themselves. *Carnavalesque* is used as an adjective to describe situations which have carnival characteristics and are similar to carnivals.

Carnivals were originally organized in Italy. Paris and Cologne followed.³⁹ Although there were confession days or fairs organized in Russia, they were quite different from the entertainment patterns of Western Europe, which have specific features and characteristics. The same is true of Arabia and Turkey. Carnivals which are festivals of Western Europe in the Middle Ages, influenced neither Arabia nor the Turkic countries of the era. In these countries, carnivals celebrated by crowds with the participation of everyone without any limits, were not in conformity with Islam in which the lines between men and women are specified rigorously. However, this does not mean that the term *carnavalesque* is not useful in this context. Though there were certain rules and limits, people in the Middle East did create their own carnivals within their own areas of freedom, such as taverns and Turkish shadow theatre. Today, these have evolved, but they still exist as in the past. The tradition of women-only henna nights on the eve of weddings is a good example of such entertainment rituals. Women wear bawdy clothes that they can never wear in public, and have fun belly dancing. Dancing is of vital importance to Egyptians. Music and dance are indispensable for men in social life; and for women in enclosed spaces where others cannot see them. Women's dancing skills top the list of sexuality in Arab countries. Bakhtin argues that carnivals have shape in flesh and bone, become independent from the church and government and thus go from drab to fab.⁴⁰ The similarity between the practice of watching soap operas and carnivals derives from the fact that in soap operas freedom is at the forefront and they are like festivals. Audiences feel a sense of freedom individually, though it is not absolute freedom. The process of

³⁸ Bahtin, Mihail. *Rabelais ve Dünyası*, translated by Çiçek Öztürk. (İstanbul: Ayrıntı, 2005), p. 245.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 247.

watching a soap opera is like a festival between the soap opera and the individual audience.

“At the beginning, the clown masquerades as the king, however when his reign comes to an end, his costumes are changed, he becomes a “ridiculous imitation” and then he turns back into a clown.”⁴¹ There is a similar relation between soap operas and audiences. At the beginning of the story, audiences pretend to be the creator, as they know more than all the characters, because the audiences have knowledge about all the characters. All that is unknown by the audience is limited to the information that the writers do not want the audiences to know. Otherwise, audiences always know the dangers, good news, bad ideas and plans before all the characters. This is highly effective in making audiences feel powerful and a part of the story. When an episode ends, audiences return to their own life, now there is not much to learn or actualize that he has learnt and spiritual identity is not given to him until the next episode. Thus, the carnival ends till the next episode.

According to Bakhtin, a “cuckolded husband” means abdication and transition to a next husband or lover. In this phantasy, the old husband is accepted as old, ancient, past and abdicated, becomes an object of derision and is denigrated. We come across similar themes in Turkish soap operas. However, in Turkish soaps ex-husband who has a good character, provokes humane sentiments rather than denigration. Audiences disapprove of a woman who has broken the rules of society only for her own feelings, needs and salacity. At the same time, if the husband is not a good person and it is better to get rid of him, the audience -which may include women with such husbands- secretly enjoy the elimination of the ex-husband. This gives the pleasure of seeing that other people can change the things that you cannot attempt or achieve in your own life.

While Lila Abu-Lughod was working on her book on Egyptian television, she lodged with an Egyptian woman called Zainab. Zainab had an unfortunate marriage and was abandoned for another woman. Though she was not old, she looked old. She said, “In the cliff-hanger that I follow on radio, there is an abandoned woman of my age. She

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 224

meets a man and falls in love, like a teenager. I did not think this could happen, it is impossible for me, but it happened on radio.”⁴²

3.2. One Side of the Medallion and Bakhtin

Carnivals are among the most important festivities in the world, and Bakhtin emphasizes their popular character in *Rabelais and His World*. Their most distinctive characteristics are that the public is able to take the initiative completely, and that carnivals have no serious or religious dimensions whatsoever.⁴³ We may consider the practice of watching soap operas an *internal* carnival, and indeed soap operas and the practice of watching them are extremely popular activities in Egypt. Thus, the day after an episode has aired, it is quite common to encounter conversations between neighbors or colleagues involving such questions as “Do you know what happened in the soap yesterday?” or “Do you think that they will really get married soon?” Mustafa Aydođan, the former deputy principal of the Yunus Emre Cultural Center in Cairo, stated that students would frequently talk about soap operas during lessons or breaks, and that they would sometimes give examples based upon them in class. This popularity of soap operas stands out as a reason for the masses to watch them. Soaps have become one of the main topics of conversation, and thus people want to be informed about them, to know briefly the main storyline and the names of the principal actors even if they do not regularly watch them. Just as the public assumes the initiative in carnivals, viewers also have the initiative in their own personal carnivals. Whether to continue watching or to stop is up to them. It is true that soaps are dependent on the television, but there are many repeat broadcasts at night and besides, viewers have access to all past episodes through the internet; this gives the viewer added power when it comes to watching and following the soaps. Furthermore, what is shown on the television screen is a series of snapshots from daily life and not a serious or religious message, so that, relatively speaking, no “sin/evil” derives from watching it. Even if some elements of the show can be judged to be wrong or incorrect from a religious viewpoint, they are far from the viewer who

⁴² Op. cit., Abu-Lughod, p. 35.

⁴³ Op. cit., Bahtin, p. 274.

simply watches them from the safety of the spectator's chair without becoming a party to them. For this reason, the viewer may experience no guilt feelings at all, or perhaps experience some guilt feelings only because he or she is watching something evil, but it is also possible that the viewer will actually feel better because that evil is not part of his or her life. Thus, the limitlessness of the carnival that can stretch behavior to extremes will only come to life in the viewer's imagination; by watching those who experience the extremes of behavior that he or she does not and indeed would not wish to experience, the viewer will step into an internal carnival.

When viewed from the standpoint of communication theory, this intense desire that Bakhtin conveys through the term carnival, this will to transgress boundaries, this determination to step out of one's self and become other, overlap with uses and gratification theory (UGT). In general, media theories focus on the influence of the media on the viewers, and what the media do to them. Thus, while spectators are considered passive and susceptible to being influenced, UGT gives them an active role. This theory, in other words, seeks to understand and explain what the viewers do with the media. It is of importance because it brings the audience to the fore and addresses itself to active audiences. UGT discusses how users deliberately choose the media that will satisfy given needs, and allow one to enhance knowledge, relaxation, social interactions/companionship, diversion, or escape.⁴⁴

UGT suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media.⁴⁵ Media users are free to determine what they need and to choose what they want to watch or know. It rejects the idea that the media and the television have absolute power on their audiences and that these latter are only passive recipients who cannot think for themselves. The main idea behind UGT is that audiences use the media, and especially television, to fulfill their own needs, and that the media do not enjoy absolute power over society today.

⁴⁴ Denis McQuail. *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*. (London: Sage Publications, 2010), pp. 420–430.

⁴⁵ Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch, "Uses and Gratifications Research," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Winter 1973–74), pp. 509–523. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2747854>> (03.06.2014).

Television is the media tool most widely used and easily accessed by media users, and soap operas are the most watched television programs. It may be argued that a link exists between Bakhtin's theory and UGT, in the following sense. Bakhtin has emphasized that, as events in which people get away from their daily lives and everything is turned upside down, boundaries are removed, and the main purpose is to have fun, carnivals are a human need; that people therefore wait for it with curiosity and eagerness; and that, when the day comes, people participate in it *en masse* and with enthusiasm. According to UGT, if people did not feel such a need, then they would not exercise the strength and the will to ensure the perpetuation of the carnival, rather choosing to continue their daily lives as usual. Watching television and especially soap operas involving a storyline has an important place in shaping the needs and expectations of the audiences.

Carnivals always involve a notion of rebirth. The exhaustion and disappearance of something, and its subsequent re-emergence is an example, as is the taking of the king's crown and its subsequent return. Carnivals end with a resurrection. Likewise, the practice of watching soap operas also gives its audience the possibility of rebirth. When an viewer turns off the television, he or she is reborn to his or her own life and thus leaves behind the life pictured in the soap.

A *carnivalesque* crowd is a community organized in its own way and by its own doing.⁴⁶ A soap opera viewer is likewise, by his or her own volition, a member of a (partial) organization. The hours at which soap operas are broadcast are considered important times and factored into the daily schedule, with viewers adjusting their evening plans, classes, and meal times accordingly. In 2010, when I was working as an instructor at the Cairo Yunus Emre Cultural Center, students in my 18:00–21:00 Turkish class requested that we skip breaks and finish early; the reason was their desire to return home in time for the Turkish soap opera *Asi* on television.

As Bakhtin describes the concept of carnival around the books of Rabelais, he focuses on unlimited eating and drinking as one of the most remarkable motifs. Carnivals push people to transgress their limits, encouraging extreme behavior

⁴⁶ Op. cit., Bahtin, p. 283.

within a cycle of eating and drinking, vomiting, and eating again.⁴⁷ Though the behavior of soap audiences is not quite as excessive, the fact is that they too indulge in a continuous state of consuming during the broadcasts. In Egypt, in particular, drinking tea and smoking cigarettes or the water-pipe after dinner continue throughout the soaps. Just as wine flows like water in Bakhtin's carnivals, tea is consumed endlessly at the homes of Egyptian soap audiences. Soap operas are watched in the company of tea, probably water-pipes, and some snacks. This gives the practice of watching soap operas certain distinctively *carnavalesque* features.

Another point to consider in carnivals is their language. Carnivals are organized around not official languages but rather local vernaculars. The dominant language is that of the people, enabling them to identify with and internalize the festivities. The soap operas broadcast in Egypt are dubbed, meaning that the audiences are not forced to watch them in Turkish, a language they do not understand. Moreover, the dubbing is not in classical but colloquial Arabic, because, although most Arabic speakers can follow classical Arabic to some degree, it is not used in daily speech. The soaps are dubbed in the Syrian dialect, which can be understood clearly by Egyptian audiences. Thus, another similarity between soap operas and the *carnavalesque* is that they are based upon dialects familiar to the people, dialects with which the people can readily identify, rather than official or classical languages.

One last point to add is the motif of grotesque bodies in carnivals. Featuring a combination of humor and ugliness, these bodies are frequently present in carnivals. For soap audiences, the grotesque bodies are their own. The characters and actors and actresses in soap operas can be described as far above the average in terms of physical beauty. Great attention is given to their weight and height and the ratio between them, as well as to their well-kempt, well-groomed appearance. In the presence of these ideal bodies, audiences define their own as unkempt, sometimes too fat, sometimes too thin, but always far from the ideal.

Bakhtin theorized the carnivals, the most important mass festivities in European history, and his theory has been applied to literature and to sociology. Carnivals are

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 307.

quite different from the ordinary festivals that are supported by religious institutions or the government, that do not push people to transgress the existing socio-political system, that preserve existing hierarchies and support religious, moral, and societal values. As Bakhtin writes,

Whether financed by religious, feudal, or state institutions, the official festivals of the Middle Ages did not drive the people out of the existing world order, they did not create an alternative life. On the contrary, they confirmed and strengthened the way things were... Official festivals defended everything that was static, unchanging, and permanent —the existing hierarchy, the existing religious, political, and moral values, norms, and prohibitions. They were the victory of a truth that had already been settled, of one that was deemed eternal and not debatable. For this reason, the tone of official festivals was monolithically serious and the element of laughter was foreign to it.⁴⁸

According to Bakhtin, while official festivals maintain the existing order, carnivals turn it upside-down, even if for a limited time. In carnivals, ordinary people can be chosen king or queen just for a day. “Coronation and taking back the crown are part of an ambivalent ritual that expresses both the inevitability of change and renewal and its creative power, the cheerful relativity of all structures and orders, all authorities and (hierarchical) positions.”⁴⁹ While watching a soap opera, members of the audience leave behind the daily routines of their own lives and become a superior power that knows the secrets of all the characters in the storyline. And when the episode comes to an end, they must give up their superior power, that is, their crown, and return to their own lives.

In Egypt, the loss of senses and the madness in Bakhtin’s carnivals are not acceptable. As religious rules (both Islamic and Christian) exist throughout social life, becoming a lifestyle rather than a belief, “extremism” is not approved. On the other

⁴⁸ Op. cit., Bakhtin, p. 9.

⁴⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Dostoyevski Poetikasının Sorunları*, trans. Cem Soydemir (İstanbul: Metis, 2004), p.186.

hand, these rules and drives bring along the desire to go beyond what is accepted as “normal” and curiosity towards the “abnormal”.

3.3. Turkish Soap Operas and the Islamic Cultural Sphere in Egypt

In the traditional Arab view, a division between passive and active is at the core of sexuality. Manhood is associated with power. Abdessamad Dialmy explains,; “Sexual power encompasses the power of (sexual) desire, the length of intercourse and its repetition, and the ability to sexually satisfy women in order to ensure their sexual loyalty.”⁵⁰

In Arab society the loss of virginity is of vital importance for both sides and is like a ritual. Here, man is accepted as the controlling power on women’s sexuality. The first sexual intercourse is transformed into a ritual in which the woman shows her virginity and the man shows his sexual power. Virginity is considered a family honor in Egypt, and it is possible to test it. Sexuality and sexual power are important for the protection of the man’s ego and mental health.⁵¹ However, it is different for women. Sexual power, which determines manhood, is far from being a symbol of womanhood. For women, sexual power turns into fertility, maternity and being a wife. In Arab and especially Egyptian culture generally, an honorable woman is a wife and a mother; other women, like lovers, singers, dancers, are downgraded.

Genital mutilation is also important. Although it is not obligatory in Islam, circumcision continues as a cultural custom and is experienced by 91 per cent of all Egyptian women according to UNICEF data.⁵² This further increases male domination. It is interesting that women also support genital mutilation. The Egyptian Demographic and Health Survey (DHS, 1995) confirms that 97 percent of single Egyptian women have been circumcised and 82 percent of them support the

⁵⁰ Abdessamad Dialmy, “Sexuality in Contemporary Arab Societies” *Social Analysis*, Vol. 49, I. 2 (Summer 2005): p. 19.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵² <<http://data.unicef.org/child-protection/fgmc>> (09.08.2014).

practice.⁵³ Genital mutilation, which is of African origin and not carried out in most Arab countries, is regarded as providing purity and cleanliness in Egypt. Hind Khattab explains that genital mutilation is considered to bring women's identity to the fore, protect their virginity, restrain masturbation and give husbands more pleasure.⁵⁴

The view is imposed on women that their primary role in the family is to protect the family honor. If she suffers sexual abuse or harassment, this is accepted as the woman's fault in Egypt. The Turkish soap opera *What is Fatmagul's Crime* has achieved success in Egypt as a result of its story and the recognition of the actors and actresses. There are various newspaper articles and documentaries telling Egyptian women to question their own lives after watching these soaps.⁵⁵ In Egypt, there are movies (such as *678*, *Asmaa*), various blogs, websites⁵⁶ and cartoon characters⁵⁷ (Qahera, Figure 3.1) on this subject.

In Egypt, pregnancy out-of-wedlock ends up women killing their own babies to save the family honor. This is important to show that illegitimate children and extramarital affairs which are accepted as frequent, unimportant and coverable fault in Turkish soap operas, are how unacceptable for Egyptians.

⁵³ Ali Asdar Kamran, "Notes on Rethinking Masculinities: An Egyptian Case" in *Learning about Sexuality: A Practical Beginning*, edited by Sondra Zeidenstein and Kirsten Moore (New York: 1996) p. 20.

⁵⁴ Hind Khattab, *Women's Perceptions of Sexuality in Rural Giza*, Giza: The Population Council, 1996, p.20.

⁵⁵ It is stated in the documentary "Kismet" that these soap operas help women bring lawsuits on sexual harassment.

⁵⁶ <http://egyptianinitiatives.com/stopsexualharassment.html> ve <http://harassmap.org/ar/> 09.08.2014.

⁵⁷ The official page of "Qahera", <<http://qaherathesuperhero.com/index>> (09.08.2014).



Figure 3.1: Qahera, super heroine.

With reference to sexuality and moral values, in Egypt women living in a different place, alone or being out of home are not welcomed in Egypt as well. As women living away from home liberalize and separate from the family elders acting like the control mechanism, they will lose or harm their honor. For this reason, there is general view arguing that the women image that stand on her own legs, live alone and work in Turkish soap operas, has negative effects on young people in Egypt. In Cairo the number of working woman has increased however the complete freedom of women is still not accepted. In rural parts of Egypt, women are still bounded to their homes.

3.4. The Other Side of the Medallion

Since 2008, Turkish soap operas have been watched by a vast audience in Egypt. We cannot claim that all Egyptians like Turkish soap operas, but a majority watch them. Even though levels of education, incomes, and environments vary hugely, especially in Cairo, it is impossible to come across an Egyptian who has never watched a Turkish soap opera. After MBC enjoyed high ratings, other television channels also mobilized, both those that broadcast by satellite to Arabic countries and national channels. However, there is also a group of people who disagree with Turkish soap opera fans and do not like, or even hate, Turkish soaps. There are three main reasons for this dislike or hatred.

The longest and the strongest opposition to Turkish soap operas is religious. Especially in Saudi Arabia, there are fatwas issued by the sheikhs, stating that Turkish soap operas harm moral values and that it is a sin to watch and broadcast them. There are similar views in which argue that Turkish soaps have a seducing power with negative effects on Egyptians, especially women. To the question “Which aspects of Turkish soap operas don’t you like?” some respondents pointed to inappropriate behavior on the soaps from an Islamic point of view. Elements most criticized were as follows: extramarital affairs and illegitimate children, excessive alcohol consumption, undervaluing of the holy month of Ramadan are, insufficient use of words like ‘inşallah’ and ‘maşallah’, and the small number of women wearing headscarves. On newspaper and television news in Arabic countries it is often stated that Turkish soap operas have a disintegrating effect on the family, change what couples expect from each other and result in divorces.

H. was an Egyptian who had just graduated from high school. His aim was to learn Turkish and study at a Turkish university. During a trip that we organized after a lesson, he said, in answer to the question “Do you watch Turkish soap operas?”, “No, not at all!” For him, watching Turkish soap operas was inappropriate. It was clear, from his appearance and dress that he was an observant believer. While I could not continue with the question, knew that H was not unaware of Turkish soap operas. Moreover, as he thinks that Turkish soap operas should not be watched and have a bad effect on people, it is likely that he gave the answer he did, as he did not want to be embarrassed in front of his friends.

The second group that opposes Turkish soap operas consists of sector representatives who think that Turkish soap operas have a deleterious effect on the Egyptian movie and soap opera sector. However, the Egyptian movie and soap opera sector is unable to mount a powerful argument against Turkish soaps.

The political tension between Turkey and Egypt that started in June 2013 when Mohammed Morsi was overthrown by a military coup led by Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and the Turkish government described the situation as an “unacceptable coup”, had

an effect on television.⁵⁸ As relations between Turkey and Egypt deteriorated, all national TV channels in Egypt banned Turkish soap operas. (See Figure 3.2)

After June 2013, Turkish soap operas were seen as the products of a country that interferes in Egypt's internal affairs, and some groups who watch Turkish soap operas also decided to boycott them. However, as there was still demand for Turkish soaps, some television channels that do satellite broadcasting did not take part in the boycott.



Figure 3.2: “Boycotting Turkish Products”

The “one minute” incident when Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stood up to the Israeli President created a tremendous impression in all Arabic countries and was much appreciated. In 2010, I went to Egypt for the first time. In those days, when I said “I’m from Turkey” almost all Egyptians said “one minute” with a smile on their faces and praised Erdoğan. Now, especially since 2013, this has

⁵⁸ “Egyptian Artists Sound the Call to Boycott Turkish Soap Operas”
<<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/5/32/78355/Arts--Culture/Film/Egyptian-artists-sound-the-call-to-boycott-Turkish.aspx>> (04.08.2014).

changed.⁵⁹ In 2014, when I was in Egypt working on my surveys on Turkish soap operas, when a saleswoman in an outdoor market heard my questions about Turkey, she started to revile Turkey and Erdogan.

⁵⁹ “Showbiz Arabia: Egypt bans Turkish TV Hits” <<http://gulfnews.com/arts-entertainment/television/showbiz-arabia-egypt-bans-turkish-tv-hits-1.1222535>> (08.08.2014).

CHAPTER 4

CARTOONS AND FILM

4.1. What is the Aim of Cartoons?

Social satire is a significant tool in understanding society, current events, and popular reactions to current events. Contemporary social satire generally uses cartoons, comedy movies, and comic books. Cartoons (caricature), which have enjoyed great popularity in newspapers and magazines, constitute one of the most popular forms of satire. Cartoons gain importance at times of political and social tension, because people realize that these images reveal people's reactions and innermost ideas. Cartoons are also critical for understanding the daily situation, people's desires, trends, and so on. As elsewhere, cartoons are widely used in Egypt. Especially after the 25th January Revolution, there was an explosion of political satire with all different ideologies and political parties: the 30-year-old ex-regime, the new democratic movements, and the military. Egyptian society has numerous outlets for social, political, and economic satire. This chapter focuses on social satire concerning Turkish soap operas in the Arab world and especially in Egypt.

Social satire about Turkish soap operas may be divided into two different types. Firstly, cartoons in newspapers, magazines, blogs, and social networks, and secondly, Egyptian movies and soap operas, as constituents of the dominant film industry in the Arab world, which criticize or satirize society under the influence of Turkish soap operas.

4.2. Turkish Soap Operas as Seen by Cartoonists

The cartoon is a kind of art that uses critical or judgmental content for a specific situation or problem with exaggerated and abbreviated drawings. Exaggeration and abbreviation are the two key terms in the definition of cartoons: exaggeration is used for pointing at the problem and abbreviation for focusing attention by ignoring all the

extra details. Comic books, cartoons, and animated films are generally considered to be intended for children and are thus often found unworthy of serious research. However, according to Clive Ashwing, cartoons, and especially comics are some of the most sophisticated and complex parts of visual arts from the viewpoint of semiotics.⁶⁰

The cartoon is a visual art that takes a message and carries it to the receiver, and using Turkish soap operas in cartoons amounts to a kind of intertextuality that all parts of society can understand. One way of interaction between the cartoon and people is having or sharing a similar cultural identity. This identity enables mutual understanding of the symbols and words used in cartoons. The cartoons' subject changes daily and the cartoonist always tells stories which are unspoken. Cartoons, whether social or political, always tell the audience a hidden or unseen story. Hence, there are some studies on cartoons that seek to understand the social background, social reactions, or unknown stories behind the main scenes they depict.

Lila Abu-Lughod argues that: "Cartoonists, often the most astute commentators on Egyptian life, caricature the experience of watching soap operas as being tied up with tears."⁶¹ She refers to Egyptian audience (probably women) and Egyptian dramas in general. However, there are no tears and handkerchiefs in cartoons about Turkish soap operas. The point is quite different when we compare general soap opera and drama critics and Turkish soap opera critics in cartoons.

Our main goal in focusing on caricatures containing elements of Turkish soap operas is to understand the social reaction to the popularity of Turkish soaps, as well as the criticism and satire directed at them. The cartoons here were taken from the Internet and from newspapers. They were published in Egypt and also other Arabic-speaking countries such as Syria, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Although our main main focus here is on Egypt, the circulation of this kind of material is very widespread thanks to

⁶⁰ P.M. Lester, "Visual Communication, Images With Messages" Wadsworth, Thomas Learning, Stamford, 2000, in Mariam Ginman and Sara von Ungern-Sternberg, "Cartoons as Information" *Journal of Information Science*. Vol. 29, 2003) p. 70.

⁶¹ Op. cit., Abu-Lughod, p. 117.

the internet and social networks. Newspapers and magazines had an important role in expanding the circulation of cartoons to a wider population, but this role is now increasingly assumed by the internet. All of these cartoons were published on the internet, mostly on Facebook, one of the largest and most prominent places to share material about Turkish soap operas. The specific subject changes by soap opera, and even if the main point satirized is generally the same, the names of the soap operas and their characters change.

Palmira Brummett argues that cartoons are, by their very nature, designed to confound the dimensions of time, space, language, and perceived reality, and that the effect of a cartoon is dependent both upon its invoking a perceived “reality” and upon its subsequently breaking the boundaries of that perception.⁶² In cartoons, time generally refers to the present day, because cartoonists choose their topics from recent events in order to be relevant and understood. If there is no other information or sign, it is assumed that a cartoon tells us something about the present. The setting of a cartoon also speaks volumes. The setting needs to be very basic and clear, and show a brief summary of the story. For example, if the setting is a specific country, a flag or an important landmark such as the pyramids, the Eiffel tower, or the Great Wall of China can be used to signify it. If the cartoon is about class differences, expensive cars or big villas can be depicted opposite small, dirty, and unfurnished houses. Other meaningful details may also be added, such as a particular outfit, a moustache and beard, make-up, jewelry, physical characteristics such as being fat or thin, beautiful or ugly.

Language is another important category, and mainly refers to level of education: such elements as chosen words, sentence structure, and slang can be used to indicate which part of society the characters come from, whether or not they are educated, whether they are rich or poor, and so on.

The most important factor for a cartoon is that what it represents is close to the reality that is accepted and desired by society. This is because proximity to reality has crucial importance for the reader to understand and internalize the story and the

⁶² Palmira Brummett, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press: 1908-1911*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 18.

satire conveyed by the cartoon. Being related to reality has a great impact, because it makes the cartoon not just a stimulus for laughter but also something important that the reader understands and thinks about.

In his analysis of American political satire, Charles Press divides the components of the cartoon into those affecting the intellect, those affecting the conscience, and those affecting the emotions: (1) a picture of reality, an attempt to demonstrate the essence of truth; (2) a message, a recommendation; (3) a mood, an indication of how the viewer should feel.⁶³ These elements are closely connected to the cartoon's content, such as its characters and their attire, the background, and the elements describing the place, people, and so forth. All these details are selected and represented by the cartoonist. These three components are also highly interconnected because the viewer can feel the real mood in the cartoon and feel the truth, as if from real life. Mood is one of the key points here, because in cartoons, there is something to criticize or satirize, and, of course, there is a specific group being criticised. Sometimes this satire can offend the viewer, so figuring out the distance between the character in the cartoon and the viewer is very important for determining how the viewer will feel when receiving the message.

In Arab cartoons in which the main theme is the fanaticism with which local audiences follow Turkish soap operas and their actors and actresses, the main message is generally criticism of this fanaticism. At the same time, however, these cartoons amuse people. The general setting is a middle- to lower-class family, never one that is educated or elite. The image depicts a family and a house that shows the family's class with its simple furniture and an old television on a table. The characters' dress is generally the same in many cartoons: they wear a *jallabiya* (traditional Arab robe) that differentiates them from the Turkish soap opera characters with their European outfits. Here, there is a very appreciable dichotomy between East and West. However, in the end, all these cartoons say roughly the same

⁶³ Charles Press, *Political Cartoon*, (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981), pp. 60-70 in Palmira Brummett, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press: 1908-1911*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 19.

thing: people are mad about these soap operas. Even if the viewer is not a fan, he or she surely knows what the caricatures mean.

A successful cartoon uses familiar symbols and creates a slice of real life for its readers so that the public can identify and understand it. I have found all cartoons to be similar in this respect, whether they are produced in Egypt, Syria or Saudi Arabia. The women are veiled and not so attractive; they are described as mothers or wives. The house in which the family watches the soap operas is very simple: the TV and a couch, and sometimes a carpet, are all the pieces of furniture in the room. There is no other detail which describes the house. This shows that the cartoonists' main target is a specific group and class of people, most probably because the middle- and lower classes constitute the largest group in these societies and thus more or less represent the entire country. If the chosen picture of reality does not capture the imagination of the public, then the cartoon fails and the intended message and feeling cannot reach the public. However, these Arab cartoons manage to attract attention and give the message to the viewer using familiar symbols. This is in line with Ibn Khaldun's argument that a successful history should make sense and construct its story within the realm of possibility.⁶⁴ This accords with the situation in Egypt: people can expect to find themselves in the cartoons, or at least find someone familiar, so that they can respond as soon as they see the cartoons and understand it.



Figure 4.1: “My wife is watching “The Lost Years” (*Sanawat El Daya*, *Ihlamurlar Altında*) and I am watching years of installment bills.”

⁶⁴ Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah: An introduction to history*, translated by Franz Rosenthal, (Princeton University Press, 1970) pp. 36-38

In Figure 4.1, there is a small house with a television and a pillow on the floor. This is all the furniture in the room, and the husband and wife are both wearing the *jallabiya*, the traditional form of dress in Egypt, not preferred in big cities. There is a small detail here: a glass of tea, which is common in Egypt as an evening drink. It shows this house to be a typical lower class Egyptian house. Another important point is that there are many bills that the husband is struggling with, while the wife does not care about the bills or even her husband because she is focused on watching the soap opera *The Lost Years* (Sanawat El Daya, Ihlamurlar Altında). However, the most important thing here is that every detail gives some hint about a lower class Arab family and everyone who looks at the cartoon can empathize.

Another key element in cartoons is symbols. The symbol greater power and meaning inside the specific setting of a cartoon. The symbol is not from high or popular culture, so there is no dichotomy between the symbols of the elite and the people. Especially in Egypt, even if there is a great gap between poor and rich, symbols are very accessible to all. The cartoon above is a good example of this, because in it symbols like the *jallabiya*, tea, and the pillow on the floor are so common that everyone who lives in Arab countries, especially in Egypt, can understand their true meaning.

The best use of cartoons is to study those containing contemporary events. Cartoons are published today, they are studied today, and they are searched today. Therefore, reading them is much easier than hundred-year-old cartoons. A cartoon is a media tool tied mainly to the direct understanding of day-to-day changes, and the humor of the present. In today's world, everyone has access to the daily newspaper; internet access is another story. One of my study groups in Egypt consists of university students, who all have internet access, and they were very helpful in collecting these cartoons. This chapter is mainly about their perspective and understanding of these cartoons.

Although some cartoons are extremely professional - in daily newspapers, with specific characters and a masterful drawing style - some cartoons are very amateurish, prepared for the networking pages. Figure 4.2 is a good example of an amateur cartoon. The lines are very basic and clumsy. This cartoon is obviously not a

professional work. The text, pictures, and some signals indicate the real story whilst without them there can be very limited understanding. The main point here, however, is the *idea* in the cartoons rather than the drawing, because some amateur cartoons have had great success in attracting popular attention in social networking and have a massive online following.



Figure 4.2: The high court for divorce is shown. The signs say: if the cause of your divorce is the Turkish soap opera 'Nour' go to the left, and if the cause is the soap opera 'Sanawat Al Daya' go to the right.

Cartoons have a voice and an image in the public realm. The voice of the cartoons in my study is in different kinds of Arabic dialect. The words chosen, as well as the image used, are important for describing the characters and materials are important for classification. Tradition is the key word in Arab cartoons: all the details contain traditional symbols. Even if there is a great gap between rich and poor in Egypt, tradition is understood and accepted in the same way universally. Traditionally, Egypt has been a male-dominated society, and cartoons generally focus on the role of men. However, most of the cartoons in this study focus on women as the real fans of Turkish soap operas. These cartoons are populated by woman more than men. This is

not true of cartoons generally, but in the case of Turkish soap operas women assume the main role. Women in Egypt have specific roles in education, marriage, the family, and domestic life, and all these cartoons criticize women who waver between these roles and the magic world of Turkish soap operas.



Figure 4.3: Addiction to Turkish soap operas

In the cartoons, women are ridiculed and blamed for not performing their domestic duties, not looking after their children as they watch Turkish soaps. Women cannot abandon their duties at home, and especially in Arab culture they are expected to clean the house, cook, and feed the children. How does the woman perform her domestic duties and deal with her overwhelming desire to watch Turkish soap operas? The solution is shown in Figure 4.3, where the woman washes the dishes, cooks, but at the same time watches *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* on a television set using a very practical contraption on her shoulders, while her baby cries in the corner of the cartoon. There is an interesting detail in this cartoon: the woman is depicted as having blue eyes with make-up and blonde hair. This is very unusual in Egypt and other Arab countries. This blue eyed, blonde woman does not represent a traditional Egyptian woman. These features show that this woman has physically changed and become of European type. On the other hand, she is still in the kitchen and busy

dishes, meals and kids. Whilst this cartoon surely criticizes Turkish soap opera addiction, it can also be read to imply that this woman is an ideal type with eyes made up and a small part of hair shown under the scarf because she is a well-groomed lady. She seems overweight, but this is not so important in Egypt. In general, being skinny and slimming to become skinny are not common in Egypt. Blue eyes and blonde hair are always symbols of European character and this cartoon might be drawing attention to the fact that women who watch these soap operas try to become more European or good looking with make-up, hair-dye and maybe colored lenses.

Cartoons which criticize women's addiction to Turkish soap operas sometimes show women as having a tendency to accept soap opera characters as real people and think about their lives and problems. Figure 4.4 is a good example of this. Two women are shown praying, conspicuously in their *jallabiyas* and headscarves, sitting on a *sajjada* (prayer rug). However, ironically, they are praying for soap opera characters. The woman in pink begs for the resolution of soap opera characters' problems and for them to have a happy life, while the other begs for the transformation of her own husband's behavior and appearance to that of a soap opera character.



Figure 4.4: Women praying for Turkish soap opera characters

Packalen and Odoi note that “Cartoons are an essential part of every country’s culture. The cartoons’ heroes reflect values and convictions that are commonly lionized in the prevailing culture and its symbolism, which allows people to identify themselves with the presented types, situations, and trains of thought.”⁶⁵ Humor or satire in cartoons is mostly related to the audience’s everyday environment. These cartoons are created by local artists who can correctly and directly convey the intended message to the reader. However, the key question here concerns who the subject of these cartoons is. With her *jallabiya* and headscarf, in her lower middle class home and unkempt appearance, the subject is local. The reader, the subject in the cartoon and the artist share a similar cultural and environmental background, but their perception levels are different.

Humor has two main functions: the first appears at times of political pressure, because at such times the population becomes liable to explode due to unresolved stress, and satire -in the form of cartoons, etc.- serves the function of relieving social tension. The second appears at the time of independence. In this period, even if there is no political pressure, people are subject to pressures in social areas such as work, school, home.

Palmira Brummett argues that the effect of the cartoon is mainly related to providing an understanding of the reality in the cartoon and also to invade political borders.⁶⁶

Today, cartoons are widely used and more popular than ever before and they are effective in delivering their message in an entertaining way. Images play a key role here, because seeing something amusing and relating it to themselves makes people more attached to the subject. Sometimes people accept that they are the subject of the satire and at other times they just see others as the subject of their amusement.

⁶⁵ L. Packalen and F. Odoi, “Comics as a Medium for Development Communication” (Finnida: Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department for International Development Cooperation, 1999.)

⁶⁶ Yavuz Bayram, “Türkiye’de Siyasi Karikatürün Yeri ve 11. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Seçimine İlişkin Siyasi Karikatürlerin çözümlenmesi”, *Selçuk İletişim*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2009. pp. 107-123, p.

It should be borne in mind that the cartoons here are translated. The work of translation requires a combination of knowledge and art. In working to translate these cartoons from the various dialects of Arabic into English, I have struggled with these requirements. Since, in understanding the cartoon, the language is sometimes not enough, I needed information about social life in Arab countries and knowledge of some elements of Turkish soap operas which are used as symbols, such as a specific style of moustache or a specific outfit. In some cartoons, even if one understands the text, it is difficult to decipher the whole situation in context. It is clear that there is a specific audience for these cartoons, because the immediate reaction elicited from the focus group when exposed to the cartoons were smiles, indicating understanding. In this chapter, all cartoons are explained in brief and, where necessary, background information is also added.

Cartoons concerning Turkish soap operas published in the Arab world can be thematically divided into six categories. First, the idea that people lose morals, tradition, and culture because of Turkish soap operas. Second, that Turkish soap operas are like a madness or illness. Third, that the number of divorces is on the increase as a result of Turkish soap operas in Arab countries. Fourth, that women and men love Turkish soap opera characters. Fifth, that women ignore their duties because of the Turkish soap operas. Sixth, the rise of tourism to Turkey.

These categories apply to cartoons which are written specifically in the Egyptian dialect and sometimes in the classical Arabic and Syrian dialect. Turkish soap operas attract many negative reactions from some parts of Arab society. Illegitimate relations, children conceived out of wedlock, couples co-habiting without being married, and women having independent lives are particularly criticized. Television, the main source of entertainment in the house, is a constant companion for housewives, especially when they do their daily chores, and for all the family at dinnertime and after. Television is still one of the most important form of entertainment for the middle class in Egypt. Thus, it serves as such for women, children, and for men who come home from work and prefer to watch colorful images and romantic stories for relaxation without having to think too hard. However, the main criticism in cartoons is that these soap operas ruin the family and morality.

In Figure 4.5, watching Turkish soap operas is equated with drinking the water sustaining lives without “the sense of shame, morality, and tradition”.



Figure 4.5: Turkish soap operas ruin the sense of shame, morality, and tradition in Arab societies.



Figure 4.6: On the right, changing room for clothes; on the left, the TV as a changing room to discard morality, and on the screen, “Turkish soap operas”.

Television may be seen as an “idiot box”. However, in Figure 4.6, the evildoer is not television, it is Turkish soap operas. In the image, television appears to be a room that changes people’s moral values. There is a satellite dish above the television, which also points to Turkish soap operas, as these are broadcast from MBC or Dubai channels to all Arabic-speaking countries. This is a warning to people who watch these soap operas: “You are losing your values because of these soap operas!”



Figure 4.7: Diseases of our century

Mad cow disease, bird flu, Turkish soap opera “Nour”.

Turkish soap operas are seen as a social illness. They are generally criticized for their addictive nature. This is so common in Egypt that while working as a Turkish instructor in Cairo, I was once asked by my evening class to rearrange the time of the class according to the starting time of Turkish soap opera *Baiat Al Wart* (Gönül Çelen), and we settled on starting an hour early so they could watch the soap opera. In Figure 4.7, *Nour*, the first popular Turkish soap opera in Arab countries, represents all Turkish soap operas, with the image of Muhanned as exemplar, and *Nour* is categorized as a contagious and virulent illness next to such illnesses as mad cow disease and bird flu.



Figure 4.8: The rate of divorce increases because of the Turkish soap opera Nour.

The devil: You have relieved me. I had too much to do, but you did my work for me.

Family and moral values have crucial importance in Egypt. Breaking the rules, being independent or having a sexual relationship outside marriage are unacceptable. If people insist on violating the moral norm, they draw a reaction and are labeled as immoral. In recent years, especially in big cities like Cairo, Alexandria, and Sharm el Sheikh, independence and individual rights are matters discussed more openly than before, but there are still strict moral controls on people from their families and society. Having a family is both very difficult and very important in Egypt. It is difficult because before marriage, a man has to prepare for all future needs, like housing and furniture, and this implies a large expenditure for the young prospective groom. After marriage and children, maintaining the family is critical. Patriarchal codes mean that men have greater responsibility and power in the family and in society, in Egypt and all Arab countries. Men have the right to divorce (though in Islam, women also have the right to divorce), to have up to four wives at same time, and to what the women in their family can and cannot do. Divorce is not deemed acceptable in these patriarchal societies. It is difficult for a divorced woman to re-

marry, and if she does not have a job, her ability to live becomes very limited. Nevertheless, the divorce rate has been increasing in recent years. This may be a result of an increase in the number of women with higher education and jobs, and more egalitarian ideas generally.



Figure 4.9: The rising rate of divorce

Turkish soap operas are also blamed for the increase in the divorce rate. In the media, there have been some court records from Arab countries, allegedly proving this, but in the Egyptian media there has been no report of a divorce case originating particularly from watching Turkish soap operas. There exist many satires on the issue of divorce. The most spectacular shows Muhanned as the devil's helper (Figure 4.8). The devil seems happy to find a good friend, and says: "You relieve me, I had too much to do, but you did my work for me." Despite the attractive appearance of Muhanned in the cartoon, he is made to resemble the devil through his pointy horned hat and cunning looks.

Figure 4.9 is another good example of the divorce theme. Here, there is a lower middle class family, and a wife and a son are leaving the house. It is obvious that the

woman is angry, and the husband is left standing in the center of the room while television still shows a Turkish soap opera.

The concept of beauty is also important in this context. Beauty is one of the most important reasons for the popularity of Turkish soap operas. It is as important for men as it is for women. Turkish actresses and actors are not famous just because of their physical beauty, they also they represent a modern lifestyle with beautiful houses and furniture, expensive cars, and stylish outfits. They are desirable, with their captivating behavior and romantic postures. Satires make use of this a great deal. In many cartoons, a husband and wife are shown in the same bed, but each dreaming of a Turkish actor and actress, or watching Turkish soap operas in the same living room, but on different televisions. The husbands want to see Lemis (Tuğba Büyüküstün in *Senewat El-edwiye*) in Figure 4.10 and *Nour* (Songül Öden in *Nour*) in Figure 4.11, while the wives want to see Muhanned. These actors and actresses come to represent the criterion for beauty, and Egyptians compliment their loved ones by drawing parallels with these actors' and actresses' characters.



Figure 4.10: Title: Turkish soap operas



Figure 4.11: Title: Turkish soap operas



Figure 4.12: The sleeping couple is dreaming of Muhanned and Nour

The perception of beauty has not remained constant throughout history. As long as people see different styles, colors, and shapes, their perception of beauty changes. In the Arab world, white skin is a sign of beauty. Turkish actresses are also white skinned, but not blonde like most American or European actresses. These white skinned, stylish women are much liked by Arab men. In Figure 4.13, a couple is

watching a Turkish soap opera (most probably *Sanawat Al Daya* judging by Lemis' photograph) and the husband looks unhappily at his wife who has a pumpkin for a head. Their clothes are also interesting. Being in the house, they should be wearing informal clothes, but they prefer to wear the traditional *jallabiya* indoors. We understand from the television, the couch and their appearance that this is a lower middle class couple who watch soap operas.



Figure 4.13: Do Turkish soap operas affect the male's perception of women?

In Egypt, whiteness is a sign of beauty, so that “zeyy qamar” (“like the moon”, in the Egyptian dialect) is a great compliment for a woman. The moon is bright and white, and this phrase is used to compliment the beauty of a woman. Turkish soap operas have now introduced other expressions into public discourse for describing beauty: “wesim misl Muhanned” (as handsome as Muhanned) or “helwa misl Nour” (as beautiful as Nour). To look like a Turkish soap opera character is to be the epitome of beauty. Couples also use these descriptions to show their love for each other. In Figure 4.14, a couple who are fans of *Nour* address each other as Muhanned and Nour.



Figure 4.14: Love Turkish-style



Figure 4.15. Problems in the family because of Turkish soap opera “Nour”.

Muhanned, the best known and most handsome actor, is always on people’s minds. He represents modernity and Westernization, with his stylish outfits, charisma,

blonde hair, and stubbly beard. He has great self-confidence, which has an effect on all the women he encounters. He also knows how to behave to women, how to talk to them, and how to make them happy. Arab women dream of this ideal and great image, and this apparently disturbs Arab men. In Figure 4.15, while Arab men with sticks in their hands are trying to catch Mohammed with their *jallabiya*, nightcaps, big moustaches and, they are not just opposed to Mohammed, they are also against modernity, romance, and the independence that Mohammed represents.

Appearance is always important for most women in Egypt. Make-up, colorful and sexy clothes, jewelry, and smooth and soft, hairless skin are always a must for women, especially in cities. *Harem es-sultan* is one of the most watched soap operas in the Arab world, and Hala (31, master's student) says, "All those beautiful clothes and women attract us, and powerful women in the harem inspire us, older women are especially inspired by them. They are all beautiful, fashionable, and attractive." Men's appearance has also gained greater importance. Women who watch handsome, sensitive and romantic male characters want to see their husbands in better shape physically and emotionally. Figure 4.16 underlines this: a man holding a picture of Mohammed is on the way to have plastic surgery. The man is ugly, with a large nose, different size eyes, big and crooked teeth and a traditional *jallabiya*, while the picture of Mohammed is a symbol of handsomeness. On the way to have an operation, the man who needs the operation does not seem unhappy or confused, but looks happy about what it will do for his appearance. He is happy because he will look like Mohammed, who is beloved by all women, and find a great spouse for himself. However, there is a catch: plastic surgery is unacceptable in Islam. Desire for plastic surgery means that one is not happy with what was given by God. The cartoon implies that people are so obsessed with their appearance that sometimes they will go to extraordinary lengths to improve it.



Figure 4.16: Going for plastic surgery

In Turkey, every popular soap opera brings with it a new trend, especially for women, such as rings, earrings, special styles of dress, hairpins, etc. In the bazaars, vendors market their products as “Hürrem’s ring”, “Hakime Hanım’s hairpin” or “Samar’s earrings”. Every new soap opera shows the viewers a new style and creates a new fashion. This influence is very effective, but not long lasting. However, when the soap opera is popular, accessories and clothes influenced by the soap opera are also popular, especially among women. This is also very much the case in Egypt. The main female character in the soap opera strongly affects female viewers’ choices in clothing and accessories. In Egypt, Turkish made clothes are very expensive, but also desirable. Figure 4.17 satirizes this. The couple in the cartoon appear regularly in the *Al-Watan* newspaper. The man normally has a tiny moustache, but here he looks different, and we can recognize the woman’s reaction to her husband. The husband now has a moustache in the style of Yahya (lead male character in *Sanawat Al Dayaa*), bold and thick, while he complains about people who are affected by soap operas.



Figure 4.17: –What is this? All newspapers and magazines just write about Lemis and Yahya and Yahya and Lemis!!!

–It is not acceptable that society is influenced so much and so fast by them...

Tourism is another important topic in the cartoons. From 2010 to 2012 the total number of tourist in Turkey increased by 11 per cent.⁶⁷ A significant part of this increase may be attributed to Arab countries. The number of tourists from Egypt was 82 per cent. Other countries sending increased numbers of tourists to Turkey in this

⁶⁷ <<http://www.ktbyatirimisletmeler.gov.tr/TR,9854/sinir-giris-cikis-istatistikleri.html>> All statistical information about tourism is taken from this Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism website (11.04.2014).

period included Indonesia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya and Algeria. In 2006, 42,686 Egyptian tourists entered Turkey, at a time when Turkish soap operas had not yet peaked in Egypt. After *Nour* appeared on Egyptian television in 2010, the number of Egyptian tourists to Turkey increased by 44 per cent, while the general increase from 2006 to 2012 was 162 per cent.



Figure 4.18: Title: More than 100,000 visas to Turkey.

The children look confused and lonely, while their parents are looking for Muhanned and Lemis in Turkey.

The number of the cartoons parodying the relationship between Turkish tourism and Turkish soap operas is high. Arab countries have paid great attention to Turkey as a tourism destination. Interestingly, tourism agencies have arranged special tours to buildings where Turkish soap operas are filmed.



Figure 4.19: On the poster: Travel to the country of Muhanned and Nour with us

Tourism agencies advertise Turkey as the soap operas' home, or Muhanned and Nour's country. Arab tourists choose Turkey for three main reasons. Firstly, high quality clothes at relatively inexpensive prices; secondly, hair and beard transplants; and thirdly, the attractive natural scenery they see in soap operas. In Figure 4.19, an Arab couple visit a tourism agency. There is an advertisement for Turkey in the background, not promoting her history or beauty, beaches or hotels, but proclaiming: "Turkey: Muhanned and Nour's country!" I experienced this in Istanbul with two of my Egyptian subjects, a 34 year old man and his mother, who came for a holiday. We took a boat from Eminönü, with many other Egyptians, and the guide introduced the historical buildings on our way normally, but as we arrived at the Abud Efendi villa, he directed our attention to it and stated that it was the house of Muhanned and Nour in the soap opera. All the tourists immediately began to stare and to take photos. It was clear that the object of their attention was not mosques, palaces, or history, but what they had seen in the soap operas. This was, for them, the most interesting and exciting part of the Bosphorus tour. All newspaper articles on the profile of Arab tourists focus on the fact that they desire to see the villas where the soap operas are shot, eat in the restaurants where soap opera characters eat, go

shopping in the stores where they shop, and buy the clothes they wear. In 2008, just after Turkish soap operas gained popularity in Arab countries, *Milliyet* reported that 300 Arab tourists visited the Abud Efendi villa every day throughout the summer, and the tourists's biggest disappointment was not seeing Muhanned in the villa.⁶⁸ This is a new and different kind of tourism and it is increasingly becoming an important trend in the tourism sector.



Figure 4.20: Arab tourists visiting the Abud Efendi villa, where *Nour* was shot.⁶⁹



Figure 4.21: Arab tourists visiting the Abud Efendi villa, where *Nour* was shot.

⁶⁸ <<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/arap-turistler-yalida-kivanc-in-pesinde/pazar/haberdetay/17.08.2008/979253/default.htm>> (14.04.2014).

⁶⁹ Figure 3.20 and 3.21 are taken from the same source above.

According to research by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, perceptions about Turkey vary greatly from country to country. For instance, while Turkey is perceived to be an Arab country in France, Arab countries perceive Turkey as a European country.⁷⁰ Turkey is known and loved in the Arab countries as the home of Muhanned and Nour. In Figure 4.22, all countries are shown on the world map using their most popular symbols, and Turkey is again identified as Muhanned and Nour's country shown in the shape of a heart.

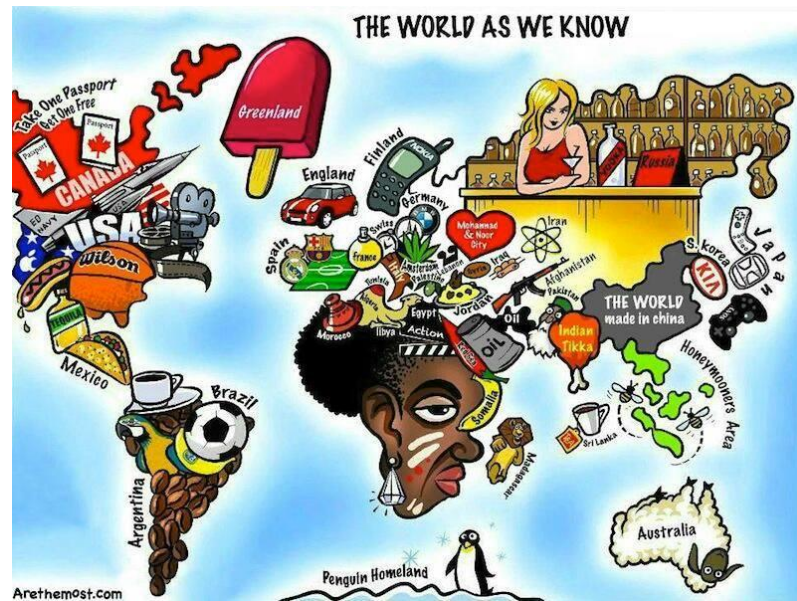


Figure 4.22: The world as we know it, and Turkey (pictured as a heart) is Muhanned and Nour's country.

4.3. The Influence of Turkish Soap Operas on Egyptian Cinema

The Egyptian film industry has great importance and success all over the Arab world. In addition to many successful genres, comedy is always the most successful and popular genre in Egypt. This uses daily life stories and satirizes people for their

⁷⁰ <<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/yabanci-turistlerin-gozuyle-turkiye-gezi-eglence-1435664/>> (14.04.2014).

habits, fears, and addictions in a very amusing ways. The addiction of Egyptian women for Turkish soap operas and Muhanned is also crucial material for these films. *Teer Enta* (You are a Bird) is a comedy which appeared in July 2009 and it has a section about Muhanned (Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ). *Teer Enta* is about the nerdy veterinarian Baheeg, who gets help from a genie to attract the attention of Leila, the woman he loves. With the help of the genie, Baheeg goes into seven different stories, and tries to show himself to Leila. One of these seven stories takes place in a village ruled by a sheikh. One of the sheikh's wives is in love with Muhanned and wants to leave the house and has prepared a suitcase for this purpose. While they argue about her leaving, the sheikh hits the suitcase by mistake and it opens, revealing, instead of clothes, pillows printed with Muhanned's picture. The sheikh is furious, and in his wrath cuts off all the village's electricity and internet access.

The importance of Turkish soap operas and women's attraction to their characters cannot be underestimated in Egyptian society. In movies and soap operas, Turkish soap opera characters are shown as the ideal spouses, attractive and romantic. In general, women seek a men like Muhanned or talk about Beren Saat's beauty when they see her on TV.



Figure 4.23: A scene from Teer Enta

Al Zawja Al Rabia (The Fourth Wife) is an Egyptian comedy series, which started in July 2012 and was shown for 30 episodes during Ramadan on CBC. Fawaz is the main character who already has three wives, children, a good job, and a house. All the women have different characters, and they live happily together. However, when Fawaz decides to marry a Lebanese girl, things turn complicated. The soap opera recounts the conflicts between these four women and their husband's reaction and solutions to the problems. The last wife is younger, thinner, and more beautiful than the first three. All the conversations and comments in the show lead the audience to understand and accept that the last wife is much more beautiful than the others. Even though the other wives are beautiful, they do not think that they have an ideal beauty, since the ideal one is on TV, on the Turkish series *Ishk Memnu* (Forbidden Love). Semer (Beren Saat in *Ishk Memnu*) is one of the best-known and loved women in the Arab world. In one scene in *Al Zawja Al Rabia*, two of the previous wives are watching television in their house together, and they are sitting on comfortable couches in luxury. Semer appears on the screen, wearing a towel, with her wavy hair out. She is beautiful and thin. The two women start to talk about her and complain about not having a body like hers and not being as beautiful as her. Semer's beauty, perceived as ideal, is accepted as symbolic in society and Egyptians use her name to describe female beauty, but they do not try to be like to her. This is because, although they love her style, they know that it is not realistic to wear high heels twenty-four hours a day at home or to wear mini-skirts and tight blouses all the time, or to have make-up on from early morning till night, sometimes even in bed in the morning, or to have beautiful, well-groomed hair all day long. This woman is an ideal, and beautiful, but only in a utopian world.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Turkey is known for her soap operas, actors, actresses, and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in all Arab countries, including Egypt. The first Turkish soap opera to be broadcast on Arab TV channel MBC was Nour in 2008, and the leading roles were Nour and Muhanned. Although this soap was not so popular in Turkey, it marked the rise of Turkey's popularity in Arab lands. Soap operas, popular music and models may be counted among the contributors to Turkey's popularity, with soap operas the most important of them. There are numerous reasons for this. Soap operas are in people's living rooms most of the time, like a member of the family. Another reason is the length of each episode; as they last for more than two hours, family members establish strong contact with soap operas and their characters. Thirdly, the characters present Egyptian people with an "ideal" husband, an "ideal" wife and an "ideal" life. For Egyptian men, women must be good looking and beautiful all the time, like the women in Turkish soap operas. For Egyptian women, a husband should be tender, kind, good looking and romantic, features that their husbands generally do not have, and he should support his wife, like Turkish husbands on the soaps.

This study's main task was not to figure out how people in the Middle East like the Turkish soap operas, who watches them, their impact as a political tool or what they provide Turkey in economic terms; but to try to understand the reasons for the great popularity they have achieved. Most Turks who go to an Arab country and talk to an Arab face questions about the soap operas and their characters. So, what are the reasons that make people watch and become attached to soap operas?

There are studies and statistics on ratings and on the economic impact of exporting soap operas. However, there has been no study of the popularity of Turkish soap operas in Egypt, where people have an Islamic identity and make Islam a part of their daily lives. Using a number of research techniques, this study attempted to answer

the basic question of how it is that Turkish soap operas which often include such taboos as illegitimate children, cheating and abortion, and go against traditional Egyptian values, have come to be loved in Egypt.

The rise of Turkish soap operas in Arab countries has attracted much media attention, much has been written and documentaries about it have been produced. A number of cartoons and websites have criticized the debauchery of Turkish soap operas. These writings, documentaries and cartoons are significant in helping to understand the popularity and social impact of Turkish soap operas. However, the question “Why Turkish soap operas?” has generally been answered in terms of *cultural intimacy*. This study has assumed this answer to be inadequate. *Cultural intimacy* is associated with Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*. A number of elements, such as mosques, salad al eid, the iftar table, and praying present a cultural intimacy and are examples of *habitus* for the audience when compared to foreign soap operas. Various interviews and surveys have shown that, although Turkish soap operas are not regarded as Islamic, audiences are pleased with their Islamic elements and with Istanbul, where most of the series have been filmed and includes examples of Islamic architecture. Moreover, Turkish soap operas are broadcast with Arabic dubbing and the idiomatic, daily language used influences the audience sub-consciously. The use by the characters in the soap operas of idioms like “inshallah”, “mashaallah” that people in Egypt use at the beginning or end of almost every sentence is instrumental in the audience’s quick attachment to and identification with the soap operas. The conversion of Turkish character names into Arabic ones, a method not used by other foreign TV series, also allows Arab audiences to enjoy Turkish soap operas.

It is not realistic to try to explain the popularity of Turkish soap operas only through the concepts of *cultural intimacy* and *habitus*. Arab countries produce quite a number of TV series, and Egypt in particular is accepted as the Hollywood of the Middle East. On the basis of some of my interviews and survey results, the reasons why Turkish soap operas are liked in Egypt are good scenarios, beautiful scenery, good technique, and romantic stories. The audiences are not disturbed by these romantic stories despite the fact they often include situations that Egyptians find unacceptable

on moral and religious grounds. This has been explained through Bakhtin's concept of the *carnavalesque*.

In interviews, Turkish soap opera audiences have stressed that they feel happy, strong and relaxed when watching. D.A. has said that the evening hours when she watches the Turkish soap opera *Asi* are the most enjoyable parts of her day.⁷¹ The internalized feeling of carnival overlaps with Bakhtin's concept of *carnavalesque* at the points below:

- The audience feel themselves free while watching the soap opera.
- The soap operas do not have religious content, which makes them feel relaxed.
- Once the soap opera begins, the audience leave their own identity aside and acquire a god-like position, as a third-person omniscient narrator.
- The unlimited feast in carnivals makes the audience eat snacks, drink tea and smoke water pipes while watching.
- The soap operas use informal daily language that everybody can understand easily.

The point that Bakhtin emphasizes in defining the concept of *carnavalesque* is that people push the limits out in a carnival atmosphere although such behavior would not be considered normal in their daily lives. When it comes to Egyptian audiences, they experience something through the soap operas that they are unable to experience in their own lives and they can criticize behavior which pushes out the limits in the soap operas. In this way, they have no moral involvement with such behavior. An Egyptian audience both condemns and rejoices with a woman character who finds real love with another man even though she is married. Members of the audience even say that they pray for the lovers to unite in the final episode, although they agree that such a situation would be unacceptable in their own lives.

⁷¹ D.A.: Assistant professor, aged 34, female, single.

In conclusion, the popularity of Turkish soap operas is based on two main factors. Firstly, the soap opera includes a habitus to attract the audience, and, secondly, the audience finds the chance to feel relaxed and happy and dream for a limited time.

My interviews and survey show that there are people who are opposed to Turkish soap operas. While this attitude is often expressed as opposition on religious grounds, others oppose Turkish soaps on national grounds since Prime Minister Erdogan said in 2013 that a coup had been staged in Egypt. Thus, the oppositional group may be divided into two; one opposing soaps on the grounds of religion, morals and family values, and the other on political grounds since 2013. There is a third group consisting of people from the Egyptian film and TV industries, who are concerned about competition from Turkish soaps.

This study concerns a country that stresses religion in social life and regards religion as an important cultural factor in daily life. It would be useful, in the future, to study the question “Why Turkish soap operas?” on the basis of comparative data from different countries.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2005.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. "Islam and Public Culture: the Politics of Egyptian Television Series" Middle East Research and Information Project, Middle East Report, No. 180, (Jan.-Feb 1993), pp.25-30. (25.05.2013).

<<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>>

Abu-Lughod, Lila. "Movie Stars and Islamic Moralism in Egypt" Social Text, No. 42 (Spring, 1995), pp. 53-67. (25.05.2013). <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/466664>>

Ahmed, Aliyya. "Women and Soap-Operas: Popularity, Portrayal and Perception" International Journal of Scientific and Researc Publications, Vol. 2, Issue 6, (June, 2012), 13.12.2013. <www.ijsrp.org>

Abu-Lughod, Lila. "The Debate abut Gender, Religion, and Rights: Thoughts of a Middle East Anthropologist" PMLA, Vol. 121, No. 5 (Oct., 2006), pp.1621-1630. (25.05.2013). <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25501635>>

Abu-Lughod, Lila. "The Interpretation of Culture(s) after Television" Representations, No. 59, Special Issue: The Fate of "Culture": Geertz and Beyond (Summer, 1997), pp. 109-134. (25.05.2013). <<http://ww.jstor.org/stable/2928817>>

Adorno, Theodor. *The Culture Industry*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Adorno, Theodor, Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Continuum, 1993.

Aktay Yasin, El sharkawy Pakinam, Uysal Ahmet, eds. *Civil Society and Change in The Middle East*. Ankara: Institute of Strategic Thinking, 2013.

Aktay Yasin, El sharkawy Pakinam, Uysal Ahmet, eds. *Culture and Politics in The New Middle East*. Ankara: Institute of Strategic Thinking, 2012.

Allen, R. *Speaking of Soap Operas*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

Ang, Ien. *Living Room Wars*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Ang, Ien. *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and Melodramatic Imagination*. London: Methuen, 1985.

Bahtin, Mihail. *Rabelais ve Dünyası*. translated by Çiçek Öztürk. İstanbul: Ayrıntı, 2005.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. translated by Helene Iswolsky. USA: Indiana University Press, 1984.

Barker, Chris. *Cultural Studies*, London: Sage Publication, 2009.

Bayram, Yavuz. "Türkiye'de Siyasi Karikatürün Yeri ve 11. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Seçimine İlişkin Siyasi Karikatürlerin Çözümlemesi" *Selçuk İletişim*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2009.

Bennet, Tony. Diane Watson. *Understanding Everyday Life*. UK: Blackwell, 2002.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Field of Cultural Production*. UK: Polity Press, 1993.

Brandist, Craig. *Bahtin ve Çevresi*. Ankara: Doğu Batı, 2011.

Brummet, Palmira Johnson. "Dogs, women, Cholera, and Other Menaces in the Streets: Cartoon Satire in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908-11" *J. Middle East Study*. Vol. 27, 1995, pp. 433-460.

Brummet, Palmira Johnson. "Gender and Empire in Late Ottoman Istanbul: Caricature, Models of Empire, and the Case for Ottoman Exceptionalism" *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 2007, pp. 283-302. 03.03.2014.

<<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/cst/summary/v027/27.2brummett.html>>

Castello, E. "Dramatizing Proximity: Cultural and Social Discourses in Soap Operas from Production to Reception", *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 13:207, 2010.

Cleveland, William L. *Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi*. İstanbul: İdil, 2008.

Danielson, Virginia. *Mısır'ın Sesi*. translated by Nilgün Doğrusöz, Cem Ünver. İstanbul: Bağlam, 2008.

Deniz, A. Çağlar. "Gümüş Dizisinin Arap Kamuoyuna Etkileri Bir Sosyal Medya İncelemesi", *Journal of Social Sciences in Usak University*, 3/1, 2010.

Dialmy, Abdessamad. "Sexuality in Contemporary Arab Society" *Social Analysis*, Vol. 49, Issue 2, (Summer, 2005), pp. 16-33.

Dillion, Katherine. *Friends Watching Friends: American Television in Egypt*. UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.

El-Mahdi, Rahab. Philip Marfleet. *Egypt, The Moment of Change*. New York: Zed Books, 2009.

Foucault, Michel. *Cinselliğin Tarihi*. İstanbul: Ayrıntı, 2012.

Geraghty, C. *Women in Soap*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

Ginman, Mariam, Sara von Ungern-Sternberg. "Brief Communication, Cartton as Information" *Journal of Information Science*, Vol. 29(1), 2003, pp. 69-77. 16.06.2012. <<http://jis.sagepub.com>>

Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Double Day Anchor Books, 1959.

Gürbilek, Nurdan. *Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark*. İstanbul: Metis, 2007.

Hobson Doroth. *Soap Opera*. Polity Press, 2003.

Issa, Dima. "Situating the Imagination: Turkish Soap Operas and The Lives of Women in Qatar", MSc Thesis in Global Media and communications, 2010, <<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/media@lse/mediaWorkingPapers/>>

İlkkaracan, Pınar. *Müslüman Toplumlarda Kadın ve Cinsellik*. İstanbul: İletişim, 2011.

Keyman Fuat, Mutman Mahmut, Yeğenoğlu Meyda, eds. *Oryantalizm, Hegemonya ve Kültürel Fark*. İstanbul: İletişim, 1996.

Lefebvre, Henri. *Gündelik Hayatın Eleştirisi I*. translated by Işık Ergüden. İstanbul: Sel, 2010.

Lefebvre, Henri. *Gündelik Hayatın Eleştirisi II*. translated by Işık Ergüden. İstanbul: Sel, 2013.

Lewis, Bernards. *Ortadoğu*. Ankara: Arkadaş, 2007.

Lindholm, Charles. *İslami Ortadoğu*. Ankara: İmge, 2004.

- Mardin, Şerif. ed. *Orta Doğu'da Kültürel Geçişler*. Ankara: Doğu Batı, 2007.
- Marsot, Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid. *Mısır Tarihi*. İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 2007.
- Matelski, Marilyn J. *Soap Operas Worldwide*. USA: McFarland & Company, 2012.
- Mattelart, Mishele, Armand. *The Carnival of Images Brazilian Television Fiction*, NY: Bergin and Garvey, 1990.
- Munshi, Shoma. *Prime Time Soap Operas in Indian Television*. UK: Routledge, 2010.
- Neale, Steve. "Melodrama and Tears", <<http://screen.oxfordjournals.org>> (4 January 2012).
- Pappe, Ilan. *Ortadoğu'yu Anlamak*. İstanbul: NTV, 2009.
- Radway, Janice A. *Reading the romance: Women Patriarchy and Popular Literature*, The University of North Caroline Press, 1991.
- Radway, Janice A. "Women Read the romance: The Interaction of Text and Context" *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Spring, 1983), pp. 53-78. (16.12.2011). <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3177683>>
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. UK: Penguin books, 1978.
- Salamandra, Christa. "Muhannad Effect: Media Panic, Melodrama, and the Arab Female Gaze" *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 85, No 1, (Winter, 2012), pp. 45-77.
- Sayın, Zeynep. *İmgenin Pornografisi*. İstanbul: Metis, 2009.

Smith, Anthony, Richard Paterson eds. *Television: An International History*. New York: Oxford, 1998.

Stokes, Martin. *Türkiye’de Arabesk Olayı*. Çev. Hale Eryılmaz, İstanbul: İletişim, 2009.

Şentürk, Rıdvan. “Televisin and Magazine Culture” *Selçuk İletişim*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Jan., 2010) pp. 174-190.

Thornham Sue, Purvis Tony. *Television Drama*. New York: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2005.

Tugay, Emine Fuat. *Bir Aile Üç Asır*. İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2010.

Webb, Darren. “Bakhtin at The Seaside” *Theory, Culture and Society*. Vol. 22(3), 2005, pp. 121-138.

Wehbi, Samantha, Deane Taylor. “Photographs Speak Louder Then Words: The Language of International Development Images” *Community Development Journal*, Vol. 48, No. 4, (October, 2013) pp. 525-539. 02.11.2012.

<<http://cdj.oxfordjournals.org/>>

Wilson Rob, Dissanayale Wimal, eds. *Global Local*. USA: Duke University Press, 1996.

APPENDICES

Appendix – A: Sample Caricatures



A.1:

-Khalef, can I call you Muhanned?

-Of course Lames.



A.2: Turkish soap opera craze

-How are you girls?

-Impossible! So handsome! Wow!



A.3: When everybody is silent...



A.4: Turkish soap operas (on the Ottoman hat)
Arab world (on the couch)



A.5: Before Nour / While Nour is on the screen / After Nour



A.6:

- Dad, can you complete this sentence: “al-‘ilm nour we...” (Knowledge is light and...)

-Al-jehl Muhanned. (Ignorance is Muhanned.)



A.7: Dirty politics

- My love, today I decided to watch a Turkish soap opera with you.
- Really? I am sure you will like it very much.
- OK. Question: Why did Lames leave her lover?
- Because he upset in the last episode.
- OK. Why did Lames talk to another guy.
- Because she wanted to break her lover's heart. Outwa, enough! Just watch, you will understand it.
- He got engaged to someone else to make her jealous. How idiotic they are!
- Outwa, enough! Do not disturb me.
- Not only that, he saved her from the streets, and how can she act like that?
- Oh my head! I will go inside and watch by myself.
- Finally I'm rid of her. Now, nobody will disturb me, ha ha ha!



A.8: Turkish soap operas

- You should behave with me the way Muhanned behaves with Nour. Because I am not less than her.
- !%&/



A.9: -Do you watch Turkish series?

-No.

-Hey maazun! (Religious functionary responsible for the registration of marriages in Egypt.)

Appendix – B: List of Turkish Soap Operas Exported to the Middle East and Shown in Egypt

1*	20 Dakika	20 dakika	20 Minutes
2	Acı Hayat	Doumou Al-Ward	Bitter Life
3	Adanalı	Adanali	Adanali
4*	Adını Feriha Koydum	Esmiyyetha Feriha	I Named Her Feriha
5	Aliye	Aliya	Aliye
6	Annem	Ummy	My Mother
7	Arka Sokaklar	Al-Azika Al-Khalfia	Back Streets
8*	Asi	Asi	Rebellious
9*	Aşk ve Ceza	Al-Hob we Al-Ikab	Love and Punishment
10*	Aşk-ı Memnu	Al-Ashk Al-Mamnu	Forbidden Love
11	Aşka Sürgün	Al-Hob fi Al-Manfa	Love in Exile
12	Asmalı Konak	Kasr Al-Hob	Vine Mansion
13	Beyaz Gelincik	Al-Zahra Al-Bayda	White Poppy
14*	Binbir Gece	Wa Yabka Al-Hob	1001 nights
15	Bir Bulut Olsam	Narin	Beyond the Clouds
16	Bir Çocuk Sevdim	Ahbabto Tıfla	One Child That I Loved
17	Bir İstanbul Masalı	Kulub Mensiyya	An Istanbul Fairytale
18	Bitmeyen Şarkı	Ugniyye Hob	Endless song
19	Bıçak sırtı	Had Al-Sikkin	
20*	Çalikuşu	Tair Al-Namnama	Wren
21	Canım Ailem	Aileti Al-Azize	

22	Çemberimde Gül Oya	Eklil Al-Ward	The Rose and the Thorn
23	Deli Yürek	Kalb Shucea	Crazy Heart
24	Deniz Yıldızı	Necme Al-Bahr	Starfish
25	Dila Hanım	Dila Hanım	Dila Hanım
26	Doktorlar	Nabd Al-Haya	The Doctors
27	Dudaktan Kalbe	Dakkat Kalb	From The Lips to the Heart
28*	Elveda Derken	Lahza Veda	Moment of Farewell
29*	Ezel	Ezel	Ezel
30	Ezo Gelin	Cevahir	
31*	Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?	Fatima	What is Fatmagul's Fault?
32	Genco	Al-Hulm Al-Daie	
33*	Gönülçelen	Baiya Al-Werd	My Fair Lady
34*	Gümüş	Nour	Silver
35*	Hanımın Çiftliği	Seyyida Al-Mazraa	Lady's Farm
36*	Hatırla Sevgili	Tezekker Habibi	Remeber Darling
37*	Hayat Devam Ediyor	Hayat	Life Goes On
38	Huzur Sokağı	Shari Al-Selam	Peace Street
39*	Ihlamurlar Altında	Senewat Al-Dayaa	Under the Linden Tree
40	İki Aile	Ailetan	Two Families
41*	İntikam	Intikam	Revenge
42	Kampüsistan	Camea Al-Mushageben	
43	Kapalıçarşı	Al-Bazaar	Grand Bazaar

44*	Kara Para Aşk	Ashk Al-Mal Al-Asvad	Dirty Money & Love
45*	Karadayı	Al-Kabaday	Karadayi
46*	Kavak Yelleri	Sanawat Al-Safsaf	Daydreaming
47	Kaybolan Yıllar	Wa Tamdy Al-Ayam	Lost Years
48	Kızım Nerede?	Eyn Ibnety?	Where is My Daughter?
49	Kurşun Yarası	Al-Hob we Al-Harb	Bullet Wound
50*	Kurt seyit ve Şura	Leys we Noura	Kurt Seyit and Shura
51*	Kurtlar Vadisi	Vadi Al-Ziab	Valley of the Wolves
52*	Kuzey Güney	Auwde Muhanned	North South
53*	Lale Devri	Leyla	The Tulip Age
54*	Med Cezir	Al-Med we Al-Cezr	Tide
55	Melekler Korusun	Ahlam Beria	Angels Bless You
56*	Menekşe ile Halil	Mirna we Halil	Menekse and Halil
57*	Muhteşem Yüzyıl	Harem Al-Sultan	Magnificent Century
58	Ömre Bedel	Sumen Oumri	
59*	Öyle Bir Geçer Zaman Ki	Ala Mer Al-Zaman	Time Flies
60	Sahra	Sahra	Sahra
61	Sakarya Fırat	Sakarya Al-Fırat	Sakarya Fırat
62	Sensiz Yaşayamam	Len Aish Men Duneki	I Can't Live Without You
63	Sıla	Sila	Coming home
64	Şöhret	Semmen Al-Shuhra	Sohret
65	Son	Al-Nihaye	The End
66	Tatar Ramazan	Tatar Ramadan	Tatar Ramazan

67	Tek Türkiye	Al-Ard Al-Tayyeba	
68*	Umutsuz Ev Kadınları	Nisa Hairat	Desperate Housewives
69	Unutulmaz	La Tensi	Unforgettable
70	Yabancı Damat	Al-Gharib	The Foreign Groom
71	Yağmur Zamanı	Mewsim Al-Matar	Rain Time
72	Yamak Ahmet	Tabbah Al-Sultan	Cook Ahmet
73	Yanık Koza	Ramad Al-Hob	Burn Cocoon
74*	Yaprak Dökümü	Al-Awrak Al-Mutasaketa	The Fall of Leaves
75*	Yer Gök Aşk	Al-Hob fi Mahab Al-Rih	Love in the Sky
76	Zoraki Koca	Al-Hob Al-Mustahel	The Accidental Husband

* Turkish soap operas that are frequently talked about in interviews and the survey.

Appendix – C : Survey Sample

Istanbul Sehir University - Cultural Studies MA Thesis Questionnaire (Turkish Soap Operas in Egypt)

Page 1

Gender

- Male
- Female

Age

Education level

- Primary School
- Secondary School
- High School
- University
- Master
- PhD

The city you live in

Occupation

Monthly income (per one individual)

Accommodation type

- House
- Flat
- Dormitory
- Other

How many people do you share your house with? (excluding temporary guests)

Total income of the family (including all earning members)

How many bedrooms are there in the house

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- more than 4

How many televisions are there in the house? In which rooms?

How many computers are there in the house? (including tablets and laptops)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- more than 3

Do you have Internet connection in the house?

- Yes
- No

Marital status

- Married
- Single
- Divorced
- Widow

How many children you have?

How many times do you watch soap operas in a week?

- Every day
- 3-5 days
- 1-2 days
- None

How many soap operas do you watch at the same time?

- Only one
- Several

With whom do you watch soap operas?

- with family
- with friends
- alone

Which soap operas do you watch?

Fatih Harbiye

Med Cezir

Umutsuz Evkadınları

Yer Gök Aşk

İntikam

Tatar Ramazan

Huzur Sokağı

Hayat

Kurtlar Vadisi

Aşk-ı Memnu

Ezel

Muhteşem Yüzyıl

Gümüş

Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?

Adını Feriha Koydum?

20 Dakika

Asi

Yaprak Dökümü

Hatıra Sevgili

Name your 4 favorite Turkish soap operas?

1

2

3

4

Name your 3 favorite actresses

1

2

3

Name your 3 favorite actors

1

2

3

Do you think, are the characters in Turkish soap operas similar with you? In which aspects?

Physical appearance

Religious practices

Life style

Do you prefer short series soap operas (apr. 30 episode) or long series soap operas (100+ episodes)?

- Short series
- Long series

What do you like most in soap operas?

- Scenario
- Characters
- Cultural similarities
- Beautiful actresses and good looking actors
- Life style
- Professional equipment
- Background (as city scene)
- Other

What kind of soap operas do you like?

- Drama
- Action
- Romance
- Comedy
- Historical

What kind of characters do you like most?

- Pretty
- Funny
- Arrogant
- Romantic
- Brave

Do you watch Turkish soap operas?

- Yes
- No

What other soap operas do you watch except Turkish soap operas?

- Egyptian soap operas
- Indian soap operas
- Other Arab production
- Korean soap operas
- American soap operas
- Mexican soap operas

What are the most interesting things that you found in Turkish soap operas?

Which character in Turkish soap operas is similar to you most? Why?

What adjectives are suitable to describe Turkish soap operas?

Eastern

European

Modern

Traditional

Do you learn any Turkish words from Turkish soap operas? Which ones?

Did you visit Turkey before? If not, do you want to visit?

I did

I want to visit

I do not care

Do you want to marry with a Turkish girl or man? Or, do you support this idea?

Yes

No

On which tool do you watch Turkish soap operas?

TV

Internet

DVD

Do you follow or like any Turkish soap opera fan page?

Yes, on Facebook

Yes, on Twitter

Yes, on blogs

No

Have you ever used a Turkish soap opera character's photo as your profile photo or cover photo? Which one?



» Redirection to final page of Online Anketler (deęiřtir)