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# RE(IMAGINING) NATIONAL IMAGINATION IN TURKISH REMAKES OF BRITISH DRAMAS

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## Abstract

This article examines how Turkish remakes of British television dramas deconstruct, reformulate, and (re)construct national, non-national, and transnational imaginaries, particularly in relation to their potential resonance among English-speaking audiences amid the limited export success of Turkish dramas in Western European and North American markets. Focusing on intra-medial transcultural television remakes in Türkiye, the study conceptualizes remaking as an isosemiotic, interlingual, and inspirational form of audiovisual translation (Gottlieb, 2007), employing qualitative thematic analysis of interpretants to examine how cultural meanings and identities are negotiated through adaptation. The findings suggest that Turkish remakes primarily serve domestic audiences and therefore retain a distinctly national character, especially through transformations of source genres and the reconfiguration of characters via interventions in gender identity and representations of sexuality. At the same time, some remakes depart from dominant television conventions, generating innovative and hybrid imaginaries. The study argues that national imagination in Turkish remakes is not fixed but continuously negotiated within transnational media circulation, contributing to scholarship on audiovisual translation and cultural adaptation while offering directions for future research on audience reception and international resonance.

***Keywords***: transnational exchange of dramas; Turkish remakes; Thematic interpretants; National imagination; Indigenization

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## A brief overview of the global reach of Turkish dramas

Audiovisual translation (AVT) has evolved significantly from its early stages, with new types catering to the growing demand for diverse audiovisual content (Abend-Davis, 2014; Díaz-Cintas, 2013; Pérez González, 2014). Amid a plethora of media content, this research spotlights the transnational exchange of television dramas[1], concentrating on remakes as a distinctive form of AVT. With the historical evolution of television as an institution and expressive form deeply linked to the nation—to national culture, national politics—television drama represents a distinctly contentious transnational environment. It also harnesses the universal language of serialized television, accessible across various terrestrial and digital mediums, thereby garnering widespread transnational appeal, as highlighted in recent analysis by *The Economist*. The genesis of this research lies in *The Economist* article, positing Turkey as the third largest exporter of television, after the US and the UK, primarily for scripted shows ("Third largest exporter of television", 2024).

The article opens by noting that Turkish drama series (*dizi*) *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* [*Magnificent Century*] (Savcı, 2011-2014) spearheaded the international wave of Turkish dramas, underscoring its worldwide appeal with a fanbase featuring American rapper Cardi B. Based on data sourced by *The Economist* through Parrot Analytics, between 2020 and 2023 global demand for Turkish shows grew by 184%, compared with 73% for Korean dramas. This growth, as the article pinpoints, reflects the expanding popularity of Turkish shows beyond the Middle East into regions such as Europe and Latin America, while export rates reached $600 million in 2022 and are predicted by some analysts to soon total billions. The article finalizes with several underlying reasons for why Turkish shows attract attention in a great number of countries, what effects they have on the perception of Turkish culture across the world, and in what ways the Turkish shows that Turkish non-mainstream media such as streaming services provide diverge from those in mainstream networks. The article's concluding assumption, particularly pertinent to this research, is: relaxing in terms of content, representation, the way of storytelling, what can appear on screens is likely to bolster Turkey's chances of captivating English-speaking

[1] In this article, "drama" serves as a broad term encompassing various types of serialized narrative fiction (semi-fiction) designed for and broadcasted on television. For this research, distinctions between narrative-based audiovisual works such as series, serials, and sitcoms are not considered.

audiences, who have historically shown more reluctance towards translated dramas compared to audiences in other regions.[2] Despite the well-documented global audience engagement with Turkish dramas (Salamandra, 2012; Yeşil, 2016) and the recognized soft power implications of their popularity (Algan & Kaptan, 2021; Yörük & Vatikiotis, 2013), the question posed by *The Economist* remains insufficiently problematized, particularly within the framework of Translation Studies.

Given that the influence of British television on Turkish TV is longstanding, this article will specifically focus on the corpus of Turkish remakes based on British dramas, largely reflective of the ongoing dynamics in the transnational flow of television dramas. Offering a broad selection of images and narratives that everyone can cleave to as a nation, TV dramas have been navigating a challenging and debated boundary between national and non-national realms, balancing the production and broadcast of domestically produced programs that reflect and bolster native culture, with the import of content and practices from elsewhere. Considering this, the focus of the research is on the workings of national and non-national imagery, representations, and identities within British dramas —often criticized for their perceived darkness, slow pace, gritty content, and depiction of unlikeable characters (Steemers, 2005; DCMS, 1999a/1999b)— and their Turkish remakes, characterized by their fast-paced narratives, emotional depth, and compelling storytelling (Bhutto, 2019). Through an analysis of (non)national and transnational imaginary constructs, narratives, and representations in Turkish remakes, this article interrogates the potential for Turkish dramas to transcend into Anglophone contexts.

## Television Remakes as Audiovisual Translation

Adaptations and remakes in translation studies are commonly understood as transcultural transfer strategies involving substantial changes in wording, style, mode, or

[2] It would be reasonable to acknowledge that Turkish dramas have already taken some steps to appeal to these audiences. In 2017, Turkish drama *Kara Sevda* [*Endless Love*] (Çatay, 2015-2017) secured the title of Best Telenovela at the International Emmy Awards ("Emmy Love", 2018). The preceding year, NBC aired *Game of Silence*, a crime drama remade from the Turkish drama *Suskunlar* (Savcı, 2012). Although it lasted only one season, it marked the first American remake of a Turkish show, paving the way for others like *Ölene Kadar* [*Eternal*] (Savcı & Sağyaşar, 2017) to follow suit (raninitv, 2017). Also, Istanbul-based screenwriter Ece Yörenç, renowned for her work on drama such as *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* [*What Is Fatmagul's Fault?*] (Çatay, 2010-2012) and Aşk-*ı Memnu* [*Forbidden Love*] (Çatay, 2008-2010), has held discussions with ABC and the producers of *House of Cards*. They have secured remake rights to one of her shows, *Kuzey Güney* [*North and South*] (Şen, 2011-2013), intending to remake it (Bhutto, 2019).

medium, frequently observed in political discourse, children's literature, advertising, and localization. *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* defines them as "a set of translative operations which results in a text that is not accepted as translation but is nevertheless recognized as representing a source text of about the same length" (Bastin, 2009, p. 3), highlighting the blurred boundary between translation and adaptation/remake. Similarly, Mark O'Thomas notes that translation is often privileged over other translative operations (2010, p. 48), while Susan Bassnett pinpoints that "[m]uch time and ink has been wasted attempting to differentiate between translations, versions, adaptations […]" and that "all texts are translations of translations of translations" (1991, pp. 78–79). Many scholars emphasize that transcultural transfers treat source texts as cultural and textual resources that inform new acts of meaning-making (Hermans, 1999). Extending this insight to audiovisual media, this study adopts a broader, semiotic understanding of translation, in which images, sounds, objects, and corporeal expressions are considered sign systems akin to language, and translation is approached as a contextualized process of interacting semiotic codes.

Given that adaptations and remakes are widely encountered across various media and artistic forms—and that they manifest in diverse ways depending on shifts in medium, language, and source material—it is important to clarify that this study focuses specifically on intra-medial transcultural television remakes. Drawing on Gottlieb's terminology, this practice is conceptualized as "an isosemiotic, interlingual, and inspirational form of translation" (2007, p.7). As a form of composite translation, it is driven by multiple social agents and conditioned by a new sociocultural, economic, and ideological environment. Within this mode of translation, the relationship with a given source text tends to be more flexible and less predictable than in more conventional forms of audiovisual translation.

To further demonstrate the relevance of remakes to audiovisual translation, this study draws on Gideon Toury's translation postulates—namely the "source text," "transfer," and "relationship" postulates (1995, p. 33). In this framework, transnational television remakes are conceptualized with reference to Toury's notion of "assumed translation." In order to better understand how these postulates operate in the context of television remakes, case studies can map particular remakes onto their assumed source texts and examine the intricate relationships between them. Drawing on Toury's model,

the transfer relationship between a television remake and its assumed source can be understood as a cross-textual interaction. Television remakes generally originate from earlier television dramas produced in another cultural or linguistic context, thereby fulfilling the source-text postulate. In many cases, viewers recognize that the remake relocates a foreign television dramas within a new network of circumstances in the Turkish context; in others, the relationship is formalized through legal agreements between rights holders and producers. The second postulate—the existence of a transfer process through which the target text is produced from the assumed source—can also be observed in the television remakes examined in this study. According to Toury, identifying a textual production as a translation further requires the presence of shared features between the texts involved. Such similarities become evident when comparing the overall storylines, themes, and narrative structures of the remake pairs included in the corpus (see Table 1).

Toury's third postulate concerns the accountable relationships linking a target text to its assumed source. Importantly, Toury notes that "there is no inherent need for intertextual relationships to always be of the same kind or intensity" (1995, p. 35). This observation applies well to television remakes, as the nature and extent of these relationships vary considerably across different remake pairs. Some officially licensed remakes—such as *Yalancı* [*Liar*] (Atukman & Özoflu, 2021) *and Evlilik Hakkında Her Şey* [*All about Marriage*] (Bülbüloğlu, 2021)—remain relatively close to their source texts due to contractual agreements between rights holders and producers.

Overall, the transcultural television remakes examined in this study appear to draw on television dramas from other cultural and linguistic contexts, to be produced through a process of transfer from their assumed sources, and to maintain identifiable—though varying—relationships with those sources.

**Problematization of national and non-national components in remakes**

This research contends that in television dramas, specifically, in remakes, the meanings of "non/national" and "transnational" are contested within their storytelling, narratives and characters. As Karen Petruska and Faye Woods (2019) articulate, the concept of a program's "original" identity transcends traditional definitions, no longer being solely defined by the content's setting, the location or ownership of its production,

or its primary audience. Instead, it mostly emerges from a complex system of transnational negotiations spanning various levels, from national policies to production processes, writing, and reception conditions. These dynamics underscore the need for a new terminology that goes beyond the dichotomy of "national" and “non-national” and provides greater specificity than "global".

Traditional TV broadcasting has always been associated with shaping collective national imaginary (Hilmes, 2012; Chalaby, 2005) and is seen essential in building the nation, which Anderson refers to as an imagined community (1983). The case of Canada serves as a telling example of this: in Canada, private television's influence is moderated by the state-funded Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and its French equivalent. The Canadian Broadcasting Act of 1991 emphasizes the public broadcaster's role in preserving national identity and cultural sovereignty (Dorland, 1996), aiming to counteract U.S. cultural dominance. Likewise, Nordenstreng and Varis (1973) express concerns that the prevalence of American programming in Latin American countries led to a one-sided dissemination of content, impeding cultural diversity. These instances highlight how television shows contribute to shaping national imagination and have a notable impact on personal and social identities (Sandbrook, 2015).

Itamar Even-Zohar's hypothesis suggesting that even cultures with diverse repertoires may encounter deadlock if all alternative options are blocked remains globally relevant (Even-Zohar, 1997a). This theory underscores the potential for utilizing available repertoires to navigate such situations. Remakes as scripted formats appear to be a strategic response aimed at transcending constraints and breaking deadlock, yet they are costly to tailor for cultural relevance and require substantial knowledge transfer. Indeed, many television dramas, as evidenced by the German remake of *Married with Children*, face challenges in transcending national borders. Steve Kent, senior executive vice president of international production, emphasizes that direct translation of scripts does not yield successful outcomes: "We learned you cannot directly translate the scripts and expect it to work well because we found, in fact, that it works terribly" (“Smile and the world smiles with you”, 2006).

Within British and Turkish drama landscape featuring a rich assortment of domestic, imported, and remade dramas, this research adopts Even-Zohar’s approach,

considering remakes as a subsystem within the broader "polysystem" of global drama flow, which showcase "potential models of life" and offer a diverse array of "life images" (Even-Zohar, 2010, p.185). I also incorporate Lawrence Venuti's concept of thematic interpretant (2007) as part of the methodological framework while conducting a textual analysis on Turkish remakes within the corpus. Interpretant refers to the application of a category/categories to inscribe an interpretation by mediating between a given source and target product (Venuti, 2007). Researchers' use of an interpretant "determines the formulation of hermeneutic relation and its interrogative effects [as a result of the disclosure of the sociocultural environment and conditions of adaptations and their source materials and of the adaptation that has processed them]" (Venuti, 2007, p. 41). According to Venuti, while identifying and analyzing the interpretants, researchers should concentrate on shifts that arise from a comparative analysis between the target text and its source. This article employs Venuti's suggestion of thematic interpretants —such as codes, values, and ideologies— to interrogate remake norms within Turkish remakes of British dramas.

Also, within this research, instances where a given remake conceals traces of its original source to align with national imaginary will be referred to as examples of "indigenizing remake strategy", whereas instances where non-national elements are displayed in remakes as a result of merging the conventions of both source and target television drama repertoires will be labeled as examples of "confrontational remake strategy" (Anonymous, 2020). Unlike the former, the latter strategy fosters the inclusion of confrontational ideas within the target television repertoire. By valuing non-national images and representations more highly, confrontational remake strategies disrupt prevailing television norms and sociocultural constructs, leading to the creation of new narratives, representations, and ideas. Within this context, the next sections will reveal how ideas of non/national and transnational identities and imaginaries are articulated on British dramas and their Turkish remakes.

## Discussion: Turkish remakes of British dramas

The corpus of the article covers all Turkish remakes based on British TV dramas broadcasted on Turkish television. All the shows within the corpus were closely watched, with comprehensive notes taken to scrutinize the extent to which their content,

representations, and storytelling —thematic interpretants— reflects national versus non-national and/or transnational spirit.[3] These detailed observations were subsequently transferred to the NVivo, and the data were meticulously tagged to highlight the key thematic interpretants, which were then categorized under relevant codes for comprehensive analysis.

**Table 1**

List of British Dramas and their Turkish Remakes

| **British drama** | **British network** | **Turkish remake** | **Turkish network** | **Legal status[4]** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Yes Minister* (1980-1984)** | BBC One | *Sayın Bakanım* (2004-05) | ATV | acknowledged |
| ***Prisoners' Wives* (2012-13)** | BBC One | *Görüş Günü Kadınları* (2013) | STAR TV | unacknowledged |
| ***Shameless* (2004-13)** | Channel 4 | *Bizim Hikâye* (2017-19) | FOX TV | acknowledged |
| ***Doctor Foster* (2015-17)** | BBC One | *Sadakatsiz* (2020-22) | Kanal D | acknowledged |
| ***Liar* (2017-20)** | ITV | *Yalancı* (2021) | Show TV | acknowledged |
| ***Mistresses* (2008-10)** | BBC One | *Yalancılar ve Mumları* (2021) | FOX TV | acknowledged |
| ***The Split* (2018-20)** | BBC One | *Evlilik Hakkında Her Şey* (2021) | FOX TV | acknowledged |
| ***Happy Valley* (2014-23)** | BBC One | *Son Nefesime Kadar* (2022) | FOX TV | acknowledged |

*Note:* Source: Author's own elaboration

The content analysis of the Turkish remakes has identified 604 tags for 10 categories through the tagging and coding of specific thematic interpretants. The

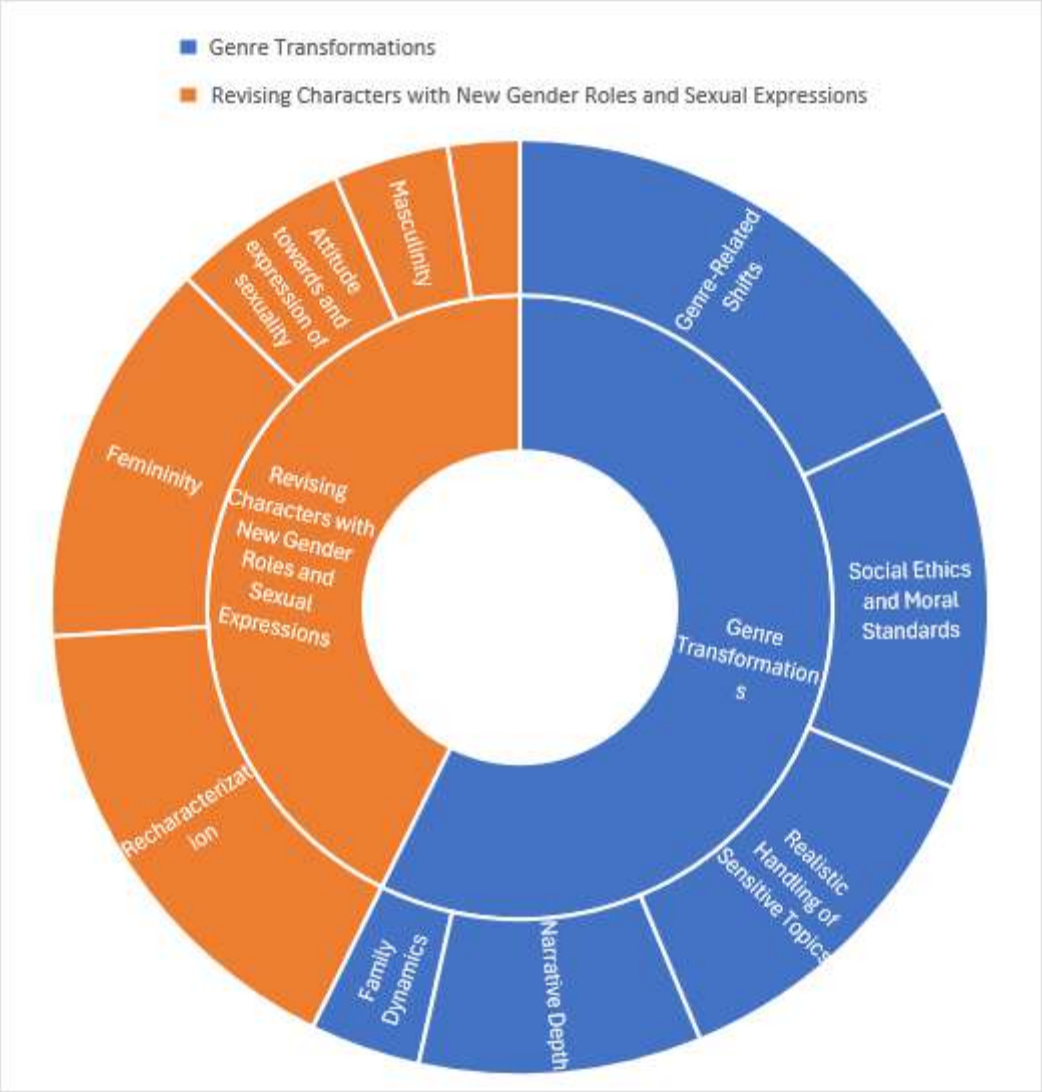
[3] Given that revenue from transnational sales has financed improvements in content and production quality within the Turkish dizi industry, and that engagement with global markets was instrumental in establishing the dizi genre during the 2010s (Öztürkmen, 2023), this study will examine Turkish remakes of British dramas from that decade. Consequently, the Turkish version of *Yes Minister*, titled *Sayın Bakanım*, falls outside the scope of this study.

[4] I found that numerous television remakes are made without any licensing or payment to the copyright holders, and the term "unacknowledged" is used to describe these cultural products.

identified categories/interpretants, along with their corresponding tag counts, include: genre-related shifts (109); recharacterization (101); femininity (81); social ethics and moral standards (80); realistic handling of sensitive topics (75); narrative depth (59); an attitude towards and expression of sexuality (37), masculinity (24); family dynamics (23); as well as portrayals of LGBTI+ characters (15). Upon reviewing these categories alongside the research questions, the initial ten have been condensed into two main themes of "genre transformations" and "revising characters with new gender roles and sexual expressions" along with their respective sub-interpretants.

**Figure 1**

Interpretants




*Note:* Source: Author's own elaboration

## Genre transformations

In my analysis, 109 tags directly indicate a genre shift between British dramas and their Turkish remakes, representing the highest tagging frequency among all interpretants. The analysis also reveals that four other interpretants can be subsumed under the theme of genre transformations, positioning a total of five interpretants as sub-interpretants contributing to genre transformations. This section delves into the extent of genre transformation in Turkish remakes of British dramas, investigating how these changes manifest through specific examples, and examining how these changes allow the Turkish productions to negotiate between non/national and transnational spheres.

Social ethics and moral standards, intertwined with the realistic portrayal of sensitive topics, constitute the two primary interpretants driving genre transformations. In the dark comedy drama *Shameless* (Abbott, 2004-2013), alcohol consumption, drug use/dependency, and nudity are prevalent in nearly every episode. *Shameless* is also lauded for its depiction of what it means to be lower-working class in the UK without eschewing its connection to politics. In S1/E2, viewers see the Gallagher family watching a news broadcast on television; this scene is devoid of dialogue, with the entire emphasis placed on the news report. The news content in the background states: "Blair came to power promising to redress Britain's position on poverty. The debates today could affect the way one in three families live for the worse..." The broadcast also features the lament of a woman concerning her living conditions and governmental policies: "Four kids and half a wage! What am I supposed to do if they cut the single parent benefit by 30%?". In the Turkish remake, the "gritty" and "realistic" storytelling[5], which British audiences have grown accustomed to and preferred over time, has been set aside. Similarly, in the Turkish remake of *Prisoners' Wives* (Gearey et al., 2012-2013), the incorporation of fundamental thematic interpretants that often enrich the crime drama genre and bolster the drama's realism—such as the abundance of bloody violent scenes, Harriet's (single mother) involvement in her son Gavin's drug procurement, Gavin's exploration of Islam in prison,

[5] Since the 2000s, British drama has increasingly adopted styles and practices from American Quality Television, imparting a more American feel to British television. Moreover, the evolving nature of early twenty-first-century television drama, alongside technological advancements like digital cameras and editing facilities, has revolutionized the "look" of British television dramas (Chapman, 2020).

and the profound discussions between Harriet and a prison chaplain on Islam and Christianity—has been noticeably overlooked.

In Turkish *Shameless*, the narrative axis involving the father character Frank having sex with Karen (his son Lip's girlfriend), and the ensuing intense fights between father and son after the revelation of this clandestine relationship has also been omitted. From this perspective, the omission of father and son conflict and the subsequent evolution of family dynamics—another sub-interpretant identified—that markedly challenge moral and ethical norms reshapes the British product's genre from its original form as a dark comedy drama into a melodrama-infused comedy, thereby fitting it more into the "national" genre on Turkish television. This inclination toward melodrama is evident in domestic Turkish dramas, which frequently exhibit features characteristic of the genre (Şentürk, 2018; Tanrıöver, 2015). The handling of moral and ethical imperatives in the British and Turkish *Doctor Foster* marks a similar divergence between the two shows. In the original (S2/E3), hours after Gemma (main lead) and her ex-husband Simon had consenting but violent hate-sex, during which fifteen-year-old Tom (their son) was upstairs in a home with thin walls, Gemma discovers that a drunken Tom had sexually abused his schoolfriend. The sexual encounter takes place in the same home where Simon brutally abused Gemma two years before. Meanwhile, Kate, Simon's wife, forbids Tom from entering her home out of concern that he will molest Amelia, her kid. The Turkish remake has omitted this sequence altogether, which was key to adding narrative depth in the original drama as it represents "non-national" family dynamics that often diverge from the typical portrayal in the Turkish drama repertoire which adheres to pro-family regulations preserving the sanctity of moralistic conservative family values on Turkish television (*Resmî Gazete*, 2018).

In Turkish remakes, melodramatic storytelling is also consistently utilized, particularly in the portrayal of romantic dynamics between couples. In Turkish *Shameless* (S1/E3), Barış's (main male) declaration of his aspirations concerning the future home he envisions with Filiz (main female), his jealousy over someone calling Filiz, and his reassurance to Filiz, "Don't be scared, I will always be by your side," introduce scenes and themes imbued with melodramatic sentiments to the Turkish remake, entirely absent from its original. A more striking example of genre intervention through emotionally charged storytelling is also found in the Turkish remake of *Happy Valley* (Wainwright et

al., 2014-2023). The scene added to the Turkish remake in the first episode and its execution are deliberate moves aimed at entirely transforming the series into a melodramatic narrative. In both series, the daughters of the main female characters (Catherine and Mihri) have tragically taken their own lives after they were raped and subsequently became pregnant. This tragic event is briefly mentioned in passing conversations in *Happy Valley*, while, in the Turkish remake, we witness Mihri's (Turkish female lead) daughter committing suicide by hanging herself, with Mihri witnessing the very moment. The scene is accompanied by Mihri sobbing uncontrollably, set against the backdrop of a deeply emotional song by the famous pop star Sezen Aksu.

However, the Turkish remake of *Liar* occasionally draws inspiration from its British original, suggesting a closer engagement with certain taboo themes, even though the overall treatment of such topics still unfolds differently on Turkish television. The narrative in the Turkish version centers on a woman named Deniz, a smart and capable teacher amid a breakup, who is set up on a date with a recently widowed surgeon and believes that the day after something has gone wrong and she has been raped, very closely echoing the original storyline. Much like *Liar*, the remake focuses solely on Deniz's (Laura in *Liar*) story without introducing a male character who develops emotional intimacy with her—a fresh, "non-national", approach for the Turkish drama repertoire. It portrays Deniz questioning whether she was assaulted and subsequently narrating her efforts to ensure that Mehmet Emin, her assailant, faces the appropriate judicial process. The portrayal of this struggle, emphasized through suspense and action-oriented elements, indicates the remake's genre affinity with the original drama *Liar*.

The analysis suggests an evident genre transformation of British crime, thriller, and action dramas into melodramatic Turkish remakes, achieved by incorporating melodramatic narrative mechanisms and expressive techniques. However, in a small yet notable number of cases, Turkish remakes embrace the fundamental tenets of melodrama while skillfully escaping its typical expressive features and devices.

**Revising characters with new gender roles and sexual expressions**

Based on this research, a second major reason why Turkish dramas often fail to capture enough interest among English-speaking audiences, as discussed in *The*

*Economist*'s article, is the frequent deployment of imagery and representations that closely mirror "national" conceptions when dealing with matters of gender and sexuality. The examination suggests that the primary reason for the character changes between British dramas and their Turkish remakes is to adjust the characters to fit the gender roles and expressions of sexuality that are prominent in their respective national imaginaries. The distinctive conceptualization of the remade characters aligns with recent research emphasizing that deconstructing "gender representations of source cultures and their (re)construction in the target culture via remakes are important within the framework of sex/gender distinction […]" (Sancaktaroğlu Bozkurt and Okyayuz, 2021, p. 267).

As with their British counterparts, who also cannot entirely avoid the prevailing ideals of femininity dictated by dominant national imagination in the British context, female leads in Turkish remakes predominantly uphold moral norms concerning binary gender and standards of femininity. The relative rigidity of gender roles in Turkish remakes is underscored by their emphasis on melodrama, genre that supports patriarchal norms by relegating women to secondary roles, associating them with the private domestic sphere, and seeking to regulate their behavior (Tunalı, 2006). On the other hand, the analysis of thematic interpretants also reveals a significant number of instances where Turkish remakes closely align with their originals in addressing issues related to femininity while simultaneously crafting their own narrative universe through non-national and/or transnational women images and representations. In these instances, the hybridity of Turkish remakes becomes evident through the selective incorporation of national, non-national and transnational sensibilities, in other words, with the use of indigenizing and confrontational remake strategies.

The quintessential melodramatic dichotomy of "either/or," characterized by starkly contrasting moral positions, finds limited application in the Turkish remake of *Doctor Foster* (Bartlett et al., 2015-2017), which showcases a confrontational remake strategy. In *Doctor Foster*, characters mostly defy facile categorization into purely virtuous or malevolent roles. For instance, *Doctor Foster*'s lead female character, Gemma, embodies a nuanced persona, evoking ambiguity rather than clear moral delineation. She engages in revenge sex with her ex-husband Simon to sabotage his marriage, continuing even after the camera stopped filming, purely for the pleasure of it. Viewers also discover that Gemma left her son as a baby during a severe episode of postnatal depression.

Despite her evident flaws, such as impulsivity and engaging in risky sexual encounters without even thinking about its negative consequences for her son, Gemma's portrayal elicits complex moral considerations, transcending simplistic judgments. This complexity reflects a departure from traditional melodramatic conventions, indicative of a synthesis of melodrama with realism-infused storytelling, as evident in many British dramas (Chapman, 2020). Typical of the melodrama genre, Turkish female leads often embody moral rectitude, frequently vocalizing their purity and ethical stances, which help perpetuate idealized female characters within the realm of Turkish dramas, characterized by predominantly positive attributes and adherence to societal norms (İmançer, 2006c; Mutlu, 2013). While Turkish Gemma, Asya, is portrayed as slightly more morally elevated than Gemma and more aligned with the national imagination, Asya's character consistently intrigues Turkish viewers by demonstrating influences from Gemma and embodying an "alternative" female archetype. Cansu Dere, who portrays Asya, describes her character as potentially defying conventional expectations of Turkish women, displaying qualities that defy straightforward categorization as either strong or weak but undoubtedly deviating from societal norms. In a cultural context where male infidelity is often trivialized as stemming from uncontrollable sexual urges, while female infidelity is heavily stigmatized, Asya's decision to engage in sexual intercourse with her friend Mert as a form of revenge against her husband defies societal norms and expectations regarding women's fidelity in the Turkish context.

In *Happy Valley*, Catherine (a divorced 47-year-old woman) secretly engages in a sexual relationship with her ex-husband Richard, and upon learning about Royce's (her daughter's rapist) release, Catherine goes for dinner with him, primarily to distract herself from Royce. *Mistresses*'s protagonist Katie, a general practitioner, engages in an affair with her terminally ill patient, John Grey, who is married. Also, she assists him in physician-assisted suicide, resulting in her suspension from work for a year once the affair and her involvement are exposed. Fiona from *Shameless* randomly sleeps with a man named Steve at the very beginning of the drama; viewers also learn that she previously had casual sex with a police officer responsible for the neighborhood's security purely for amusement. She is portrayed as a woman who enjoys going to nightclubs and refuses to be held accountable to anyone for her lifestyle choices. Her closest friend, Veronica, is seen engaging in topless webcam streaming to generate income. In *The Split*

(Morgan et al., 2018-2024), it becomes obvious that Hannah had slept with her former lover Christie on the day just before her wedding. It is even understood that during that time, Hannah became pregnant and had an abortion, with a strong possibility that the baby could have been Christie's.

In Turkish remakes, viewers do not witness Mihri (Turkish Catherine) engaging in romantic or sexual intimacy with her ex-husband. Similarly, Turkish Fiona does not establish even a kissing-level intimacy with a man she has just met, let alone engage in sexual relations. Filiz, the Turkish character, questions the propriety of Barış visiting her home, a behavior not seen in her counterpart Fiona. Filiz's best friend does not prefer earning money by appearing half-naked on camera, unlike Fiona's best friend. Instead of going to nightclubs, Filiz and her friend socialize by attending weddings held in their neighborhood. Hannah's Turkish counterpart Azra does not engage in any romantic involvement with a man she previously loved. These examples, illustrating an indigenizing remake strategy, are consistent with the portrayal of typical Turkish female protagonists who frequently emphasize their purity and moral perspectives, aiding in the portrayal of idealized female characters recognized for their positive attributes.

The examination of the corpus has also revealed that Turkish remakes have erased and/or straightwashed LGBTI+ figures in British dramas by employing an indigenizing remake strategy; by so doing, they not only render LGBTI+ characters unrecognized, ignored, and sometimes denied, but also affect the perspectives and assumptions conveyed through their representation, thereby reproducing heterosexist dogmas, and strengthening heteronormativity (see Anonymous, 2023). In *Shameless*, numerous LGBTI+ characters are featured. Among the main cast, Ian Gallagher stands out as one of the most prominently represented gay characters. Monica Gallagher, the often-absent mother of the Gallagher family, is revealed to be bisexual. Jessica from *Mistresses* engages in relationships with both male and female characters, and through her, viewers can also observe an open relationship experience. *The Split* features multiple LGBTI+ representations within its cast. Through these representations, viewers are exposed to various LGBTI+ characters expressing their sexuality, engaging in different sexual acts, and displaying the realistic and specific concerns of LGBTI+ individuals. Regarding LGBTI+ representation, Turkish remakes in the corpus have served the goals of identity politics at the expense of the multilayered nature of queerness, resulting in a lack of

diverse and confrontational ideas within the Turkish television repertoire (see İnceoğlu, İ. & Akçalı, E., 2018).

This section also examines the construction of masculinities in both the original shows and their remakes, exploring how this contributes to the process of recharacterization in the Turkish remakes. Overall, only a small number of interventions (24 tag counts, representing roughly %9) were identified regarding male characters in the corpus. In these interventions, while Turkish remakes often depict male characters as tougher, emotionally and physically more stoic, aggressive, offensive and dominant, a considerable number of examples show that Turkish remakes inspired by British male characters also explore alternative masculinities with a confrontational remake strategy in the remakes. An example from Turkish *Doctor Foster* is Volkan (the male lead), who is portrayed as a character unafraid to express emotions such as grief, fear, and love, challenging traditional masculine imagination in the Turkish context and the universal concept of hegemonic masculinity (Donaldson, 1993). Volkan sharing with his female friend all his uncertainties, weaknesses, sadness, and dilemmas about being in love with two women at the same time—his wife Asya and his girlfriend Derin—has sparked considerable debate in both mainstream and social media in Turkey ("Televizyon dizisindeki sahneye tepkiler yağdı", 2020). In *Yalancı* (Turkish Liar), Okay's character exemplifies an alternative masculinity by maintaining rational, calm, and moderate demeanor when suspecting his wife of cheating on him with her ex-mother-in-law. Upon discovering the betrayal, he calmly separates his children from their mother to start a new life, consistently reminding her that he has always taken care of the kids as she has always been busy with work. Alongside these traits of him, in the series finale, he adopts a non-hegemonic masculine stance towards his wife's infidelity, choosing to forgive her for their past troubles, ultimately resulting in a happy conclusion for their relationship. These alternative masculinities help mitigate the intolerance towards diverse masculinities often seen on Turkish television, which has historically stigmatized and negated non-hegemonic expressions of masculinity.

Yet, there are also many cases where an indigenizing remake strategy is employed to evoke the national masculine imagery in the Turkish context (İnceoğlu, İ. & Akçalı, E., 2018). Barış, the Turkish counterpart of Steve from *Shameless*, immediately becomes a hero by saving Filiz's purse from a thief in the first episode, a feat Steve couldn't

accomplish. In subsequent episodes, we see Barış taking on the role of Filiz's savior and promising her a better life. Unlike Steve, Barış easily becomes jealous of Filiz, which he openly demonstrates through his behavior towards her. In contrast to Frank's role as a father, we witness scenes where Fikri in Turkish *Shameless* passionately confronts the man his daughter likes to ensure her honor remains intact. Similarly, a behavior pattern not seen in the original drama is how Filiz's brothers instinctively protect her from external threats, especially from men in the outside world.

In the context of reconceptualizing characters from British originals, the analysis highlights that Turkish remakes occasionally employ both confrontational and indigenizing strategies. This dual approach introduces contradictions that challenge prevailing ideologies in the Turkish national imagination. Despite presenting ostensibly progressive narratives, Turkish remakes in the corpus are firmly entrenched within a normative conservative framework. Consequently, while they outwardly endorse liberal values, they ultimately reinforce traditional values and conservative ideologies, particularly evident in their portrayal of women, LGBTQ+ characters, and depictions of sexuality.

## Conclusions

Even with the redefinition of television by global economic shifts, regulatory liberalization, and myriad technological changes in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, it remains a source of content—such as local dramas—that plays a role in forming "a sense of unity and belonging among citizens of the nation" (Turner, 2009, p.62). Television dramas significantly shape the national imagination and mold personal and social identities, particularly in extensive, multi-part formats (Sandbrook, 2015). Thus, in contemporary media landscapes, creating dramas that delicately balance national images, representations, and imaginative with economic opportunities by transnational engagement remains significant, acting effectively as both a seismograph and a catalyst for collective sentiment.

This research has set out to examine the potential of Turkish dramas to captivate English-speaking audiences through an analysis of Turkish remakes of British dramas, investigating the interplay of national and non-national imagery, representations, and identities within original dramas and their Turkish remakes. The findings suggest that dramatic divergences in two major thematic interpretants—i) genre transformations and

ii) revising characters with new gender roles and sexual expressions—between British dramas versus their Turkish remakes within the corpus heighten the likelihood of a cultural dissonance among English-speaking audiences. Delving into genre transformations reveals that while remaking British dramas in the corpus, which feel quite local and specific to their UK context, storytelling and narrative structures in Turkish remakes are not crafted to be "odorless" or to avoid "the smell" of Turkish national identity and imagination, borrowing Iwabuchi's (2002) term. The frequent tagging of interpretants including social ethics and moral standards, realistic handling of sensitive topics, narrative depth, and family dynamics highlights the inclination of Turkish remakes to embody traits of the melodrama genre, which is characterized by its emphasis on upholding moral values, moderating discussions of sexuality, presenting straightforward narratives with easily discernible characters categorized as either good or bad, while avoiding the complexities in between, and reinforcing traditional family values.

Additionally, Turkish remakes have demonstrated a pronounced emphasis on national imagination, particularly in the reconfiguration of femininity and the portrayal of LGBTI+ characters and sexuality. In the qualitative analysis undertaken, recharacterization emerged as the second most prominent distinction in the examined Turkish versions of British dramas, following genre-related shifts; upon review of tag counts, it becomes apparent that the primary impetus behind recharacterization lies the re-evaluation of thematic interpretants concerning femininity and sexuality. The (re)construction of LGBTI+ characters in Turkish remakes, though not often emphasized by tag quantity, represents the most substantial transformations in recharacterization, primarily due to the use of indigenizing remake strategies, particularly omission. While Turkish remakes sometimes draw direct inspiration from original productions in terms of femininity and masculinity themes and at other times apply the strategy of repetition by toning down— a process where Turkish remakes follow the source material while softening its narratives and underlying messages—, LGBTI+ and sexuality-related interpretants are most often completely disregarded. Hence, characters appearing "too Turkish" might potentially deter English-speaking viewers and undermine Turkish dramas' market appeal in these markets, yet likely increase their success potential in the LAC, MENA, Balkans, and the Far East.

There is no doubt that the dynamic between Britain and Turkey's television drama repertoire since the inception of Turkish television has involved a push-and-pull scenario, marked by a historical pattern of unilateral influence from Britain to Turkey, juxtaposed with the recognition of broadcasting as a pivotal nationalizing force on both sides. This study is confined to remakes that aired exclusively on mainstream Turkish networks. Thus, in the context of emerging streaming video on demand (SVoD) services, this research posits, the widespread acclaim of television dramas from Britain and Turkey are likely to underscore the ongoing strategic focus on transnational audiences by television industry stakeholders, who are expected prioritize the deployment of delocalized, non-national, narratives, images, and characters to safeguard against potential declines in marketability. All in all, the discourse emerging from the analysis emphasizes the concept of a fluid and continually negotiated national imagination. Rather than conceiving of national culture as a static construct that can be fully represented and mirrored, this perspective is better suited to accommodating the inherent fragmentation and subjectivity within national cultures amidst the transnational circulation of dramas.

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