

**THE DIGITAL AGE OF DRAMAS FROM
TRANSNATIONAL TO GLOBAL**

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To my mother, you are the best...



DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis and that this is the true copy of my thesis, including the final revisions, approved by my thesis committee. All data and information have been obtained, produced, and presented in accordance with the rules of research ethics and principles of academic honesty. As required by these rules, to the best of my knowledge I have acknowledged ideas, thoughts, and any copyrighted material in accordance with the standard referencing rules. I certify that any part of this thesis has not been submitted for a degree or diploma in another educational institution.

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ABSTRACT

Betrayal and vengeance are powerful narrative forces that transcend cultural boundaries, shaping some of the most compelling stories in television drama. This dissertation connects manhood, understood as the social recognition and roles, with masculinity, conceived as the gendered traits and behaviors, within a heteronormative framework that defines and discusses these ideas. Through case studies of *Ezel* (Türkiye) and *Doctor Foster* (UK), alongside their adaptations, the research explores the ways in which transnational television adaptations negotiate, challenge, and mediate masculinity and manhood with visual representation and the themes of betrayal and vengeance. The case studies consist of two series and their adaptations: The Turkish original *Ezel* (2009), its Mexican adaptation *Yago* (2016) and its Romanian adaptation *Vlad* (2019); and the British original *Doctor Foster* (2015), along with its South Korean adaptation *The World of the Married* (2020) and Turkish adaptation *Sadakatsiz* (2020). Using Multiple Proximities Theory and masculinity studies, the study analyzes how protagonists deal with betrayal and vengeance across adaptations and how gendered themes are adapted to align with local sociocultural norms while maintaining thematic continuity. By combining textual and contextual analyzes, this dissertation contributes to the understanding of transnational media flows, evolving masculinity in television, and the transformative potential and cultural significance of betrayal and vengeance narratives in local and global storytelling worlds comparatively.

Keywords: Transnational drama adaptations, masculinity, betrayal and vengeance in dramas, multiple proximities, transnational media flows

ÖZET

İhanet ve intikam, kültürel sınırları aşan güçlü anlatı unsurlarıdır ve televizyon dramalarının en etkileyici hikâyelerini şekillendirir. Bu tez, toplumsal tanınırlık ve roller olarak anlaşılan erkekliği (manhood); cinsiyetlendirilmiş özellikler ve davranışlar olarak kavramsallaştırılan erkeklik olgusuyla (masculinity), bu fikirleri tanımlayan ve tartışan heteronormatif bir çerçevede ilişkilendirir. Türkiye yapımı *Ezel* ve Birleşik Krallık yapımı *Doctor Foster* dizileri ile bunların uyarlamaları üzerinden yapılan vaka incelemeleri aracılığıyla, araştırma; ulusötesi televizyon uyarlamalarının erkeklik ve “manhood” kavramlarını, ihanet ve intikam temaları ile görsel temsiller üzerinden nasıl müzakere ettiğini, sorguladığını ve yeniden şekillendirdiğini inceler. Vaka incelemeleri şunlardır: Türk yapımı *Ezel* (2009), Meksika uyarlaması *Yago*(2016) ve Romanya uyarlaması *Vlad* (2019); İngiliz yapımı *Doctor Foster* (2015), Güney Kore uyarlaması *The World of the Married* (2020) ve Türk uyarlaması *Sadakatsiz* (2020). Çalışma, Çoklu Yakınlıklar Teorisi (Multiple Proximities Theory) ve erkeklik tartışmaları çerçevesinde, baş karakterlerin ihanet ve intikama karşı nasıl bir tutum sergilediğini ve toplumsal cinsiyet temalarının uyarlamalar sırasında yerel sosyo-kültürel normlara uyarlanırken nasıl tematik sürekliliğin korunduğunu analiz etmektedir. Metinsel ve bağlamsal analizleri birleştiren bu tez, ulusötesi medya akışlarını, televizyon anlatılarında değişen erkeklik temsillerini ve ihanet ile intikam anlatılarının küresel hikâye anlatıcılığındaki dönüştürücü potansiyelini ve kültürel önemini anlamaya katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ulusötesi drama adaptasyonları, erkeklik, dramalarda ihanet ve intikam, çoklu yakınlıklar, ulusötesi medya akışları

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1. INTRODUCTION

People watch a variety of content daily but rarely think about where the stories come from or the selection and the production of the contents. Especially in Türkiye, the prime time television slots are for local productions but little we know that some of these local contents are actually adaptations of foreign series or formats. Türkiye is not the only country to adapt foreign contents, many countries choose to adapt and localize stories that have shown success in another country. These popular stories often have numerous interwoven dramatic conflicts, emphasizing the details that would heighten the emotions and curiosity, while focusing on the themes and events that are usually globally attractive and relatable. These universal themes that resonate across cultures and historical periods are making them central to some of the most compelling narratives in television dramas.

Betrayal and vengeance are among these universally attractive and relatable themes that are used in various series all around the world. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine how these themes intersect with portrayals of masculinity in transnational television adaptations, focusing on the contextual and textual factors that influence the adaptation process. Using the Multiple Proximities Theory and masculinity studies in media and television, this study draws attention to the cultural, thematic, and emotional proximities that shape the localization of narratives with a focus on the betrayal theme, masculine characters and storytelling. The literature review outlines the discussions of masculinity with transnational drama adaptations and the theme of betrayal, transnational media flows and globalization of the contents, and Multiple Proximities Theory with different levels of proximities. By analyzing the Turkish series *Ezel* (2009) and its Mexican (*Yago*, 2016) and Romanian (*Vlad*, 2019) adaptations, alongside the British drama *Doctor Foster* (2015) and its South Korean (*The World of the Married*, 2020) and

Turkish (*Sadakatsiz*, 2020) adaptations, this research aims to uncover the contextual and textual details of the drama production differing across countries while examining how betrayal disrupts traditional notions of masculinity and how vengeance is culturally mediated across different sociocultural contexts. The guiding research question of this study is: How do contextual and textual factors influence the transnational adaptation process of *Ezel* and *Doctor Foster*, particularly at the intersections of masculinity, betrayal, and vengeance? By addressing this question, this dissertation contributes to the growing field of television adaptation studies and cultural studies, offering new insights into the dynamics of gendered storytelling in a globalized media landscape.

This research focuses on adaptations from diverse industrial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, beyond the sphere of Hollywood's global dominance. The opportunity to examine different narratives that emerge with alternative structures and aesthetic choices allows for a deeper engagement with culturally specific storytelling practices and industrial contexts. The inclusion of countries from Europe, Southeast Asia and Latin America provides a comprehensive perspective on the transnational drama adaptations.

1.1 Literature Review

In the realm of transnational television, the theme of betrayal and its relationship with masculinity is particularly complex as it requires the adaptation of masculine archetypes across different cultural and geographical contexts. Therefore, a discussion of masculinity with the context of television and media and the theme of betrayal is necessary to start the research. Then delving into the transnational media flows and drama adaptations help to examine the issue of convergence in the digital age of dramas. Later in this section, the Multiple Proximities Theory is used to explain thematic proximity in

relation to betrayal and vengeance, cultural proximity and gender representations, as well as emotional and genre proximities. This section provides an understanding of the history of television series in the context of masculinity and transnational media flows, offering a comprehensive and analytical perspective on proximities that frames and connects the subsequent research.

1.1.1 Masculinity and Betrayal in Television

1.1.1.1 Discussions on Masculinity and the Media

In the painting *Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden* by the renowned Italian Renaissance painter Masaccio, a striking contrast emerges in how the figures express their emotions. While Eve is depicted openly crying, Adam hides his face, shielding his vulnerability from view. This choice of showing Eve crying and Adam hiding his tears subtly reflects the gendered norms around emotional expression, even in the Renaissance era, where showing emotions (especially crying) was understood differently for men and women (Fischer et al, 2004). This poignant contrast in emotional expression is not simply a stylistic choice but reflects the gendered expectation of the time. During the Renaissance, according to societal norms, women were more likely to be depicted as emotionally expressive especially in the moments of distress, while men were expected to maintain composure, concealing their vulnerability. Similarly, in another painting *The Death of Germanicus* by the French painter Nicholas Poussin we see the female depictions openly crying and mourning the loss of Germanicus, a young Roman general who was poisoned. However, the male figures respond to his death with stoic faces. The stoic heroism of the soldiers in the paintings are shown by the emotional restraint and dignified expressions on the male figure faces (Minneapolis Institute of Art, n.d.).

Traditional masculine traits and gender roles are clearly distributed in accordance with societal expectations, for a long time in artistic expressions. This artistic portrayal reflects the enduring cultural norms and values that have historically shaped the depiction of masculinity and femininity in visual narratives.

Building on these artistic depictions, there are other factors that further illuminate the differences in emotional expressions across genders. Psychology research done by Fischer et al. (2004) argues that not only biological factors but also social, cultural, and contextual influences shape a person's tendency to cry and the frequency of their crying. This helps explain why crying has been viewed as incompatible with traditional masculinity, which is reluctant to associate male identity with expressions of powerlessness or emotional exposure. These examples suggest that the aversion to visible male vulnerability has deep historical and cultural roots, with Renaissance art like Masaccio's providing an early glimpse into these gendered expectations surrounding emotional restraint and strength. Furthermore, in many narratives, when male characters do cry, their tears often carry a distinct symbolic weight. The tears of a male character are not used as signs of vulnerability or weakness, but can signal a pivotal transformation in the storyline or even a foreshadowing of action fueled by rage and a desire for revenge.

According to Connell (2005) there are different types of masculinities, and they are socially constructed, hierarchical and historically connected. Hegemonic masculinity, describes a culturally idealized masculine character that carries privilege and reflects dominant power structures including aggression, emotional restraint, and an authoritarian leadership style. Maintaining male dominance requires the subordination of women and hegemonic masculinity is not a static construct but a dynamic one, capable of adapting to societal shifts and challenges (Connell, 1987; Kimmel, 2000). Masculinities are not static

but they change over time, emphasizing how hegemonic ideals evolve in response to external pressures and critiques. Consumerism is instrumental in constructing masculine and feminine ideals and at the intersection of media and consumer culture, gender is often simplified to hyper-masculinity or hyper-femininity (Jacobson, 2005).

The concept of masculinity has significantly expanded over time, transitioning from a conceptual model to a framework to analyze gender dynamics and power structures. This adaptability ensures that hegemonic masculinity remains relevant, continually reshaping itself to maintain dominance while integrating elements that address contemporary social expectations (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.835). This evolution reflects its applicability across diverse cultural and practical contexts, making it an important concept for understanding gender dynamics in society. Men's relationship with other men, women and even children need to be examined to understand the gendered power and hegemonic masculinity (Hearn, 2004). By tracing its conceptual journey and flexibility, we see how hegemonic masculinity operates not only as a tool of power but also as a mirror to society's shifting values and challenges, offering insights into the intricate negotiations of gender roles across time and cultures. Even when the people do not meet the masculinity standards or stereotypes, they are influenced by them (Gürkan & Serttaş, 2022). These representations are magnified and disseminated to wide audiences through television, making it a critical site for examining the construction, reinforcement, or critique of gender norms.

Traditional masculinity refers to long-standing societal norms about men, emphasizing roles such as breadwinners, protectors, and leaders, alongside traits like emotional stoicism, physical toughness, and dominance (Connell, 2005). It reflects historical and cultural ideals passed through generations, forming the baseline for what is

often considered the appropriate masculine behavior. However, since masculinity is socially constructed, the definition of masculinity can change any time depending on the age, ethnicity, education, and geography (Kimmel, 2000, p.88). Orthodox masculinity operates within the framework of traditional masculinity but emphasizes strict adherence to these norms, especially in settings like sports or other male-dominated spheres. It is static and it resists change. It also tends to exclude traits or behaviors seen as deviating from conventional male roles, often reinforcing homophobia or rejecting emotional openness (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This concept, frequently tied to the work of Anderson (2005), highlights a rigidity that upholds the status quo and rejects alternative masculinities.

In order to explore the complex negotiation between the patriarchal and feminist masculinities on screen, an analysis within the television narratives is necessary as the gender norms and depictions are changing over time. What happens in the narrative universe of the television series tells a lot about the society and culture. Majority of the research about masculinity and television is done both in American and British television especially to lay out the historical changes. However, recent studies have shown the changes in masculinity and media in non-Western societies. For example, paternal nurturing has become more prominent in the hyper-masculine shows such as *Prison Break*, *The Witcher* and *The Mandalorian*. These shows portray male parenting masculine, suggesting that masculinity is flexible and responsive to sociocultural changes (Cuklanz & Erol, 2021). Given the dominance of Western media since the emergence of television and its subsequent globalization, examining the evolution of masculinity portrayals in American television provides a logical starting point for analysis.

In the United States, the depiction of male characters on television began to change starting in the 1980s, reflecting cultural shifts influenced by feminist movements and changing gender norms. In the 1980s, a new representation of men like Michael Stivic from *All in the Family* appeared, showing sensitivity but stopping short of challenging gender power dynamics (Lotz, 2014). Alongside these, macho male figures persist, now often sharing the screen with strong female leads, emphasizing the tension between traditional and evolving gender roles. By the 1990s, workplace dramas like *Boston Legal* and *Ally McBeal* began integrating the archetype created in the previous works, depicting men as collaborators with women, balancing work and family, and aligning more with feminist ideals. This evolution redefined hegemonic masculinity, laying the groundwork for analyzing how American television masculinity trends are adapted transnationally (Lotz, 2014, p.20-50). Although stay at home dads (or Mr. Moms) take care of the children and do domestic chores, the portrayal of these men in 90s television news coverage still reinforces the traditional masculine men stereotypes. There are “set of appeals and gender reversals that attempt to normalize the *male nurturance and domesticity* by promoting these practices as properly masculine” (Douglas Vavrus, 2002, p.353) in the series of 1990s and the normalization of domesticity for the male characters affect the masculinity perceptions for the society.

Meanwhile British soap operas focus more on female leads. British and American soap operas share certain formal and thematic features, such as open-ended narratives and a focus on family life, yet they differ significantly in their portrayal of gender and authority (Feasey, 2008). British soap operas have traditionally centered on strong female characters, particularly matriarchs, who often serve as pillars of their families and communities. The emphasis on family and familial issues, the emphasis on females and

gender roles, and exaggerated emotions construct a strong audience connection (Geraghty, 2010).

In contrast, American prime-time soaps have historically been dominated by patriarchal authority, with male figures frequently occupying positions of power and influence. Interestingly, thematic shifts observed in British soaps since the late 1980s and early 1990s, such as the inclusion of more patriarchal narratives, mirror dynamics that have long been elements of American prime-time soaps (Feasey, 2008). This comparison highlights the cultural distinctions in how gender roles and power structures are depicted within the genre.

The start of the 2000s is the time for change for both masculinity and femininity because the popular media reshapes the gender expectations for men and women. These post-second-wave masculinities are affected by feminism, economic and social changes after the Boomer era (Lotz, 2014). Although it is also the time to assume a masculinity crisis due to the changes in masculinity, the change is well accepted with the help of new gender scripts and social norms, which were also being shown in the cable series in the United States during those times. Lotz also suggests that the proliferation of the cable channels and television series enabled the diversity for depictions of masculinities and showing more nuanced masculinities although the reach was niche and small (Lotz, 2014, p.10-50). Throughout the years the slight changes in masculinity, like increased collaboration with females, is affecting television series globally.

Soap operas can now draw attention to gender inequality and social injustices to start a new dialogue in India (Patil, 2024), renegotiate and reconstruct gender identities in South Africa (Marx, 2008), and form a new male depiction who is egalitarian and friendly in South Korea (Miyose & Engstrom, 2015). The non-Western contents were

usually influenced by the dominant Western perspective on masculinity but there have been changes in the understanding of masculinity around the world.

1.1.1.2 Masculinity and the Television Series

The representation of masculinity in television has long been a subject of academic interest, with many scholars examining how the medium constructs and challenges traditional notions of gender roles. Masculinity, often framed through discourses of power, dominance, and emotional restraint, is typically intertwined with various narrative arcs, including those centered around betrayal. Betrayal, in this context, functions as a pivotal narrative device that can serve to destabilize or reaffirm dominant masculine ideals. Television series across genres, across cultures and countries, frequently depict male characters grappling with feelings of betrayal, whether through love interests, professional acquaintances or friends, as a way of exploring and critiquing the boundaries of masculinity. Betrayal also provides a fruitful narrative arch to the story with many conflicts to unravel in the coming episodes.

Scharrer and Blackburn (2008) suggest that gender roles differ by genre. For example, sitcoms often reinforce traditional gender roles like incompetent fathers and foolish men especially between 1950 and 1990 (Scharrer, 2001). A study on German crime series *Tatort*, which runs since the 70s, shows that males tend to express negative facial expressions which are stereotypically male attributed and females tend to smile more even though the variable is small. However, there is a decrease in the gender role stereotypes and an increase in female chief inspectors over time, showing that the series follows the changing standard of society in general (Finger, Unz and Schwab, 2010). Similarly, the rise of contemporary Turkish television crime series, such as *Poyraz Karayel* and *Behzat Ç.*, reflects the societal shift toward cynicism and the destabilization

of traditional values. The characters in the series struggle with their fathers' legacies and contemporary crises, navigating complex relationships with both their personal identity and societal norms. These series explore themes of irony, disillusionment, and a desire for justice, while offering a critical view of patriarchal authority and traditional values (Akkaya, 2018).

Feasey (2008) examines a storyline from *Coronation Street*, an English soap opera, that blends public and private spheres, focusing on the rivalry between two male characters. In most of the soap operas with leading male characters, the portrayal of masculinity is shaped by competition, dominance, and insecurity. The men avoid confronting their emotions directly and instead they express their feelings through rivalry, using insults to assert their position in the hierarchy of masculinity. This behavior reflects a fear of appearing weak or vulnerable, with both men seeking to maintain control and superiority over one another. Their interactions highlight the tension between emotional vulnerability and the need to perform traditional, patriarchal masculinity, where dominance and the assertion of power are prioritized over open emotional expression.

The most notable shift in soap operas is not simply the addition of masculine storylines but the disruption of hegemonic masculinity through the portrayal of men openly expressing their deepest thoughts and emotions, often in a dramatic and intense manner (Feasey, 2008). This transformation is particularly relevant to the intersection of betrayal and masculinity, as such vulnerabilities often surface in narratives of trust, power, and emotional conflict. A Mexican telenovela *Club de Cuervos* (2015) depicts a shift in the portrayal of masculinity on television, blending traditional and evolving gender dynamics. While male characters are shown as successful and purposeful, the series also introduces sensitive, emotionally expressive models of masculinity, with

characters like Rafael and Hugo Sánchez engaging in caregiving and self-care. These representations challenge traditional gender roles, although the show still perpetuates some stereotypes, particularly through hypersexualization and the underrepresentation of women and minorities. This evolving portrayal reflects a broader trend in Latin American media, where masculinity is being redefined and traditional gender norms are being questioned (Contreras Tinoco & Alfaro-Beracoechea, 2022). Challenging and redefining the gender roles and masculinity traits increase over time through different contents just like we see in the telenovelas.

A study done on twelve Turkish television series that aired in 2017 suggests that gender stereotypes are reinforced in the series as women are portrayed in domestic settings with emotional and caregiving roles whereas men are portrayed with power and mobility (İnceoğlu and Akçalı, 2018). Moreover, in *Yeni Gelin (The New Bride)* 70% of the femininity references were derogatory regardless of being towards men or women. Meanwhile, 90% of the masculinity references were compliments (Akçalı and İnceoğlu, 2020). This pattern perpetuates a cultural script that celebrates male coded traits while female coded traits are diminished, normalizing gender hierarchies within the television narratives.

1.1.1.3 Masculinity and the Theme of Betrayal

Betrayal, in its various forms, serves as a significant challenge to conventional masculine ideals. In traditional patriarchal frameworks, men are expected to be loyal, stoic, and authoritative. However, when male characters experience betrayal, whether by friends or lovers, they often confront vulnerabilities that conflict with their constructed identities. Television narratives that focus on betrayal allow for a critical interrogation of masculinity, particularly when male characters respond to betrayal through actions of

revenge, aggression, or conversely, through emotional introspection. It is also possible to see the female characters obtaining masculine traits when dealing with betrayal, such as emotional toughness, self-reliance, assertiveness or strategic confrontations. These responses offer insight into how different characters negotiate the societal expectations of masculinity within the dramatic structure of betrayal.

The portrayal of betrayal in media often serves as a catalyst for the reinforcement of traditional gender roles, particularly those associated with masculinity. In her article, Gürbilek (2008) claims that the victimization of characters can cause masculine drive for dominance. The marginalized individuals or victimhood create a fertile ground for the victim to claim for authority and support the hierarchical gender structures. Following this perspective, we can assume that having been betrayed creates victimhood, making the character ready to assert dominance as a means of reclaiming power and control. In narratives where betrayal plays a central role, the experience of being wronged often positions characters as victims, enabling them to justify actions that reinforce traditional gender hierarchies.

This process of seeking to regain power and control not only reestablishes their authority but also perpetuates the broader social structures that privilege masculinity. Therefore, portrayal of betrayed characters becomes a vehicle for exploring how personal victimhood is leveraged to reassert societal norms, intertwining individual narratives with collective understandings of power and gender dynamics. These dynamics unfold in individual narratives while changing and transforming through transnational adaptations with cultural details and localization practices. The cultural differences in the television drama adaptations and global media flows influence how betrayal is conveyed in a story with varying masculine takes.

1.1.2 Transnational Adaptations

Transnational adaptations across diverse cultural landscapes provide a unique opportunity to examine how themes are reinterpreted and localized, reflecting the intersection of global trends with local sociocultural norms. By exploring the variations in betrayal narratives and their impact on masculine portrayals in different countries, we can better understand how transnational television adaptations contribute to the evolving discourse on gender and power. Transnational drama adaptations create a site for negotiation between globalized masculine ideals and localized cultural expressions across different countries and languages.

1.1.2.1 Globalization and the Transnational Contents

The globalization of television has revolutionized the way audiences engage with content, making series from across the globe more accessible than ever. Advancements in technology have facilitated this exchange, allowing countries to explore and appreciate diverse storytelling traditions and production styles. As a result, the flow of television content has experienced a remarkable increase, marked by unprecedented growth in scale, reach, and speed, further enriching the interconnected global media landscape (Thussu, 2006). Television can be examined from various perspectives, including spatial dimensions such as local and regional or national and global levels, as well as rural, urban, topographic, or geopolitical contexts. These spatial dimensions may vary across different times within the same physical territories. Temporal analysis of television can be approached both synchronically and diachronically, providing different levels of viewpoints (Fickers & Johnson, 2010). Among these different approaches, the most relevant take for this research is at a spatial level with an emphasis on the visual and audiovisual details such as mise-en-scene and music.

By focusing on the spatial elements of the adaptations, this dissertation investigates not only the shared thematic elements but also how these visual and auditory details may shift in response to different cultural contexts, offering a fresh lens to understand transnational adaptations. The spatial emphasis distinguishes this research from other studies, which may focus on textual analysis or narrative comparisons without considering the importance of visual style and sensory cues in the adaptation process. The dissertation has a section where the specific single location scenes of the selected series are compared and examined. A confined or limited space can amplify a sense of tension or emotional constraint, which may relate to the masculine stoicism in the face of betrayal. The specific use of the space may also have cultural significance, as how it's perceived and depicted may vary depending on the cultural context of the original and adapted versions.

The spatiality can also explain the title of this analysis as transnational as opposed to international. By emphasizing the transnational, we can explore the movement and the flow of contents across multiple nations and cultures. If we were to frame the discussion about the television dramas with the term international, the analysis would likely be limited to a direct comparison between two countries and their respective dramas. However, the scope of this dissertation is broader, as it focuses on the dynamic flow of contents rather than reciprocity or a linear exchange and transfer.

The title of this dissertation, *The Digital Age of Dramas from Transnational to Global* reflects the changing nature of television drama adaptations across different countries and cultures. In the digital era that is enhanced with streaming and online platforms, the dramas are produced, distributed and consumed differently, which adds a new layer to the discussion of drama adaptations. While the word 'transnational' signals

the pluralistic and multidirectional flow of contents across countries, cultures and languages, where the local markets retain and negotiate and negotiate the cultural markers in the process. The word 'global' emphasizes the resulting stage beyond the transnational, where the dramas are available for everyone, anywhere anytime. 'Global' is more mainstream and homogenized, where dramas are bundled to be made available in the system, often shaped by dominant industry expectations and market logic. The movement from plural to homogenized is not linear and the negotiations between the local details and the common appeal is continuous. This constant negotiation between the local and global can be explained by employing the proximity framework. This research tries to answer how proximities like thematic, cultural, gender, emotional and genre are actively mediated in the adaptations, sometimes amplifying the local textures and sometimes smoothing them to a universal mold.

The flow of the contents is more complex than ever as electronic media have often diminished the importance of the physical aspect of communication. Television is no longer a pure national medium; the changes in technology and media have been affecting the definition of television. Yet, Moran (2009) suggests that using the word 'flow' is still relevant; stating that the concept of flow is still useful because it connects both the verb and the noun. It links carriage with content and flow can thus be understood as movement, or an action that transports an entity from one location to another. Previously simpler flow of cultural products started to become multidirectional with the effects of globalization (Robertson, 1992). As a result, the discussion surrounding transnational dramas and adaptations has expanded to a global scale, driven by the dynamic exchange of content across cultures.

With modernity and globalization, the audiences have access to the popular trends which alter the cultural products at home. Remakes and adaptations are among the localization practices with the cultural, linguistic and value inputs that are harmonized with the global effects. This makes up the glocalized content, which has a mixture of both globalization and localization effects on the series. Glocalization could also be thought as the ability of the global market for media to incorporate the local elements and to express the local contents through global concepts (Adriaens & Biltereyst, 2012). At the point of cultural intersections, we think about the hierarchies that dictate what stays the same and what is changed according to the local values. The original content is expected to be more successful and the remakes bring some risks about adaptation choices.

Globalization of the television industry has brought significant attention to remakes and adaptations, as audiences worldwide become increasingly exposed to diverse series from different regions. While the flow of popular television dramas traditionally moved from West to East, the globalized media landscape has disrupted this linear trajectory, and the movement of transnational adaptations has become multifaceted. This is a new conception of flow, where active audiences engage with television content through various participatory forms, continuously renewing and reshaping the dynamics of global media consumption (Marinelli & Ando, 2016). This shift opens the door to hearing a broader range of stories from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Adaptations now span various formats, from game shows and reality programs to series, each incorporating localized and culturally specific elements. Scripted content, in particular, demands a meticulous process of cultural translation to align with the expectations and preferences of local audiences. This process carries greater risks for scripted formats, as their success often hinges on striking the right balance between

authenticity and relatability within the target culture (Chalaby, 2016). Even though there is an associated risk and difficulty for adaptations, the monetary and popularity rewards are high.

1.1.2.2 The Effect of Digitalization of Adaptations and the Idea of Convergence

Over the years, the television contents and production choices have been changing. First, transnational adaptations improved the diversity of stories across different countries and then the digital platforms introduced the globally produced contents. With the emergence of digital streaming platforms like Netflix, Hulu, Disney Plus, and Amazon Prime, the audience is no longer dependent on the nationally broadcasted dramas, they can watch series whenever they want and wherever they choose as long as they have their internet and devices. The developments in the technology have been affecting the audience experience and also the production of the contents. Although there are series that are produced for the global audience, the adaptations with the same story yet with local details are also consumed. It is possible to say that local is not lost with the streaming, but it is evolving. The digital platforms make the flow of contents more multidirectional than ever.

Transnational drama adaptations are evolving even with the introduction of streaming. Özturkmen talks about "... the recent studies in 'digital lore', where emergent streaming logics or new conventions constitutively shape and reshape traditional broadcasting and production habits" (Özturkmen, 2022, p.21). While digital lore is interesting to discover in the television context, because digital platforms and series are entering the homes so fast that it would fall short not to mention these series. There are multiple examples to show that adaptations are not made only from a country's local

channel to another country's local channel. Nowadays, there are adaptations or remakes that happen within the streaming service like Netflix or between two different streaming services, or from a local channel to a global streaming service.

For example, *Fatma* (2021), a Turkish drama and a Netflix original was adapted to Netflix again, this time with a South African production as *Unseen* (2023). Another example is *Şahsiyet* (2018), which was one of the pioneers in the Turkish digital series and was shown in PuhuTV was adapted to Mexican audiences in HBOMax as *Asesino del Olvido (Before I Forgot)* (2021). *Fatmagülün Suçu Ne?* (2010) is an example to show that a locally produced and broadcasted Turkish series can be adapted to global audiences in a streaming platform, Netflix with a perspective of a Spanish production as *Alba* (2021). All these examples show that with the technological advancements and changing televisions environments, the nature of television drama adaptations also evolve and change forms. This trend amplifies the reach of a series and underlines the significance of transnational media flows in contemporary television, where the content is selected and made fit to unique tastes across cultures. Clearly, a series that is initially created for a local broadcast channel, can transcend the limits of the broadcast television through adaptation with the technological advancements that we have today. Remakes offer an opportunity for the series to reach a broader audience with specific contexts.

Villegas Simon and Soto Sanfield (2020) compares three fictional television formats from the United States and Spain to explore cultural imperialism and what differs between the adaptations. The business part of the research focuses on the production system and the business environment in general, but more importantly, there is the textual and audiovisual analysis of the research which looks at the episodes of both the United States and the Spanish version. It is interesting to notice that the audiovisual details are

similar while the narrative and the style of the series seems to be converging. The converging effect of the globalization of the television industry is apparent in this research and the local aspects show that there is a globalization effect as well (Simon and Sanfield, 2020). When the textual and audiovisual elements come together, insights about the adaptation gets deeper because new parameters enter the analysis.

Having a global outlook with a localized taste enables the success of the series as the audience wants a modern drama while expecting a familiar story that complies with the cultural standards. It is possible to look for national identity and the prevailing local tastes in certain contents. There is a number of research done to assess national identity and localization practices in adaptation of television formats. For example, one of the studies worked with the United States sit-com *The Office*, and its British original (Beeden and De Bruin, 2010). Comedy and humor are very cultural and testing for the differences between two versions yields interesting results. The research focuses on the use of humor, characters and situations in both versions of *The Office*. The study finds that each version localized the content to appeal to the local audience, which set national identity and cultural feelings of belonging.

Although a major part of the literature on adaptations claims that globalization leads to convergence of television contents, this study finds that the cultural differences lead to the character, humor and story variation between the versions of the fictional format, by implementing specific details and references from the culture (Beeden and De Bruin, 2010). Indeed, claiming a clear convergence of content with the adaptation would be faulty because there are various kinds of characters, plot lines and tone that can vary between adaptations. Moreover, one can even claim that adaptation of a series can highlight the local culture which deviates from the idea of convergence.

1.1.2.3 Transnational Adaptation Process and the Anticipations of the Outcome

Transnational adaptation in television refers to the process of reinterpreting and localizing a television program or narrative to suit the socio-cultural, political, and economic context of a different region or country. As media industries globalize, the adaptation of television series across borders has become a significant phenomenon, with many shows being reworked to resonate with local audiences while maintaining elements of the original narrative structure. Transnational adaptations allow producers to tap into established formats, reinterpreting them for new cultural settings while addressing the expectations of their domestic viewership.

Transnational drama adaptation extends beyond mere economic pragmatism; it can also be analyzed through the framework of critical transculturalism, as it represents more than a simple one-way borrowing between countries. Instead, it embodies a dynamic interaction and multifaceted process (Perkins and Verevis, 2015). Within this ecosystem, every participant in the transnational television drama industry, from creators to producers, broadcasters, and audiences, makes decisions that influence one another. The success or failure of a series hinges on the collective contributions of these stakeholders, just like the small puzzle pieces that form a cohesive and impactful picture. This intricate interplay not only fosters the evolution of transnational drama adaptations but also highlights the challenges and innovations that drive their development.

Adaptations take many forms, including remakes, dubbed or subtitled versions, but regardless of the format, they undergo localization processes to cater to the preferences of local audiences. These adaptations are far from passive imports; the infusion of cultural elements familiar to the local context fosters a genuine connection

with viewers. As a result, the series undergoes intricate transformations that allow it to resonate with local cultures and address the specific needs and aspirations of various social groups. South Korea presents a successful example that significantly integrates the popular culture elements into exports, ensuring co-rise of the originating content and accompanied product, such as using K-Pop idols to promote brands like Hyundai and Samsung (Bozgeyik, 2025b). This strategy is also used in the export of series or transnational adaptations.

The process of transnational adaptation reveals a complex interplay among various stakeholders, each contributing uniquely to the creation, dissemination, and reception of content. While audiences consume content daily, they often overlook the intricate behind-the-scenes dynamics involved in selecting and producing these works. In Türkiye, for instance, prime-time slots are typically reserved for local productions. However, many of these are adaptations of foreign series or formats. This phenomenon is not unique to Türkiye, as numerous countries adapt popular foreign content to suit local tastes, creating a web of interdependent participants in the adaptation process.

The journey begins with creators and writers, who construct the fictional universe by developing the storyline and scripting the series, laying the groundwork for the narrative. Producers then take over, assembling the necessary staff and crew to bring the script to life. As the financial backbone of the production, producers carefully balance creative aspirations with the expectation of financial returns. They collaborate with directors to cast actors who embody the characters and deliver the scripted dialogues with emotional authenticity.

Channel owners and broadcasters act as gatekeepers, determining the accessibility and reach of the series by distributing it to viewers. While audiences appear to be at the

end of this chain, they play a pivotal role in sustaining and expanding the series' impact. By emotionally engaging with the storytelling, viewers initiate a secondary wave of interaction, forming fan groups and contributing to the narrative's longevity through fan edits, fan fiction, hashtags, and other creative expressions on social media. Digitalization further amplifies this engagement by enabling dramas to cross borders, fostering new audiences in different countries who actively seek additional content through online platforms and forums. These overlapping roles illustrate the interconnected nature of adaptation. For instance, a viewer might also be a fan group member, while a channel executive could simultaneously be a dedicated audience member. This fluidity underscores the mutual influence and collaboration among all parties involved, making transnational adaptation a dynamic and multifaceted process.

General research done in television contents focus on either scripted format adaptation or reality shows and television programs. If we set the research done in advertising segments and news coverages aside, the scripted format adaptation and other television shows are drawing attention. There are many ways to work with dramas, including the discourse, content and text analysis methodologies. Transnational drama adaptation is an exciting subject as it gives the opportunity to compare and contrast the selected elements with various contexts like cultural differences. Adapted versions have unique ways to fit in the domestic culture and the changes from the original content tell a lot about the production choices.

Television is both local and global, because with the adapted content, the audience watches the “national variations of the same show” (Waisbord, 2004, p.360). The increase of international trade of television formats, fiction or reality TV, enhanced the circulation of the formats and the knowledge about global trends. The economic interests of the

producers are accompanied with the audience expectancies of national belonging. It is possible to maximize profits while speaking to the domestic audience. Formats are perfect for this purpose because they are flexible so that “domestic productions can fit local narratives, histories, humor, events, and characters into the basic formulas that they purchase” (Waisbord, 2004, p.371). It is possible to increase or decrease the local details in the adapted format which offers a degree of freedom to the producers with a lower risk.

Potential afterlife of series through online streaming and international fan base create new opportunities for exports. For example, fans of the South Korean original of the series would be interested in watching the Turkish version as well to compare and contrast and have conversations online in forums. This creates wide opportunities for the producers to create interests abroad with international exposure while compensating the production costs. As the audience requires more aesthetic and visually pleasing content, the production costs increase. High competition brings high production costs for drama and therefore, rating failures are even more daunting, requiring a more ‘exportable’ drama to amortize the production costs (Dunleavy, 2014). The high production costs are compensated by the advertisements and the exports of the series or formats. As Waisbord suggests, “formats are the ultimate risk-minimizing programming strategy” (Waisbord, 2004, p.365).

Chalaby (2011) describes the formats as transfer of expertise since they constitute the rules of that specific show. The licensees are required to keep the skeleton but are free to modify the flesh of the original content (p.295). This flesh part of the format is the cultural factors and the fixed details that did not really work in the original version of the show. Similarly, the adapted drama has its own cultural details and localized nature. The skeleton is subject to change depending on the agreements and adaptation strategies.

Following the theories of Keane and Moran (2005), Straubhaar (1991), Waisbord (2004) and Chalaby (2011) there have been specific format adaptation strategies developed or discussed in the literature, each focusing on different aspects of the adaptation. For example, renting is a way of adapting a format; the producers rent the intellectual property rights of the content to make the adapted version. The shared social values, historical details and cultural habits often lead the renting strategy for the culturally and geographically proximate countries. However, adapting and renting come with some limitations for countries with different legal and regulation systems. “Varying production values, funding, demographic target groups, content regulation and media policies have a greater effect on the final product than cultural values and national mentalities” (Keinonen, 2017, p.999). The technical details can change the storyline or affect the renting strategies which can be business oriented such as localization, glocalization, creation of media spectacles and internationalization (Lim, 2008). Media producers rent contents that have the potential to be popular and as a result, the adaptation includes cultural, technological, political, and technical details that tell a lot about the adaptation and the original.

Another study on transnational adaptation analyzes the adaptation strategies with a focus on the story and the narrative. Larkey et al. (2016) constructed three types of adaptation strategies after their qualitative and quantitative research on adapted formats. Transposed narrative, transmuted narrative and driven narrative styles explain how much of the original content is kept whereas how much ‘flesh’ is modified to add cultural context or a different voice. Even the sequencing of scenes could be different in adaptation strategies and they all affect the stylistic and contextual choices. These strategies could be studied to offer insights for transnational television contents and

adaptations. Although there are articles that have a combination of qualitative and quantitative research, the availability of strong quantitative analysis of television contents that are adapted in different cultural contexts is limited.

The different perspectives on the adapting and renting strategies underline the dilemma of the creative storytelling and the technical production system. The dilemma in a way combines the “individual creativity and authorship with industrial working methods. Within a production format, this dilemma may even be accented, as artistic creativity is needed in the creation of content, but the production process is tightly framed by the format” (Keinonen, 2017, p.1004). The format often draws the lines for the adaptation and creates some limitations while offering a successful working schedule. Focusing on the local details and cultural identities challenge the international appeal of the formats while having the freedom of adapting the script formats and adding the cultural details enhances creativity.

There is always an anticipation of the outcome as the people are generally skeptical about adaptations. Verevis argues that *The Slap*, an Australian series (2011-2015) was adapted from a bestseller novel that told a story of a multicultural Australian middle class with a complex and unique perspective. It was very successful and an American remake was decided to be made. However, the reactions were mixed as many people thought that the remake would be inferior to the original because the original had so many cultural details (Perkins and Verevis, 2015, p.682). This pessimistic approach by the audience and the critics exists in other countries since it is almost a common expectation that the adaptation is never going to be as successful as the original version. It was a similar situation when *Shameless* was going to be adapted in Türkiye in 2017 as *Our Story*. The critics were very skeptical as the criminal and sexual details could never

be adapted to the conservative Turkish television screens. However, since the adaptation was made with a reconstructing of the plot elements as a localization practice, the adapted version focused more on the family and poverty with certain plotlines (Zorlu, 2020).

The challenge in transnational adaptations lies in the need to retain the essence of the original content while incorporating local cultural details to make it appealing to the target audience. Producers must carefully identify the key cultural elements of the original and adapt them to fit the new context, ensuring that the core substance of the content is preserved. The success of the original serves as a driving force behind these adaptation decisions. This delicate balance reflects how cultural hierarchies and value systems shape both the flow of content across borders and the strategies used in adapting it. As a result, adaptations are influenced by both local customs and global trends, creating a dynamic interplay between the two.

1.1.3 Multiple Proximities Theory From the Lens of Masculinity

The concept of multiple proximities theory offers a framework for understanding the negotiation between masculinity and betrayal in transnational drama adaptations. There are various dimensions of cultural, emotional, and social contexts when analyzing themes of masculinity and betrayal, and these dimensions allow for a layered exploration of reinterpretations of themes and emotions across different cultural settings. By considering the proximity of narrative elements such as gender roles, cultural values, and emotional expressions, multiple proximities theory illuminates the ways in which the portrayal of masculinity and betrayal in television series adapts to, and sometimes challenges, the cultural norms of both the original and adapted versions. Through this framework, we can better understand how masculinity and betrayal not only reflect but

are also reshaped by the proximity of the original and local cultures in the adaptation process.

1.1.3.1 Introduction to Multiple Proximities Theory

The concept of glocal culture blurs the boundaries between the familiar and the foreign, as the processes of localization and globalization dissolve the distinctions between the self and the other. By embracing this fluidity, the Multiple Proximities Theory challenges traditional dichotomies and provides fresh perspectives for understanding audience preferences in an increasingly interconnected world. Even though it was often believed that the domestic content is preferred over the foreign ones because of the familiar and relatable topics and local narratives (Straubhaar, 1991) it is more difficult to clearly pinpoint what is preferred and what is familiar. The study of transnational adaptation becomes increasingly compelling when viewed through the lens of multiple proximities, as cultural proximity alone proves insufficient to explain audience preferences. While people often gravitate toward content that aligns with their cultural, linguistic, or geographical backgrounds, defining what is relevant is challenging due to the dynamic and relational nature of these tendencies. Factors such as subgenre alignment or shared historical experiences frequently shape viewer choices (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005, p.273). As Straubhaar (2007) points out, cultural identities are multifaceted, encompassing geographical, spatial, linguistic, religious, and ethnic dimensions, making the interplay between adaptation and audience even more intricate.

The Multiple Proximities Theory was first discussed by Straubhaar and La Pastina (2005) as they talked about the contents that were adapted to countries without any common culture and language. “Shareability also refers to common values, images, archetypes and themes across cultures that permit programs to flow across cultural

boundaries” (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005, p.278) as discussing the cultural proximity remains insufficient due to three factors: Production-level constraints, economic and reception barriers, and intangible cultural obstacles all play significant roles in shaping media consumption and adaptation. 'Material and structural limits at the production level' arise when certain countries lack the resources to create original content that meets domestic demand. Economic barriers, such as limited income or lack of access to media infrastructure (once exemplified by the absence of satellite TV and now extending to streaming platforms or internet connectivity) restrict media accessibility. Additionally, 'less tangible barriers of cultural capital' emerge when individuals are unable to engage with or comprehend media due to educational, linguistic, or cultural limitations (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005, p.279). These constraints, coupled with the multifaceted nature of cultural identities, underscore the importance of adopting a multiple proximities approach to better understand audience preferences and media consumption patterns.

Cultural proximity provides some insight into the regional popularity of Korean dramas in East Asia, but it falls short of explaining their global appeal. Similarly, Turkish series have transcended cultural and geographic boundaries, gaining popularity not only in the Middle East but also in regions as distant as Latin America. Iwabuchi (2002) argues that the consumption of Japanese contents in Taiwan is partly due to sharing a 'modern temporality' or 'Japanese transnational cultural power manifesting itself in Taiwan' (p.122). Clearly, factors beyond cultural or geographical proximity influence the transnational flow of formats and series adaptations. Setijadi (2005) highlights the limitations of relying solely on cultural proximity, emphasizing the importance of considering “social, economic, and macro-historical factors” that shape audiences' perceptions of cultural similarities in media texts (p.200). To fully understand the

dynamics of popularity and influence in transnational adaptations, the Multiple Proximities Theory offers a more comprehensive framework.

The Multiple Proximities Theory provides a nuanced framework for examining content, uncovering the values, perspectives, and influences that shape its creation and reception. Proximities such as thematic, religious, historical, value-based, and genre-specific dimensions offer detailed vantage points that enable deeper analysis. This approach is particularly effective in studying transnational adaptations, as it highlights the unique characteristics of localized, and often glocalised, content. Beyond analyzing audience preferences for different formats, the Multiple Proximities Theory also sheds light on how television formats evolve as they traverse various regions. It reveals not only the localization strategies used to make content resonate with local audiences but also the enduring connections between adapted versions and their original sources, showcasing the intricate web of relationships formed through multiple proximities.

1.1.3.2 Thematic Proximity in Adaptations: Betrayal and Vengeance

Thematic proximity becomes particularly intricate when exploring a concept like betrayal, as it can manifest across various genres, shaping the narrative and cinematic style in distinct ways. Betrayal, as a universal yet multifaceted theme, surpasses genre boundaries, appearing in dramas, thrillers, or even comedies, each presenting the narrative in a unique tone and style. For instance, a betrayal storyline in a drama might delve deeply into emotional and moral complexities, while in a comedy, it could take a lighter, satirical approach. This versatility means that betrayal as a theme can surpass traditional genre conventions, establishing a new level of thematic proximity that resonates with audiences through diverse storytelling techniques and cultural interpretations.

When a theme like betrayal and its counterpart vengeance, become popular, it has the power to resonate with audiences across diverse cultures, transcending traditional notions of cultural proximity. Such themes tap into universal human experiences, creating connections that cross geographical and cultural boundaries. For example, betrayal in the context of familial, romantic, or professional relationships can evoke strong emotions and a sense of moral conflict, drawing viewers into the narrative. Similarly, the theme of vengeance, often portrayed as a response to betrayal, provides a cathartic journey for audiences who empathize with the protagonist's quest for justice or retribution.

Universally relatable themes, such as betrayal and the resulting fallout, can be marketed successfully across countries regardless of cultural differences. Research suggests that the themes like migration to cities, adjustment to city life, families and love within urban stresses in Latin American telenovelas are also appealing to the people in Eastern Europe (Straubhaar, 2007). Similarly, 'the beautiful urban environment, young and single professionals, aestheticized lifestyles' in Korean dramas aspire to the younger audiences in Asia (Kim, 2007, p.131). It is not only the Korean lifestyle that attracts the viewers.

Likewise, Turkish series featuring opulent lifestyles, and familial disputes attract Iranian viewers in Austria, who relate to the underlying conflicts despite differing cultural contexts (Özalpman, 2017). Apparently, regardless of the geography and language, series from another culture and country can be very successful. These narratives often juxtapose aspirations for wealth and upward mobility with the consequences of betrayal, creating dramatic tension that captivates audiences. The life-worlds of viewers that are shaped by shared norms, values, and aspirations play a crucial role in their engagement with such themes (Eichner, 2020, p.110). Whether seeking emotional resonance, moral resolution,

or escapism, audiences connect deeply with stories of betrayal and vengeance, which reflect not only the darker aspects of human nature but also the enduring hope for redemption and justice.

Betrayal is a universal theme and can be incorporated in the story regardless of the genre or the topic. However, even though the theme is used in many different series and storylines, the thematic examination is not made in the literature. More broader themes like family, power and love are among the themes that contribute to the success of the Turkish television series (Yesil, 2015, p.45). Similarly, a mixture of humor, melodrama, romance, social commentary and realism are among the factors that makes the telenovelas successful even in the midst of national political crises (Acosta-Alzuru, 2010, p.199). This could also mean that the way themes are approached and developed is almost as important as the themes themselves.

The theme of betrayal often plays a pivotal role in shaping gender dynamics within narratives, as it challenges established power structures and societal expectations tied to gender roles. As mentioned above, the tone and the focus of the series may differ across cultures. Thus, the act of betrayal may highlight the emotional vulnerabilities traditionally associated with women, contrasting with the stoicism and emotional restraint often expected from men.

This dichotomy reinforces or challenges heteronormative gender roles, where men are typically portrayed as strong, authoritative figures who suppress emotional expression, while women are depicted as more openly expressive and reactive. In the series, manhood is portrayed as the social status or identity the male characters strive to achieve or retain. How they are recognized as men in the cultural and social networks define their manhood. At the same time, the analysis of the series explores masculinity as

a set of gendered traits, behaviors and ideals that are associated with men. The performance of masculinity reflects societal norms and explores to reveal what it means to be a man encompassing aspects of emotion, power and dominance.

1.1.3.3 Cultural Proximity and Its Influence on Gender Representations

Straubhaar argues that cultural proximity is deeply intertwined with cultural capital, encompassing factors like family, travel experiences, education, personal networks, religion, and non-religious activities, age, gender, class and ethnicity (Straubhaar, 2007). These elements can function as subcategories within cultural proximity, shaping audience preferences in nuanced ways. Storytelling, for instance, is influenced not only by cultural affinities but also by historical and societal contexts. Straubhaar poses a thought-provoking question: How can a Mexican telenovela be more popular in Brazil than a local Brazilian show, even if the Brazilian show has better production values and addresses important national issues? (Straubhaar, 2007, p.214). This highlights the complexity of expectations and realities, which cannot be fully explained by national or local proximity alone. Instead, it suggests that factors like shared cultural narratives, thematic relevance, or even stylistic choices may outweigh purely geographic or nationalistic considerations in determining what resonates with viewers.

Cultural proximity extends beyond national details, encompassing layers of life shaped by shared experiences or group norms. This can include emotional culture, gender roles, and even business culture, all of which play a significant role in how a story resonates with an audience. When examining cultural proximity in television series, it's possible to identify subtle cues in the narrative and visual style that reflect these cultural nuances. For instance, gender representations in a series can highlight specific societal expectations and gender dynamics that are familiar to local audiences. These nuances

help create a connection with the viewers, as the content mirrors their own cultural and emotional realities.

Berg and Sansalone (2024) suggests that Italian women are drawn to Turkish television series because the men are masculine and the romanticism is traditional. Similarly, Greek audience prefers Turkish content over Spanish or Italian series and romantic depiction of relationships are among the reasons of the popularity of Turkish series (Pothou, 2020). Even though women claim that they are attracted to traditional masculine traits in the Turkish series, when they describe what they like about men in the series, they talk about the masculine looks and emotional depth of the characters and the relationships (Berg & Sansalone, 2024, p.877). However, traditional masculinity does not show emotional depth and kindness as much as the descriptions the audience provide. It seems like even though the series show masculine traits like physically strong, assertive and attractive characters with superiority in professional settings, the emotional depth like kindness, sensitivity and loyalty are also among the appealing factors in the male characters of the Turkish series.

Another important finding is the female empowerment in the Turkish series is very surprising and appealing to the Italian women viewers. The modern and independent lifestyle of the female characters dissolve the previous prejudices and stereotypes of Muslim Turkish women and sets a new standard for female representation in television series with a family friendly and family-oriented focus. (p.879-880). Some examples for the Turkish series that became very popular in Italy are *Family Secrets (Yargi)*, *Bitter Lands (Bir Zamanlar Cukurova)*, *Endless Love (Kara Sevda)* and *Daydreamer (Erkenci Kus)*. Although there is a shared Mediterranean culture among Italians and Turkish

people, the series takes the mere cultural proximity and acts like a transformative force to further develop the gender roles in a modern and globalized world.

1.1.3.4 Emotional and Genre Proximity

Betrayal brings along a web of interconnected meanings and emotions, such as innocence, guilt, a sense of wrongdoing, broken trust, loss, resentment, and regret. These emotions are so intertwined with the narratives and characters that sometimes it is not even talked about, but the emotions are there to connect with the audience. In this case, emotions set a meeting ground for people who have been betrayed by lovers or friends and this shared pain sets a direct appeal to people from different cultures and languages, because emotions are beyond cultures and languages.

Hence, it is possible to address emotional proximity that brings the people together to watch the series. However, it is also possible to tie this concept with genre proximity because genre of the content often dictates what the prevailing emotions will be. Genre proximity simply concentrates on the configuration of the specific type of the content. Since genre is a very complex concept, the categories could be created in a discursive way with different contexts. “The fluidity of genre boundaries enables us to conceptualize genre and genrification as cultural and historical processes, rather than as a set of textual elements” (Yang, 2008, p.279). With a national context, East Asian Drama, Korean Drama and Turkish Drama could be regarded as genres. Li suggests that although the Taiwanese, Japanese and Korean dramas have developed “different and distinctive aesthetic and narrative styles and conventions” they share the same origin as ‘trendy dramas’ and for their online circulation. They also share the regional origin as the East Asian, which becomes the ‘defining genre descriptor’ (Li, 2009). The Korean Dramas designate the historical and cultural elements that make up the visual details and

cinematography that are almost like patterns. The exaggerated mimics and jests, colorful mise-en-scene, melodramatic details and focus on the leading actors are some of the characteristics of the Korean Drama. Similarly, Dizi (Turkish series) could be the genre of Turkish dramas because of the distinctive production, narrative, aesthetic, and ethnographic details and richer musical, textual and visual elements compared to soaps and telenovelas. (Özturkmen, 2018). Dizi (which is etymologically meaning coming after one another, like serials) differs from soap operas and telenovelas in its unique structure, featuring two-hour episodes aired weekly. These episodes are typically filmed only one or two weeks ahead, creating an intense production schedule for the crew while allowing the show to incorporate audience feedback. In these specific genres, which are unique to their countries of origin, emotions are often heightened, and multiple genre conventions are blended within a single narrative. A more detailed discussion of the television sectors for the selected dramas and their countries of origin will be presented in the contextual analysis section of the dissertation.

As Mittel (2004) suggests, if the text is open to be categorized by multiple genres, then it is not plausible to fit the text into a one genre. Thus, the emotional belonging of the series could be the determining factor to have a common basis between different cultures. It is not easy to find a common genre for the series studied in this research, because even though *Ezel* can be regarded as a crime, mafia series, *Doctor Foster* is a family drama. Maybe if we draw the commonality line very broad, we can say that all of the series are love and betrayal dramas but this is not a genre itself. Universal love stories are expected to have more potential in the international market compared to the love stories embedded with local, historical or cultural details. For this reason, the producers choose to have a “pausterized, transnational product detached from national cultures”

(Waisbord, 2004, p.368) which in fact corresponds to glocalization dynamics according to Waisbord (2004), demonstrating the complex nature of the transnational, global and local contents. In this case, the betrayal theme becomes powerful and relatable with the question of how the character deals with the betrayal and seeks for vengeance. The common ground for all series in this research is that the characters seek to gain agency after the betrayal by increasing their masculinity (even when the character is female) by suppressing their emotions, appearing stoic, taking charge and taking risks. Even though we see an overall decrease in expressing emotions across adaptations and the originals, there are some differences between the versions as one character cries in one version and the other chooses to hold the tears. However, the emotional content is still there even when we don't see the physical proof of pain.

Bassols, Cros and Torrent (1988) claim that the use of emotions in a content increases the engagement of the audience. Even though their discussion is more on the non-fiction contents, the arguments relate to the fictional content as well. Empathetic emotions bring the protagonist and the audience closer because these emotions are felt by the recipient because they imagine the circumstances and feel the pain of the person they see on the screen. Provoked emotions are when the recipients automatically mimic what they are watching such as a laugh or a cry.

Then it is not so curious to see that Korean series are very popular in the Middle East, so much so that the first Korean satellite station Korean TV started in 2008 to translate the popular Korean contents into the languages of the Middle East (Noh, 2010). The demand of the Korean series in the Middle East could be explained by the emotional needs and expectations of the local audience; "The emotional Arabic culture resembles the melodramatic culture of Korea... Echoing the notion of cultural proximity, Arabic

and Korean cultures seem to share a fondness for the emotion in a global context” (Noh, 2010, p.351). Since Arabic audiences cannot find the emotional content locally produced, they prefer more proximate content elsewhere, even though it is geographically far away. It demonstrates that shared emotional sensibilities can go beyond the geographical, cultural and linguistic barriers, creating unexpected connections between distant cultures. Research even suggests that the emotional expressions of characters in a scene of a series correspond to the shot lengths. Shots with longer lengths are often accompanied with the moments of sadness, contemplation and despair whereas shorter shot lengths are often accompanied with the moments of danger, excitement, nervousness or exuberance. These choices in the style of editing demonstrates emotional proximity in the television series adaptations (Bozgeyik, 2025a). This correspondence acts as a proof of emotional proximity in transnational drama adaptations with a quantitative perspective.

While discussing gender roles and their representation on screen, it is essential to address the discourse surrounding the male gaze and spectatorship. The male gaze in cinema has been explored as a way of positioning female figures as passive objects of the male viewer's gaze, with women existing primarily to support male characters while men take on active, narrative-driving roles (Mulvey, 2006). Television often reproduces patriarchal ways of seeing, framing women as objects of visual pleasure for the heterosexual male viewer, even when the director is female (Kaplan, 1983). Cinematic language constructs desire and identification by emphasizing how emotions are mediated through visual codes, engaging both the mental processing of images and the act of watching (Metz, 1981).

Acknowledging the prevalence of the male gaze in *Ezel*, this dissertation diverges from the existing literature by examining how its transnational adaptation disrupts these

dynamics. Although *Doctor Foster* engages with the theme of betrayal as *Ezel*, it employs a gaze that shifts the narrative focus to the emotional and psychological interiority of its female protagonist. This dissertation begins and ends with a critical engagement with heteronormativity. It is important to note that femininity is not used to express women exclusively, nor is masculinity confined for men. Masculinity and femininity are beyond biological categories, functioning as socially constructed and performative gender traits that individuals from any gender can embody. This fluidity challenges the traditional description of manhood and emphasizes the complexity of gender expressions. For example, a woman may display traditionally masculine traits just as Doctor Foster, who appears emotionally calculated, stoic and assertive when she deals with betrayal. Such portrayals reveal how cultural norms dictate masculinity and femininity and how narrative contexts help to display the complicated understandings of gender and power in the frameworks of heteronormativity.

2. METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The previous chapter provides insights about the existing literature on the subject and introduces the masculinity studies in television and outlines the Multiple Proximities Theory. This chapter delves into details on the research design with the case study method and its dual layer or contextual and textual analysis. Additionally, it further explores the Multiple Proximities Theory in relation with the selected series and scenes.

2.1 Research Design

There is a gap in the literature for scripted format adaptation comparisons. Most of the research is focused on the previously very successful remakes like *The Office* (Griffin, 2008; Beeden & De Bruin, 2010; Wells-Lassagne, 2012; Schwind, 2014; Ringelová, 2015) and *Ugly Betty* (Fung & Zhang, 2011; Mikos & Perrotta, 2012; Carini, 2013; Hilmes, 2013; Smith, 2013; Chen, 2016; Gao, 2019) but since then adaptations and remakes made for television across different cultures has been increasing. Meanwhile the audience is also getting used to the content adaptations because they can get access to different versions or the original series through various streaming platforms like Netflix. Therefore it is all the more interesting to research different versions of adaptations and see what are the similarities and differences.

There are two main series selected for this research: *Ezel* (2009) and *Doctor Foster* (2015) which share a common theme of betrayal and vengeance although the premises and the characters are different. *Ezel* was adapted in Mexico as *Yago* (2016), and in Romania as *Vlad* (2019). *Doctor Foster* (2015) was adapted in South Korea as *The World of the Married* (2020) and in Türkiye as *Sadakatsiz (A Woman Scorned)* (2020). The six series from different cultures and languages tell the same theme yet two different

stories with their own takes. Each adaptation has specific localization practices and cinematographic choices which arise from the various proximity to the themes, expectations on the gender roles and cultural details. Then the adaptation itself becomes an embodiment of these choices and starts to manifest the details like masculinity as the audience watches it.

Thus, the series in a way produces, enhances and reproduces the perspectives on the theme of betrayal, who takes vengeance and how masculinity sits in the representation. Ezel is a male protagonist who is betrayed by his lover and friends. Doctor Foster is a female protagonist who is betrayed by his husband and friends. In order to analyze the series in a thorough way the scene where the protagonist learns the betrayal is selected. The similar trajectories are offering a great groundwork for analysis because there are six scenes of learning of the betrayal with different genders, cultural and cinematographic details.

2.1.1 Case Study Approach

A study by Villegas-Simon and Soto-Sanfield (2021) uses a case study method with a twofold of contextual and textual analysis. I am adopting their perspective on the methodology to analyze the adaptations across different cultures by pairing a contextual analysis with a detailed textual analysis. This approach offers a thorough understanding of the adaptations and can lead to various implications. Case study approach provides opportunities to analyze the scenes from the series while considering the contextual realities like the industry, network system and production. Meaning-making in textual analysis is inherently contextual as Priya (2021) suggests “Analyses of texts are always done within their context” (p.97). Hence, a case study methodology by pairing contextual

and textual analysis is fitting to examine the selected scenes from the series and analyze the television series adaptations across different countries.

Thus, this research uses a comparative case study method with components of contextual and textual analysis to analyze the adaptations of the Turkish drama series *Ezel* (2009 - 2011) and the adaptations of the British drama series *Doctor Foster* (2015). This method offers an in-depth analysis of the adaptation process across multiple versions while also considering a point of comparison.

The comparative case study approach will be divided into two key parts: contextual analysis and textual analysis. Contextual analysis involves examining the production environment and broadcast context of each adaptation. This includes factors like the television and network system, production aspects and audience reception (such as ratings and reviews). Textual analysis, on the other hand, will delve into the content of each series. Narrative structure, character portrayals, audiovisual style, and the use of space and time will be compared across the versions to identify adaptations in storytelling and thematic emphasis. Then in the discussion section, these details will be examined with the lens of masculinity and the themes of betrayal and revenge.

In order to create a framework for the analysis, I offer to have a theme of betrayal and revenge because it will make the scene selection more meaningful. By this way I will be able to use the thematic proximity, suggested by Straubhaar and la Pastina (2005) to set the basis of the analysis in a common ground. The two series for the case study are *Ezel* and *Doctor Foster* and their adaptations in Romania and Mexico, and South Korea and Türkiye respectively. The common theme guides the scene selection as the protagonist's learning of the betrayal and taking revenge, which points to the climax of the episodes for each version. All the scene sequences will be analyzed with textual

analysis where I look at details like characters, mise-en-scene, audiovisual elements and narration.

By employing this two-pronged approach, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the narratives in the original versions of the series are transformed and shaped by the specific cultural and production contexts of each adaptation.

2.1.1.1 Contextual Analysis

Contextual analysis is almost like a market analysis as it offers insights about the market conditions, the broadcast and audience details of the country of origins of the selected dramas. The components of the contextual analysis are TV and network systems in the countries of the dramas of the case study, the production aspects of these dramas and the audience reception. These components tell a lot about the existing economic, social and industrial details for each of the countries that adapted the television series. The contextual analysis successfully lays out a comparative groundwork that highlights the constraints and opportunities for the adaptations.

Behlil (2021) suggests that we need to consider the economic and practical circumstances to understand the transnational interactions, because cultural theory alone cannot explain the conditions in the power relations in the television industry. Lower costs, distribution rights and having more control over the production are among the reasons Turkish producers opt to remake the Korean Dramas rather than other options. This reasoning explains the importance of having a contextual analysis part in an extensive research on television drama adaptations. Focusing on the textual analysis alone would overlook certain details in the television and the network system, production and the audience reception.

2.1.1.1.1 TV and Network System

Each drama discussed in the dissertation is streamed or broadcasted in a specific system in their country. The platform where the drama airs, whether in a streaming service with a subscription plan or free broadcasted channel, influences the production quality and choices, audience reach and even the narrative structure and timing. There are taken for granted benefits of streaming platforms such as individualization, customization and decentralization but it may be limited depending on the government restrictions or political imperatives (Wang & Lobato, 2019). For this reason, it is important to compare how different countries are functioning in the respective series.

Whether a series is aired in a traditional broadcast channel or a subscription based streaming network can also affect the length and the structure of the series. For example, episodes of the dramas in the Turkish television system are about 2 hours and 10 minutes but if the drama is on Netflix, it is around 40 minutes. The length of the episode also determines the narrative choices because if the work is adapted, there will be a lot of filler scenes that make the story fit into a lengthy story arch. By analyzing the television and network systems in Türkiye, the UK, Mexico, Romania, and South Korea, this section helps to decipher the network system the series are broadcasted in.

2.1.1.1.2 Production Aspects

The production aspects include (but not limited to) the budget, production quality, locations and aesthetics, and casting decisions. The location hints very insightful details about localization practices because most of the time location is tied to the narrative structure of the story. For example, in *Doctor Foster* and its adaptations we learn that the protagonist has moved to a smaller city after marrying, to fit in with his husband's life and friends. So the betrayal is even more painful because she had made a sacrifice of

leaving friends and the big city life behind. Another example can be from *Ezel* and its adaptations, the friends and the old lover of the protagonist move to a city known for its gambling vibes to open a casino. The choice of the city provides an atmosphere to the story and the audience are signaled about the connotations of the location.

Casting models and beautiful actors and actresses can also bring a lot of media attention to the series, or having a superior production quality with successful visuals would attract the audiences and elevate the interest in the series.

2.1.1.1.3 Audience Reception

Social media engagements, viewer ratings and online discussions tell a lot about the audience reception of the drama. Although some series are told to catch the social media engagement tactics to increase the ratings, the afterlife of the series can still be tracked by looking at the social media and forum posts of the fans of the series. The reception of the series affects whether it is going to be sold to other countries for adaptation and contributes to the global circulation of television dramas.

2.1.1.2 Textual Analysis

Textual analysis in this study examines the narrative structure, character development, audiovisual style, spatial and temporal design in the selected television dramas and their adaptations. These textual elements help to dissect the series into specific parts so that the comparison is meaningful when the discussion is tied to masculinity and betrayal.

2.1.1.2.1 Narrative Structure

Narrative structure is a crucial element in adaptation, as it dictates how plot unfolds and characters change throughout the episodes. Narrative structure is closely

related to the network and television system and the adaptation can be really tedious to carry out a specific story with all the localization considerations. For example, *Doctor Foster* is a five-episode psychological thriller whereas its adaptation in Türkiye *Sadakatsiz* is multi season melodrama which has to come up with new characters and arches to feed the story for a long time. However, to make the comparison meaningful and effective, this research focuses on the scene of learning the betrayal for all versions. Thus we only look at how the scene is structured and how the background story affects the learning of the betrayal. The analysis section has detailed background story and scene description to start the comparison in the textual level.

2.1.1.2.2 Characters

Characters in a story are vessels for emotional explorations, it is through the characters we see the pain of betrayal and the determination for vengeance. Characters also carry the personality traits, backstories, costumes and mimics which informs gender roles, societal expectations and cultural ideals.

2.1.1.2.3 Audiovisual Style

Cinematography, colors, close-ups, editing and even the music contribute to the audiovisual style of a series. In this case, since the case study is on the selected scenes of the series, it is especially important to look at these details to see how different can localization practices be. A camera work can be hand held or a slow motion might be used to underline a specific scene or a character movement. These parameters do not only have aesthetic functions but also have intrinsic qualities that signal specific meanings.

2.1.1.2.4 The Use/Design of Space and Time

Space and time contribute to the narrative logic of the series. Adaptations often

modify the space and time or temporal settings to fit the story and the narration into the local culture and expectations. Depending on the storytelling traditions, there might be excessive use of flashbacks or linear time to shape the events and character arcs. All of these details are helpful to understand the setup of the scene and how the meaning differs across adaptations' choices of space and time.

Space and time are not only the location and the calendar time. There is the sense of time and place which influences the storytelling. Choe (2022) suggests that close up of the character's face accompanied by the melody creates a timeless and placeless space for the audience. Therefore, even though there are different parameters in the textual analysis, it is crucial to recognize how intertwined they can be during the storytelling process.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The previous chapter has assessed the Multiple Proximities Theory with the perspective of masculinity studies and the themes of betrayal and vengeance. It has outlined different levels of proximities, such as thematic, emotional and gender proximities which influence how transnational adaptations are aligned with the local cultural and industry-specific expectations. While the literature review provided the foundation for understanding the theory, this section integrates the theory with the conceptual framework of this research and informs how the theory ties to the methodology and the discussion.

The two pronged approach with contextual and textual analysis provides opportunities to analyze the scenes and their narrative details while considering the realities of the industry, network system and production. The integration of Multiple Proximities Theory allows for a systematic understanding of how these adaptations

negotiate local and global influences, ensuring that the core themes of masculinity, betrayal, and vengeance remain relevant while adapting to new cultural contexts. The Multiple Proximities Theory helps explain why some elements like the themes of betrayal and vengeance remain intact across adaptations, as they are universally resonant, while other elements like dialogue styles, gender dynamics, and production values are adjusted to increase cultural proximity. The framework helps unpack why these modifications occur, demonstrating that audience reception is shaped not only by narrative familiarity but also by the ways in which stories align with local social structures and viewing habits.

3. CASE STUDY

3.1 *Ezel* (2009) and Its Adaptations *Yago* (2016) in Mexico and *Vlad* (2019) in Romania

3.1.1 *Summary of the Series*

Turkish television series *Ezel*, broadcasted from 2009 to 2011, has a complex narrative of betrayal, revenge, and redemption. The series follows Ömer Uçar, whose life takes a tragic turn when he is falsely accused of a crime he did not commit, leading to a lifetime imprisonment. His girlfriend Eysan is the one to start the intricate plan (although unwillingly - she accepts the plan of her father to get the money for her sister's treatment) and his best friends Ali and Cengiz join the plan in exchange for a big sum of money. He gets out of the prison, after undergoing a profound transformation physically and psychologically, with a new identity as Ezel and embarks on a meticulously crafted plan for revenge against those who wronged him, confronting his former friends and fiancée who turned enemies. The series follows a nonlinear storytelling style with a lot of flashbacks and the audience switching back and forth between different times of lives for the characters.

At its core, *Ezel* delves into themes of betrayal, revenge, justice, morality, unraveling the multifaceted nature of vengeance and its consequences. This series delves into the psychological complexities of betrayal and the lengths to which one might go to achieve a sense of justice. The series navigates the labyrinth of relationships and power dynamics that define Ömer's quest for retribution. Ezel's calculated infiltration of his former friends' opulent world and his manipulation of their lives raise questions about the effectiveness of revenge in attaining emotional catharsis. As the narrative unfolds,

viewers are drawn into a gripping tale of suspense and intrigue, punctuated by moments of intense emotion and moral ambiguity. The narrative explores the tension between the pursuit of justice and the potential for forgiveness, inviting viewers to contemplate the cyclical nature of vengeance and its ability to both empower and consume the individual seeking retribution. Through its compelling storytelling and nuanced character development, *Ezel* transcends conventional television drama, offering viewers a thought-provoking exploration of the complexities of human nature and the pursuit of justice in a morally ambiguous world.

3.1.2 Contextual Analysis

3.1.2.1 TV and Network System

Ezel enthralled audiences for two seasons between 2009 and 2011. Kerem Deren, the writer of the series, claims that he had an urge to adapt *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and when he was at the meeting with the producer Kerem Çatay, he asked for a revenge story like *The Count of Monte Cristo* (Maro, 2011). This mutual enthusiasm for Alexandre Dumas's well-known story resulted in a successful production. *The Count of Monte Cristo* tells the story of Edmond Dantes, a man falsely accused of a crime and imprisoned by his friends. Dantes escapes to take calculated revenge from his friends, years later. This narrative of betrayal and vengeance has influenced many adaptations in literature, film and television around the world. In *Ezel* too, we see the same premise. Ömer, betrayed by his lover and friends and sent to prison for a crime that he did not commit, escapes the prison and goes after them, this time as Ezel with his new identity, to take an orchestrated revenge. The core elements of justice, honor, betrayal and

vengeance are localized in *Ezel*, with details like military duty, choice of locations and incorporating the socioeconomic realities.

Initially broadcast on Show TV in 2009, the series later transitioned to ATV in 2010. Each episode offered a substantial viewing experience, ranging from 90 to 120 minutes. This extended runtime allowed for a meticulously crafted narrative that unfolded over 71 episodes, enabling a deep exploration of the protagonist's transformation and intricate revenge plot. Its placement on prime-time television, airing between 8 pm and 11 to 12 pm, further underscores its significance as a show targeted towards a large and engaged viewership. Prime-time slots are typically reserved for popular and critically acclaimed programs, indicating the network's confidence in *Ezel*'s ability to resonate with Turkish audiences.

Yago, the Mexican adaptation of the Turkish series *Ezel*, aired on Univision and UniMas in 2016. Univision, which is a US based Spanish broadcaster, has been a partner of Televisa, and later merged to form TelevisaUnivision in 2021 (Villafañe, 2022). *Yago* offered a more concise format compared to the original, with each episode clocking in at a standard 60 minutes. Despite the shorter episode length, *Yago* managed to span a single season with 65 episodes, suggesting a focus on maintaining a compelling narrative within a more streamlined structure. The series initially aired at 10 pm, a later prime-time slot, which might be because of the adult content with murder, gambling and cheating. The show was later moved to a later time slot, potentially indicating adjustments made based on audience reception or scheduling conflicts.

Vlad, the Romanian adaptation of *Ezel*, stands out for its ambitious approach to storytelling. The series was broadcast on Pro TV, the leader of the Romanian television market since launching in 1995 (Bălăşescu, Angelova, & Surugiu, 2024). From 2019 to

2021, the series captivated audiences for four seasons, with a total of 65 episodes. Unlike its counterparts, *Vlad* adopted a format that evolved over time. The first season boasted a substantial runtime of 90 minutes per episode, allowing for a detailed exploration of the protagonist's backstory and the intricate web of betrayal. However, subsequent seasons adopted a more streamlined format with 45 minute episodes, potentially reflecting adjustments based on audience preferences or production considerations. It was aired prime-time and was also appraised as the first Romanian television series produced with cinematic standards. This ambition is evident not only in the extended runtime of the first season but also in the potential emphasis on visual storytelling and production value. Furthermore, the audience could access the episodes a day earlier in the streaming platform Voyo (Panaite, 2023), which meant the series joined the digital distribution and consequently enabled the rising hype of the series.

3.1.2.2 Production Aspects

Produced by Ay Yapım, a renowned Turkish production company known for high-quality dramas, *Ezel* benefited from experienced creative talent. The leading actor Kenan İmirzalıoğlu is one of the most popular actors in Türkiye. Similarly, the actress Cansu Dere is a known actress who also later acted in *Sadakatsiz*, the other series that is examined as a case study in this research. Both actors are former models which shows that the production places an importance of beauty and charm on the screen. The series' filming locations, Istanbul and Northern Cyprus also deserve consideration. Istanbul, a bustling metropolis, serves as the backdrop for the protagonist's initial betrayal and his eventual return as Ezel.

Northern Cyprus, a geographically and culturally distinct location, symbolizes the protagonist's transformation and his calculated separation from his former life. Northern

Cyprus is situated in the eastern Mediterranean and only recognized by Türkiye, carries a complex political and cultural history and identity. The geopolitical tension offers a unique setting to symbolically align the transformation of the protagonist and his detachment from his past. There is a concentration of casinos in Northern Cyprus, whereas casinos and gambling are illegal in Türkiye. Thus, this new location introduces the undercurrent of risk taking, secrecy, identity ploy, and moral ambiguity. The elements of casinos and gambling are used in the series to drive the narrative plot and emphasize the high-stakes nature of the protagonist's new life on his way to take a calculated revenge. The illegal undertone of the location and gambling successfully pairs with the theme of vengeance through a new identity. The choice of these diverse filming locations potentially enriches the narrative by visually contrasting the protagonist's past and present realities.

Yago was produced by Televisa, a leading Mexican media conglomerate and the series benefited from the production company's expertise in creating telenovelas, a popular genre in Latin America. Similarly, Iván Sánchez is very famous and a former model just like Kenan İmirzalıoğlu. The decision to film *Yago* majorly in Mexico City adds a distinct layer to the adaptation. Unlike *Ezel*, which utilized contrasting locations, *Yago* grounds the narrative within a single urban environment. This choice allows for a focused exploration of revenge and betrayal within a specific Mexican social context, potentially highlighting cultural nuances and audience expectations within the Mexican market.

Produced by Pro TV, a leading Romanian television network, *Vlad* benefited from the network's commitment to high-quality productions. The choice of filming locations also merits attention. While specific details about the Greek locations are unknown, the

series primarily focused on Romania. This grounding in a familiar cultural context could have enhanced viewer engagement and allowed for a nuanced portrayal of revenge and betrayal within Romanian society.

Additionally, the naming conventions carry local and global connotations of betrayal and cunning. In all three adaptations, names of the characters serve as culturally significant markers that enrich the meaning of the story. The Turkish original employs the idiom *Ali Cengiz oyunları* to evoke cultural concepts of trickery; the Romanian adaptation uses the name Vlad, which evokes the historical figure Vlad the Impaler, a potent symbol of vengeance and retribution in Romanian folklore; the Mexican version localizes the narrative by naming the protagonist Yago after the globally recognizable archetype of Iago, the infamous schemer in Shakespeare's *Othello*. These names are strategic production choices that frame the characters' moral ambiguity and signal the thematic core of betrayal and complex revenge across cultural contexts.

3.1.2.3 Audience Reception

Ezel, the original was very successful especially with its first season. The series garnered high ratings, the wise quotes of the *Ezel*'s mentor Ramiz acted as promotional tools that worked like a word of mouth strategy. When the ratings dropped, the casting of renowned actor Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ boosted audience interest. Although the second season started with decreasing ratings, the overall success was large and *Ezel*'s phenomenal success continues, holding the record for the most remade Turkish series (Sakar, 2022). This enduring legacy speaks to the power of *Ezel*'s story and its ability to resonate with audiences across cultures. Furthermore, the production companies upload the episodes soon after the initial broadcast, allowing the viewers and fans to catch up and engage in

discussions in the comments (Behlil, 2010). Having active audience in the social media increases the audience reception and the popularity of the series.

Vlad is considered as ‘one of the best Romanian series of all time’ and was sold to Bulgaria for a three season deal (Formatbiz, 2020). The deal underscores the growing quality of Romanian television productions, with *Vlad* captivating audiences both domestically and abroad. The producers made sure to have continuous communication with the audience through various online events such as behind the scenes access, quizzes and interviews with the actors and real life showings such as a premier of the last episode of the first season at the cinema (Panaite, 2023). The constant contact with the audience created a special fan base which increased the reception of the series.

The producer, director and actors of *Yago* used twitter engagement with fans to promote the first day of the broadcast (Univision, 2016). This focus on audience interaction through social media platforms sets *Yago* apart from some traditional promotional strategies, demonstrating the power of social media engagement. By responding to fan questions and expressing gratitude for comments, the *Yago* team created a two-way conversation that fueled excitement for the show. Their social media savvy not only generated buzz but also fostered a sense of community among fans, leading to a successful premiere. Due to its timing (being produced in 2009), *Ezel* missed the opportunity to join the social media strategies to generate the hype around the series.

3.1.3 Textual Analysis

3.1.3.1 Narrative Structure

The first episode sets the background story of Ezel, his friends Ali and Cengiz, and his lover Eyşan. At the beginning of the episode, we see Ezel and his confidants (a

woman and a man) in a luxury car, looking at the picture of his friends and lover. A voice over by Ezel begins to introduce the story. Ezel narrates his own story in the third person, because he has changed. Ömer is the one who lived in the past and experienced betrayal. After prison, he becomes Ezel, with a new face and identity. Through flashbacks, he introduces his friends, then returns to the present, arriving at a casino hotel. He introduces himself as Ezel and adds, 'I came here to take revenge' as the opening credits roll.

After returning home from his military duty, Ömer reunites with his family, friends and lover at the train station. It seems as though nothing has changed, and they all appear to be a happy group. However, during a family dinner at Ömer's house, we learn that Eyşan has started working with Cengiz at the casino hotel. Eyşan has kept this a secret, but Cengiz reveals it to the entire family. After a brief moment of tension, everything appears fine, yet we sense that nothing truly is. Meanwhile, a parallel narrative unfolds in the present, showing the current lives of Ezel and his friends. Ezel is now at the casino owned by Cengiz and Eyşan, who are now married, incredibly wealthy and have a son. Yet, Eyşan is not happy. Cengiz spends his time gambling at the casino, while Ezel is determined to challenge him and penetrate their lives slowly. We still don't know the full shape of his revenge, but we know that it is a long and intricate plan.

The first critical point is when Ömer overhears a secret conversation between Cengiz, Ali and Eyşan's father. He walks into their plan that we don't fully hear, but Ömer is not suspicious at all. Eyşan's father leaves and Ömer announces that he intends to propose to Eyşan, and his friends congratulate him. This critical point passes without Ömer's suspicion but it shifts the audience's perspective entirely. Now we anticipate that something terrible is going to happen and his friends are all in on the plan of the betrayal.

The second critical point takes place after Ömer proposes to Eyşan. They join Ali and Cengiz, and the mood darkens when Cengiz, drunk and bitter from his unrequited love for Eyşan, confronts the group. They dream about their future: Eyşan dreams about living happily with Ömer and their future son, Ali dreams about having a luxury boat. After a moment of joking around with his friends, Cengiz gets angry and draws his gun. He says that nobody loves him and he is going to be a gangster. He first points the gun at Ali, asking for the imaginary boat. Then points at himself. Then at Eyşan, accusing her of coming between the brotherhood he once shared with Ömer. ‘You would die for her’ Cengiz says, as if he is jealous of his love towards Eyşan. Ömer replies that he would, but he would also die for Cengiz because he loves him as well. Cengiz gets angry and says that he is using him to appear a good person. Cengiz asks Ali ‘Is there a more good-hearted person than Ömer?’ and points the gun at Ömer uttering ‘You asked for it’ and pulls the trigger but the gun is empty. He laughs while the others are in shock. This critical point reveals multiple conflicts between the characters: Ali’s hunger for money and luxury, Cengiz’s dilemma between his love for Eyşan and the sadness of losing a good friend and jealousy toward that friend, and Ömer's inability to fully perceive the danger ahead, blinded by his devotion to Eyşan.

Eyşan and Ömer spend the night together, but Ömer wakes up alone, with Eyşan’s ring by the bedside. Before he can make sense of it, the police burst in and violently arrest him. During the brutal interrogation, he learns that he is accused of killing the security guard of the casino hotel and stealing money from the casino. He is beaten in the interrogation room and nobody believes his claims of innocence. He is sent to prison and later taken to court. The court scene serves as the third and the final critical point of the episode that marks the beginning of Ömer’s transformation. On the witness stand, Eyşan

lies against him, claiming that Ömer proposed to her and that she rejected him. She testifies that after returning from military duty, he became more violent and angry and that he had been asking questions about the casino and the hotel. While Ömer listens in shock, Eysan apologizes to him, but continues to lie, ensuring his conviction.

In that moment, Ömer recalls that the jacket used as evidence was on Cengiz on the night of confrontation. This is when he realizes that both Eysan and Cengiz have betrayed him. He doesn't know the whole story, but Eysan's false statement and Cengiz's suspicious behavior confirm his worst fears. Ömer gets a heavy life sentence and is sent to prison, left to face the betrayal alone for years. Ezel's voiceover reveals that Ömer never got out of the prison. But revenge is more powerful than death. We see a newspaper reporting the deaths of a group of prisoners and Ömer is among them. Ezel explains that his story begins after Ömer.

The episode ends in the present day, as Ezel sits down to gamble with Cengiz, meeting Cengiz, Ali and Eysan for the first time. Ezel knows them all well, but they are unaware that Ezel is actually Ömer, because he has changed his identity and appearance. Eysan studies Ezel closely and asks if they have met before. This ending hints the dramatic conflicts to come. The parallel time structure established in this first episode continues throughout the series.

3.1.3.1.1 The Scene: Ezel Episode 1 1:10:05 - 1:17:15

The court scene starts with Ömer entering the courtroom with handcuffs, escorted by two guards. The guards remove the handcuff and bring him to the center of the court, in front of the judge. Meanwhile, Ömer's mother, father and little brother are present to witness the trial. His father is angry, his mother is worried and his brother is eager to see

Ömer. Since Ömer's mother is blind, she keeps asking if Ömer looks well, and if he is alright.

The judge informs Ömer of the accusations: killing a security guard with a gun and stealing the money from the casino. The first piece of evidence is the gun with his fingerprints on. They show him the picture of the gun. Ömer panics and insists that he didn't do it. The judge shows him the grieving wife and daughter of the security guard, and Ömer turns to his father to plead his innocence. His father is mad, and seems unconvinced. They show him the second piece of evidence, which is a jean jacket found in a garbage bin near the casino. Ömer looks at the photo; it is indeed his jacket. His mother asks if it belongs to him and his father confirms in a whisper. The judge states that all the evidence points to him and accuses him of lying. Ömer's brother jumps to his feet to defend him: 'My brother doesn't lie.'

Ömer's lawyer calls Eyşan as a witness to prove that Ömer was elsewhere during the incident. Eyşan enters the courtroom; everyone stands. She avoids eye contact with Ömer and his family. The judge asks her to swear to tell the truth, and she looks at Ömer while doing so. They all sit. The judge asks if she had seen him on that day. She claims she did: At night, he proposed to her, and she says she rejected him. Ömer jumps to his feet at the first lie, but the guards force him to sit. The judge asks why she rejected the proposal and she lies again, claiming that he had become angry and violent after returning from military duty. He changed, she says and adds that he had been asking questions about the casino and the hotel. After this lie, Ömer stands and begs Eyşan, asking why she's doing this. The guards force him to sit again.

Eyşan looks at her father, seated at the back, watching the trial, and her sister, sitting beside him. Ömer turns to see who she looks at. Eyşan continues her lies, claiming

that after the proposal rejection, Ömer became very angry and declared that he would become rich. She says that Ömer had told her, ‘I was going to do it later, but I am going to do it now.’ Ömer cannot believe his ears and begs her ‘Eyşan, Eyşan’ and Eyşan apologizes to him, starting to cry. The judge dismisses her. As she walks away in slow motion, with a flashback Ömer remembers Cengiz wearing his jacket and pulling a gun while drunk, the night they all met to talk about their dreams. Ömer runs after Eyşan and holds her. They face each other, and Ömer asks ‘Who are you? I don't know you anymore,’ but Eyşan remains expressionless and does not answer. The guards pin him down and handcuff him. Eyşan leaves to check on her father in the audience, but he is gone. Eyşan exits and Ömer watches her leave as his vision blurs.

3.1.3.1.2 The Scene: Yago Episode 1 - 39:25 - 49:19

The court scene starts as the judge calls Sara to the witness stand. As she enters the courtroom in slow motion, we see Omar and his lawyer sitting to the side as the defendant. Sara glances at Lucio (Cengiz) and then at her father, who are seated among the audience of the trial. Omar's parents are also there. Omar calls, ‘Sara,’ and she struggles to hold her gaze away from him. The courtroom setup is different: the witness stands in the corner next to the judge, facing the audience. Abel (Ali) is also among the audience. As Sara approaches the witness corner, a man makes her vow to tell the truth.

The lawyer asks about their relationship and she says that Omar is her boyfriend. The lawyer continues: the defendant claimed that he was with her the night of the incident, is that true? She says that it is true. Omar and his parents are relieved. However, Sara proceeds to say that ‘Only for a moment.’ Omar stiffens at the first lie. She tells that he was angry because she didn't accept his marriage proposal. She claims he said he would soon be a millionaire, and then she would have no excuse to reject him. Hearing all the

lies, tears roll down Omar's face. The lawyer thanks her and lets her leave. Omar's parents sit in shock and deeply upset.

Before leaving the courtroom, Sara looks at Omar and apologizes. In a flashback, Omer remembers taking the gun from Abel during Abel's drunken quell, when the gun fired into the sky. He also remembers the night they slept together. Then he gets very angry and jumps to his feet, shouting and yelling behind Sara, trying to understand why she betrayed him. Omar's brother cries and jumps up to protect his brother, while his parents hold him back. Sara exits the courtroom crying, and the guards restrain Omar. We do not hear about the sentence in this scene. However, we know that Omar is in trouble due to Sara's false accusation. The sentence is revealed a couple of scenes later via voice over, as Omar is guarded handcuffed and guarded to a car outside the courthouse.

3.1.3.1.3 The Scene: Vlad Episode 1 - 1:13:00 - 1:18:50; 1:20:33 - 1:26:00

The court scene sequence starts with an establishing shot of the grand courthouse. Adrian walks with a guard on one side and a lawyer on the other. He is handcuffed and insists that he didn't commit any crime and that it doesn't make sense for him to pay the price for something he didn't do. The lawyer tells him that it is in the best interest for him and his family to accept what he has allegedly done. They enter the courtroom and Adrian's mother holds his hand with compassion. The guard brings him to the defendant's seat, while Adrian's brother timidly waves at him. The courtroom setup is different from the other versions: The audience faces the judge and the defendant sits on the side. Everyone stands as the grand jury enters and sit only after the grand jury lets them to. This entrance elevates the nervous wait of the scene.

Just like in the Turkish original, Adrian's mom asks if Adrian is looking alright. Adrian's brother answers her that he is. The grand jury asks Adrian if he knows of the

accusations and he says yes. The grand jury adds that if accepts what he has done, the sentence will be reduced by one third. Would he want to proceed in this manner? Adrian looks at his anxious family and declares that he is innocent. His parents tense up, knowing this choice could triple his sentence if the grand jury finds him guilty.

Adrian is accused of robbery and a murder, breaking into Rainbow Star Casino in Bucharest and stealing about eight million dollars. A short flashback shows the casino. As the grand jury reads the accusation, we see flashbacks of the scene, showing the details of the incident, from the name of the casino, to the amount that was stolen and to a description of how the security guard was killed. These details increase the realism of the scene, which exacerbates the effect of the betrayal. The prosecutor submits the evidence of the shotgun found in the accused's car, with fingerprints matching the accused. He also shows the picture of the jean jacket that the accused was wearing during the incident. A short flashback of a car driving away from the area enters.

Then the prosecutor invites a guard who was injured that night. He enters with a bandage in his head and tells that he doesn't remember much more than a silhouette who hit him. (We see another short flashback of the hitting). They show him the picture of the jean jacket and ask him if the aggressor was wearing this jacket. He says yes and leaves the courtroom. The grand jury asks Adrian if he has seen this gun, he says that he has never used a gun, and the jury asks again if the car is his car. He admits that it is. The grand jury insists that he accept the deed and get a reduced sentence. Adrian's father stands up anxiously, but Adrian looks at his father's face and answers no. His father leaves the courtroom crying with agony. His mother also cries silently. Adrian sits down with a harsh realization that proving his innocence will not be easy.

The scene ends here and we see present time shot of Vlad wearing his shirt. Then another scene of right after the trial follows showing the guards asking Adrian why he didn't accept the accusations, as the sentence would be much shorter. He is then beaten by the other criminals in the jail. Adding the scene exacerbates the effect of what is coming later as Eliza makes her false accusations.

We go back to the courtroom with an establishing shot of the courthouse again. Adrian's lawyer invites Eliza as the witness to prove that Adrian was in another part of the city during the incident. As Eliza enters, Adrian, his mother and brother get hopeful, believing her testimony could help him. Eliza walks before the grand jury and swears on the Bible to tell the truth. She confirms that Adrian is her boyfriend and that she saw him on the day of the incident. Her answers relieve Adrian's mother. Eliza then recounts a memory when Adrian asked her to marry her, but she declined. Adrian's mother visibly gets distressed and Adrian rises from his seat to call out 'Eliza!'

At that very moment, Eliza's father and sister quietly enter the courtroom and take their seats at the back of the audience. Eliza continues, claiming that lately Adrian has changed to become violent and aggressive after returning from working on a ship, and that she is afraid of him. Adrian jumps to his feet again calling 'Eliza.' She looks at his father and Adrian follows her gaze. With tears rolling down her face, Eliza says Adrian has been asking her questions about the casino. Adrian stands up and demands to know why she is doing this. The guards force him to sit and Eliza looks at her father before continuing with difficulty, saying that after rejecting Adrian's proposal he became very angry and violent, threatened her, saying he would be so rich that she would regret it. She adds that he said he was going to do something that night that he had been in his mind for a long time.

Adrian stands up with anger and passes the defendant's dock and yells 'Why are you doing this to me!' He runs near Eliza, confronts her face to face while the guard struggles to hold him back. He asks again why she is doing this to him. Eliza apologizes, but Adrian keeps yelling the same sentence. Eliza is escorted out, while Adrian shouts and cries on the guard's shoulder. Adrian's brother and mother look after Eliza, in shock. The scene ends with Adrian crying in agony, with police surrounding him.

3.1.3.2 Characters

The protagonist is depicted similarly in each version although how they react differ slightly. For example, in the Turkish version, we see the protagonist in pain of the betrayal and suffers shame in front of his parents but he doesn't cry at all. Even when he shouts after Eysel after her false testimony, he grimaces and throughout the scene he is sweaty with anxiety but he doesn't cry. The Mexican version and the Romanian version on the other hand, show the tears in the eyes of the protagonist during the false accusations and at the end when the woman he loved leaves the room we see the protagonist crying with the pain of the betrayal. Showing the fragile side of masculinity in the Mexican and the Romanian versions elevates the emotional impact of the scene as we see them suffering and breaking down with betrayal.

The portrayal of the protagonist's lover remains largely consistent across all three adaptations; however, each version introduces subtle yet significant emotional nuances. In the Turkish version, Eysel is depicted as emotionally restrained and composed. Although her inner struggle is predictable, she maintains a stoic demeanor throughout the courtroom scene, only allowing her emotions to surface once she leaves the courtroom. She holds her tears as she walks away and she cries when nobody is around. In contrast, the Mexican version presents Sara as similarly reserved, yet her vulnerability is more

visible with subtle cues such as her deep breaths and occasional tears in her eyes, signaling that it is not as easy to tell the lies. Her emotional restraint collapses as she leaves the courtroom and she begins to cry while Omar is shouting behind her. The Romanian version, on the other hand, portray Eliza as visibly distressed during the courtroom scene. She sheds tears as she delivers the false testimony and glances twice at her father twice, an action that suggests a higher emotional conflict compared to single glance observed in the other two versions. These variations not only reflect differing cultural norms around emotional expression but also highlight how adaptations can localize character portrayal through nuanced performance details.

Both the Turkish and the Romanian protagonist wear a light gray suit, which emphasizes the importance and formality of the trial, whereas the Mexican protagonist wears a white T-shirt and pants. Even though white is indicating innocence, compared to the other versions, his clothing remains negligent almost to prove that he knows that is not guilty and he will be cleared of the blame easily. His anticipation is not met as Sara makes a false testimony so his pain of the betrayal is deeper as he was rather relaxed about the case. Both the Turkish original and the Mexican version show the lover in black dress which goes in line with her betraying act. The Romanian version shows Eliza in a shirt and a brown cardigan-like jacket. She looks innocent yet she makes a false testimony and betrays Adrian. The contrast between the character's polished appearance and her emotional state might be a way to make her more complex. This ambiguity could make the audience question her motives and keep them invested as she interacts with the revenge-seeking protagonist, intensifying the conflict.

The Mexican version has the friends in the trial as well, but we don't see them in the original nor in the Romanian version. As the trial continues, we watch the cruel yet

anxious faces of the friends, but at the end when Omar shouts in pain behind Sara, Abel cries as well. His vulnerability is not expected so we doubt if he is regretful of the incident and the betrayal. In the Romanian version, the father leaves the courtroom after the presentation of the evidence and Adrian's insistence on claiming that he is innocent. It is not as clear if he is mad at him or just sad that the sentence is going to be longer but him leaving the trial increases the emotional toll on Adrian. On the other hand, the Turkish version shows a mad father figure as he believes that Ömer is actually guilty. This is especially harsh on Ömer as he is frantically trying to prove that he is not guilty but all the evidence shows otherwise.

3.1.3.3 Audiovisual Style

The Mexican version uses a lot of close ups of the characters, not only of the protagonist but also of Sara, the parents, brother and the friends. These close-ups heighten the emotional impact as we see the tears on the eyes and the shock in the faces. The medium and long shots are only used to show the bigger picture of the scene when there is an action, like when Omar jumps to his feet or when Sara walks to the witness corner. The high angle close-up on Sara's face reveals Omar's face in the background. Similar shots are used in the Turkish original as well. With the slight high angle shot of Omer, we can see his parents in the background, or with a slight high angle shot of Eyşan, we can see Ömer in the background. These high angle closeup shots with another character in the background help us to see both facial expressions at the same time and puts a pressure on the characters to emphasize the importance of the decisions on that moment.

In the Turkish original, the scene starts with a very long shot of Ömer entering the courtroom. Then the shots are mostly long and medium shots until Eyşan comes in to make the false testimony. When she speaks, we see more close-ups of Ömer, Eyşan,

Eyşan's father and Ömer's mother. There are a couple different shots used in this scene as well. When Ömer sees about the wife and the daughter of the killed security guard and hears the evidence the close-up rotates to give the sense of shock and fear. At the end of the scene, Ömer shouts at Eyşan asking her 'Who are you?' and we see Eyşan from his eyes and the guards force him down on the floor. We see the room through his eyes as he falls down and sees the legs of the guards and Eyşan in the background. This first person shot exacerbates the feeling of the scene as we are put in the place of the protagonist. At the end, the shot showing Eyşan leaving the courtroom is a low angle slanted shot, as to indicate that Ömer's life is upside down from now on.

The Romanian version uses a variety of shots but mostly medium and long shots. The establishing shot of the courthouse before showing the courtroom helps to set the serious and formal mood of the trial. The Romanian version also uses a very slow push-in pan on Eliza and Adrian on the corner with a long shot, or push-in pan on the characters faces as Eliza makes the false testimony. The push-in pan is very slight but it has the effect of slowly realizing the harsh truth of the betrayal by the love of the protagonist. Overall, the main difference between the Mexican and the Romanian version is the shot selections, with majorly close-ups in the Mexican version and more long shots in the Romanian version. The Turkish original seems to have a mixture of different kinds of shots with an addition of slanted and rotating shots to infuse the fear of the protagonist in the scene.

Music is a very powerful element in the Turkish version. Even years after, its soundtrack remains iconic and continues to enjoy popularity on social media. For this reason, it would be lacking for the research not to include the series' music. In the Turkish version, the use of music elevates the mood, while moments of silence emphasize the

reality. All versions make use of music, minimal in the Romanian version and the maximal in the Turkish version.

The Turkish version begins with a traditional string instrument called *baglama*, with suspenseful strings in the background. Then the *baglama* stops, the suspenseful strings continue, joined by drumlike echoes. During the evidence sequence, the music shifts to a sad string arrangement layered with the same drumlike echoes. The music stops right before Eyşan is called into the courtroom. Upon her entrance, we hear a sweet piano melody that is simple yet powerful. The melody is the signature melody of the series and closely tied to the love of Ömer to Eyşan. That sweet melody stops as soon as Eyşan starts to answer the questions. The exchange starts in silence, with no background music. Only when she lies about rejecting the marriage proposal does the music return forcefully, layering drumlike echoes with strings. The music falls silent again when we see Eyşan's father, leaving only the drum echoes. As the lies continue, more string layers and a faster tempo is added. When Ömer runs to her, sad strings and drums return, but the guards pin him down while Eyşan leaves, the same piano melody plays that played when she entered, more emotional than before.

In the Mexican version, the scene opens with an eerie string based background music, giving it an almost thriller-like quality. The music continues until Sara walks to the witness stand, stopping the moment the judge begins to speak. It returns as Sara begins lying about the events of the incident, as we see Omar reacting to her. The music stops shortly after, only to resume during the flashback of the friend pointing the gun and the love scene, this time with a softer, more peaceful piano melody. After that, as Omar jumps up to shout at Sara, the music gains drums and a slight increase in tempo, though not so

much. While timing of the music cues is effective, the music itself does not reach the emotional and thematic impact of the *Ezel* soundtrack.

The Romanian version has no music at the beginning, but small beats play as Adrian enters the courtroom. The suspenseful atmospheric music builds slightly as the grand jury enters. A minimal background piano beat is heard as the jury states that he can accept the accusations and receive a reduced sentence. The beat spikes when Adrian refuses. The flashbacks of the accidents are accompanied with echoed beats, with no music. A sad piano theme begins as Adrian looks at his father and maintains his refusal to accept the crime. The scene is then intercut with two other scenes, and the remainder of the courtroom sequence begins without any music.

Eliza enters without music; we do not hear any sound even the beats we heard in the first half. An echoed beat is placed when she says she did not accept the marriage proposal. From that moment on, minimal suspenseful atmospheric music plays in the background, gradually growing louder and more tense as she lies. As Eliza looks at her father, a suspenseful melody emerges, fading after she looks away. When Adrian jumps to his feet to shout after Eliza, the music swells into a powerful, suspenseful drum driven rhythm. Unlike the Turkish version, there is neither a sad nor a sweet melody accompanying the entrance of the protagonist's lover. This omission removes the possible emotional pain and instead highlights the possible repercussions of the betrayal and false testimony. The sole purpose of the music and sound here is to heighten the suspense and deliver the shock of betrayal at the very end.

3.1.3.4 The Use/Design of Space and Time

The use of time is very unique in this series. Not only the original, but the remakes are also using nonlinear storytelling style. This nonlinearity is achieved through

flashbacks in time, almost parallel to the present time. So, we keep watching two stories at the same time; the first one is the Ömer and his past with his family, love and friends, the second one is the present time with Ezel (Yago and Vlad) meeting the long-lost friends after years in a new identity. The flashbacks are frequent throughout the series and the first episode. However, the scene selected in this case also uses this trick to change the design of time.

All three versions use flashbacks to remind the audience about the gun in his friend's hand the day before. We are reminded that Ömer actually held the gun to save Eysan from this drunk recklessness but Ömer also realizes that something is wrong and his friend might be involved in the incident. Another flashback of the evidence worn by the same friend Cengiz also shows that Ömer is betrayed by his dear friend Cengiz. These flashbacks are used in all versions after the appearance of the evidence in the trial. However, the Romanian version uses more flashbacks to show short clips of the incident even though Adrian was not there. While the grand jury reads the details of the incident, the related short clips increase the reality of the events.

The Romanian version uses a special trick to emphasize the gruesome act of the friends and the love of the protagonist. It divides the scene with a present time of Adrian, but more importantly, they add the scene happening after the trial before Eliza's false testimony. That brings us to the immediate result of her betrayal in the jail as the guards ask him why he didn't accept the guilt and reduce the sentence and as the other criminal beat him up. That scene is only the beginning of all the horrible effects of the betrayal of Eliza and his friends. Right after this scene, the twist in time, we watch the scene of Eliza's false testimony which is now charged with emotional intensity. The audience is positioned to feel anger towards Eliza and sympathy for Adrian.

The design of the space is different in each version, which is probably because of the different law and trial systems in each country. Where the judge is sitting, where the witness and the defendant are standing differs. For example, in the Turkish original *Ezel*, we watch Ömer standing right in front of the judge, with security guards next to him. His stance indicates that he is the criminal who can run away or do something outrageous at any minute. In the Mexican and the Romanian versions, the protagonist sits on the side of the courtroom to defend themselves. A police officer stands next to the Romanian protagonist whereas the lawyer sits next to the Mexican one. The space is ample in the Romanian version, the grand courtroom makes the protagonist smaller on the side, which shows him even more powerless. However, the Mexican version has a smaller space with a gloomy and jammed atmosphere. The Mexican courtroom almost imitates the constricted nature of the protagonist, as he is cramped between the lies and the betrayal. The Turkish original has a relatively large courtroom, which has a dull atmosphere with all wooden walls, fences and seats.

Although the Romanian version has wooden walls and furniture, the atmosphere is much colder because of the blueish color grading in the scene. In contrast, the Turkish version adopts a warmer yellow-toned grading, which is probably influenced by the style characteristic of the broadcast channel ATV. The distinct color treatments affect the atmosphere and emotional tone of the scene to make the Turkish courtroom nostalgic and sad, and make the Romanian courtroom cold and formidable. The Mexican version has wooden walls and furniture as well but we don't really notice it because instead of the space, the camera focuses on the faces of the characters. There is also a blur effect in the Mexican version probably to exacerbate the effect of the flashback, so it contributes to the use of time.

3.2 *Doctor Foster* (2015) and Its Adaptations *The World of the Married* (2020) in South Korea and *Sadakatsiz* (2020) in Türkiye

3.2.1 *Summary of the Series*

Doctor Foster (2015) a British series, follows the unraveling life of Gemma Foster, a successful doctor. Her world is shattered when she discovers a strand of blonde hair on her husband Simon's scarf. This seemingly insignificant detail sparks suspicion, leading Gemma down a dark path of uncovering potential infidelity. She discovers that not only her husband cheats on her with a very young woman, but also their friends are part of this deception. They all knew about this woman and spent time together keeping this as a secret. The series meticulously portrays the emotional turmoil Gemma experiences: denial, confrontation, and the struggle to rebuild her sense of self.

The series intricately explores themes of trust, betrayal, and revenge, as Gemma navigates the complexities of her crumbling marriage and friendships and the consequences of her actions. Through its compelling narrative and complex characters, the series offers a nuanced portrayal of the psychological and emotional toll of marital discord and infidelity. The series delves into the complexities of human relationships, particularly the erosion of trust within a seemingly happy marriage and the destructive power of secrets and lies. As Gemma meticulously investigates Simon's potential affair, the narrative explores themes of deceit, gaslighting, and the psychological toll of emotional manipulation. It critiques the societal expectation of maintaining a perfect marriage and explores the resilience of a woman forced to confront a devastating truth. The series compels viewers to consider the boundaries of trust, the impact of deception, and the potential for personal strength in the face of betrayal. Gemma's journey is

characterized by moral ambiguity and ethical dilemmas, as she grapples with questions of loyalty, justice, and personal integrity.

3.2.2 Contextual Analysis

3.2.2.1 TV and Network System

Doctor Foster, the British original drama, aired on BBC One starting in September 2015. It was a 5-episode series but due to its popularity a second series which is like the second season of another 5 episodes, was produced and broadcasted in November 2017. The writer Mike Bartlett was inspired by the Greek tragedy *Medea*, and the 5-episode season mirrors the classical 5 act storytelling structure. In *Medea*, after her husband betrayed her, the character takes a calculated and devastating revenge taking her actions too far even to the act of killing her own children. The tragedy has been reimagined and retold across different mediums to tell the story of rage, blurred lines of justice and vengeance. In *Doctor Foster*, the underlying inspiration is apparent in the thrilling atmosphere with Gemma's strategic revenge and coping with betrayal. However, for the second series, Bartlett adopts more modern storytelling while retaining the 5-episode structure (Lawson, 2018). In the second season, two years have passed since Gemma's revenge, and her husband returns. This season explores the aftermath of revenge in a modern context. Each episode lasts 60 minutes, allowing for a deep exploration of the protagonist's emotional journey and the unraveling of a devastating betrayal. Notably, the series aired on Tuesdays at 9 pm, a timeslot traditionally reserved for popular and critically acclaimed programs. The selection of this specific broadcast time suggests BBC's confidence in *Doctor Foster*'s ability to resonate with a broad audience.

The World of the Married, the South Korean version, serves as a successful remake of *Doctor Foster*. Aired on JTBC, a pay television network in South Korea, in March 2020, the series captured Korean audiences with its exploration of marital infidelity and its devastating consequences. Even though KBS, MBC, and SBS are the main network stations to broadcast Korean Dramas (Tingyin, 2019) JTBC achieved a very high viewership with this series. Unlike *Doctor Foster*'s 60-minute format, *The World of the Married* offered extended episodes ranging from 75 to 92 minutes, potentially granting a deeper dive into the emotional turmoil and complexities of the narrative. This extended runtime, combined with its placement on a pay TV platform, suggests a targeted approach intended for a more engaged audience seeking a more intense viewing experience. Additionally, the series comprised a single season with 16 episodes, hinting at a potentially more elaborate adaptation willing to deviate from the original's structure. It aired on Fridays and Saturdays at 10:50 pm with an R rating (Ji-won, 2020). The late-night broadcast schedule and the "+19" rating mandated by the Korean Juvenile Protection Act highlight the show's mature themes and potentially graphic content. This aligns with the series' focus on adult relationships and the emotional devastation caused by infidelity.

Sadakatsiz the Turkish adaptation of *Doctor Foster*, aired on FOX from October 2020 to May 2022, captivating Turkish audiences with its portrayal of a shattered marriage. Unlike its British and Korean versions, *Sadakatsiz* adopted a significantly longer format, with each episode lasting for 120 minutes. This extended runtime allowed for a potentially more detailed exploration of the emotional journey of the protagonist, Asya, as she deals with the discovery of her husband's infidelity. The series has 2 seasons and 60 episodes. This extensive commitment suggests a focus on a nuanced and in-depth

portrayal of the emotional fallout from betrayal, potentially delving deeper into character motivations and the societal impact of infidelity within a Turkish context. *Sadakatsiz* occupied a prime-time slot on FOX, airing between 8 pm and 12 pm. This coveted broadcast window indicates the network's belief in the series' ability to attract a large and engaged viewership. Additionally, the prime-time placement suggests that the exploration of marital infidelity, a prevalent theme across all three adaptations, resonated with Turkish audiences despite its potentially sensitive nature.

3.2.2.2 Production Aspects

Doctor Foster was a joint production of BBC and DramaRepublic, highlighting the network's commitment to high-quality dramatic content. Hertfordshire is the filming location. The choice of this idyllic, semi-rural environment could serve to heighten the sense of disruption and violation experienced by the protagonist. The leading actress is Suranne Jones, a renowned actress who has been nominated and won many awards in the United Kingdom. Bertie Carvel, who plays the protagonist's husband Simon Foster is also a successful actor.

The World of the Married was produced by JTBC studios, which is also the broadcaster of the series. The production by JTBC Studios further underscores the network's investment in the series and its confidence in its ability to resonate with Korean audiences. The series not only focuses on betrayal and the emotions of the main character but also the people around her. This choice of storytelling is also reflected in the name of the series *The World of The Married* in contrast with the name *Doctor Foster* which only focuses on the protagonist (Ji-won, 2020). Interestingly, the series is set in Gosan, a fictional city. This choice allows for a more controlled depiction of Korean society and cultural norms while still reflecting the universality of themes explored, such as betrayal,

revenge, and the struggle to rebuild one's life after a devastating emotional blow. The leading actress Kim Hee-ae is a very famous actress in South Korea. The actor who plays her husband Park Hae-joon is also an experienced actor, although not as famous as Kim Hee-ae. This casting choice might have been related to the story of the series to emphasize the strong nature of the protagonist and the weaker portrayal of her husband.

Sadakatsiz is produced by Medyapım and Mednova, the series benefited from the established expertise of these production companies, known for delivering high-quality Turkish dramas. The filming location, Tekirdağ, a city in northwestern Türkiye, adds another layer to the adaptation. Unlike *The World of the Married* with its fictional setting, *Sadakatsiz* directly confronts the realities of Turkish society. This choice grounds the narrative and allows for a nuanced portrayal of social expectations, cultural norms, and the potential consequences of infidelity within a specific Turkish context. The leading actress Cansu Dere is a very famous actress in Türkiye, who has also played in other renowned series such as *Ezel*, the other case study in this dissertation. Caner Cindoruk, starring as the husband Volkan, is also a famous and experienced actor in Türkiye.

3.2.2.3 Audience Reception

Although *Doctor Foster* had only five episodes, the series was very successful and received good critics in the press. In fact, the series was so successful that many remakes were done after its broadcast. About 10 million viewers watched the season finale of *Doctor Foster* and talked a lot on twitter, mostly unhappy with the audience wishing for a better vengeance on her husband for the ending (Cockroft, 2015). On average, 8.9 million viewers watched the first season episodes, and BBC director of contents took the praise as being the most-talked drama of the year (GazetteStandard, 2017). The first series was sold to over 266 international territories, and sold to Russia

for a remake in 2017. Then the production of the second series for BBC One was decided (TheHerald, 2017).

The World of the Married was the highest rated drama ever in the cable TV history with viewer share of 24.3% and over 6% of all viewers when it first aired in South Korea. Since South Korea has the highest divorce rate among the OECD countries, the women felt closer to the protagonist and felt betrayal in the drama related to their own lives. Moreover, until 2015, in South Korea adultery was a crime with sentences reaching two years (Kim, 2020). A lot of people shared their own experiences and anger on social media as they watched the drama. There were also critics saying that the series placed a big importance on betrayal and divorce as to claim a traumatized life forever. Whether criticizing or praising, the audience talked about the series a lot which increased the overall interest in the series. One advantage of the timing was that it was streamed on Netflix during the lockdown of the pandemic, so people tuned in for the series with all their time and interest.

The audience viewing and retention cannot be compared in three versions because they are all broadcasted in three different mediums. *Doctor Foster* was broadcasted in a public TV channel, which affects the insights because public channels have government fundings and the high rating would not be that big of a problem. *The World of the Married*, on the other hand, was broadcasted on pay television, and was not free to every household in South Korea. Later, it was also streamed on Netflix, which resulted in a global audienceship. *Sadakatsiz* on the other hand was broadcasted on a private channel free to every household in Türkiye, and there is a clear list of ratings for each episode of the series (fav10.net, 2023) and the series was always in the top five in the lists with considerably high ratings.

3.2.3 Textual Analysis

3.2.3.1 Narrative Structure

Gemma's realization of the betrayal is not sudden; on the contrary, there are stages of suspicion where she doubts that her husband might be cheating on her. The subject of suspicion grows as she confronts different clues throughout the episode. The first clue is a lipstick she finds in her husband's pocket, but she quickly eliminates the suspicion. Next, she finds a strand of blond hair on her husband's scarf. She then starts to analyze every blond woman she encounters. Later, she hires a young woman in return for a sleeping pill prescription to follow her husband. That patient follows the husband and sees that he is indeed with another woman, but she cannot see her face. This leads to the climax of the episode, where Gemma learns all about the betrayal and the details.

Just before her husband's birthday party, Gemma searches her husband's car upon her patient's suggestion and she finds a bag of proof of betrayal. Hidden under the floor of the trunk of the car, the bag includes new underwear, clothes and a phone. The phone's screen has a picture of a couple, her husband and a young woman she knows. Her husband has been cheating on her with the daughter of Gemma's patient and her husband's prospective job sponsor. They are all at the birthday party. After somewhat recovering from the first shock, she gets into the pictures in the gallery of the phone, only to find out that her friends are also in this scheme. There are many pictures of her friends spending time together at a dinner, picnic and different events. From the back of the car, Gemma looks at all the happy people at the birthday party, the people who have been betraying her for all this time. There are two critical points in the first episode: when Gemma learns for certain that she is being cheated by her husband, and when she realizes that her friends

were also part of this betrayal. These two critical points unfold the dramatic conflicts that the character experiences.

The second critical point is the turning point in the story where Gemma learns about everything, breaking the dramatic irony of the narrative. From that point on, she has to decide what to do with her husband and her friends. Although she is shaken from the news, she collects herself and joins others in the birthday party and kisses her husband, signaling what she will do with all the things she has just learned. She will not leave them, instead she will stay and fight to take revenge on them all. That kiss heightens the dramatic conflict because she knows that her husband cheats on her, but her husband doesn't know that she knows. As she keeps this knowledge a secret, the dramatic conflict between the husband, the woman he cheats with, and the friends escalates.

The betrayal scene is that scene where she searches for the proof at the trunk of the car, finds the pictures and joins the birthday party. This scene is analyzed in three versions and discussed later with the findings.

3.2.3.1.1 The Scene: Doctor Foster Episode 1 - 48:40 - 53:00

Gemma arrives at the place where her husband's birthday takes place, carrying the birthday cake. She sends her son off to play and notices her husband standing next to the woman she has been suspicious of. They wave at her joyfully. Then her husband Simon approaches her, excited yet flustered, and asks her where she has been. She asks for his car's keys, claiming she needs to search for the earrings she dropped earlier. In the previous scene, her cooperative patient, who had followed Simon and seen him with a woman, had warned Gemma about his car. Gemma knows there is something in Simon's car. Simon reluctantly hands her the keys, tells her to hurry, and then continues to greet the guests. Gemma approaches the car but briefly turns back to watch the scene. A car

arrives; it belongs to the family they had been spending time with. Susie, the wife of the family they know, hugs Simon and Gemma gets nervous, almost certain that Susie is the woman Simon is having an affair with. Gemma opens the trunk and searches but there is nothing but a boring magazine. Then she searches the back seat, the front seat, all the compartments and pockets in the car, but still finds nothing.

Just before she is about to give up, she pauses and returns to the trunk for one more search. She lifts the cover of the spare tire and finds a bag hidden next to it. She hurriedly empties the bag. Inside are a wallet with a credit card, some cash, a t-shirt and a phone. Gemma turns on the phone to see the biggest proof of the cheating: A picture of Simon with a young girl. Looking at the party crowd, she realizes that young girl is Susie's daughter. Gemma gasps with a shock and continues to scroll through the pictures of Simon and the girl. In one of them, she spots Simon's secretary, whom she had just talked to the day before.

She looks at the crowd at the party and sees her. Another photo shows the couple who are Simon and Gemma's friends and neighbors, happily spending time with Simon and this girl. They have all known about the affair. Gemma scans the crowd and spots them, all enjoying themselves. Then she opens the phone's messages, and finds one from her friend Ros at the hospital: "Gemma's left work early I think she's going to follow you" Gemma looks over at Ros, who is smiling and chatting with Gemma's son. Breathless and stunned, Gemma she realizes how big the betrayal is.

Then she puts the bag back exactly as she found it and walks to her own car. With fury and shaking hands, she takes a pair of scissors. and slips them into her pocket. Taking a deep breath, she walks toward the party, looking around at the guests as if everything's

is now in slow motion. All her friends look at her and ask where she'd been. Her eyes find the girl in the crowd.

3.2.3.1.2 The Scene: The World of the Married Episode 1 - 1:14:25 - 1:26:39

The scene begins with the protagonist's husband, Lee Tae-Oh, retrieving the birthday related boxes (such as beverages) from the trunk of his car. He gives a box to a waiter and carries another himself. Walking toward the birthday area, he greets the guests and acknowledges the birthday wishes with nods. A waiter takes the box from him and Lee Tae-oh approaches a table with food. A woman asks about his wife, Ji Sun-woo. 'Is she going to be late?' she asks. 'Yeah' he replies. After she leaves, he asks his son, who happens to be passing by, where his mom is. 'She is in the car,' the boy answers.

Then we see Sun-woo sitting in the car, watching the birthday festivities with tears in her eyes. From the other side of the venue, a car arrives. Go Ye-rim, one of Sun-woo's patients, steps out of the car with her famous businessman husband and her daughter. Sun-woo realizes the car license plate and checks the photo that she had received from her 'agent patient,' whom she had hired to follow her husband. The plate matches with the one in the photo, and Sun-woo becomes almost certain that this woman, whom she had spoken to just yesterday and met with her family a day before, is involved in an affair with her husband.

She watches Go Ye-rim handing a present to Lee Tae-oh. Then Sun-woo steps out of the car. Her husband approaches and asks why she's late. She ignores the question and asks for his car's keys, claiming she can't find the camera and it might be in his car. He says that she will find it later, but she takes the keys from his pocket herself, flirting as she says that this is a special day and she wants to take good pictures. Sending him away,

she walks toward his car. Meanwhile, in the background, we see the happy and festive birthday scene.

She opens the trunk: there are a few bottles, a spray cleaner, and a random dust cloth. Finding nothing, she checks the front seats, glancing twice at the birthday scene and at the suspicious Go Ye-rim. She opens the trunk once more, almost in tears from the desperation of searching for a clue. Just before closing the trunk again, she notices the cover on the trunk floor. She lifts the cover to see the handle that opens to the spare tire and next to it, a bag. She opens the bag and empties it in slow motion: a couple of clean underwear, a condom, a deodorant and a phone. With rage, she throws away the condom and turns on the phone, still glancing toward Go Ye-rim in the crowd. But the phone's wallpaper is not Go Ye-rim, it is her daughter, Yeo Da Kyeong. Go Ye-rim leans toward someone, and from her back, we see her daughter. Sun-woo remembers meeting her just the day before at Go Ye-rim's exhibition.

Shocked, Sun-woo takes a few steps back and continues to look through the pictures in the phone: couple selfies of her husband and the young girl, and group shots with her friends and neighbors. She can't believe it and searches the crowd for them. There they are, all having fun. She checks the messages on the phone: 'Sun-woo left early, she might be suspicious,' and 'be careful, hide your phone well.' These are from her friend at the hospital. Sun-woo covers her mouth with her fist and begins crying in the pain at the betrayal. She looks at the birthday area, and sees the very friends who have deceived her. Taking a few steps, she leans on a car and begins laughing hysterically as she watches the cheerful party.

Then she gets up, wipes her tears, puts the bag away, closes the trunk, takes deep breaths and slowly walks towards her car. Meanwhile, we hear a voice over of her

explaining that she had been betrayed by her friends as well. She retrieves scissors from the emergency doctor's kit in her trunk of her, closes it and fixes her gaze on the birthday area. Hiding the scissors behind her back, she walks toward the crowd and comes to face her husband.

3.2.3.1.3 The Scene: Sadakatsiz Episode 1 - 1:23:47 - 1:33:50

The birthday scene starts with Asya's (the protagonist) husband entering the birthday place with a box of fireworks. Volkan is happy and energetic as he greets the guests and answers the birthday wishes. He talks to his mom and hugs her. Next to them are the friends and the neighbors of Asya and Volkan. She asks 'Where have you been?' to him, they talk and this is when we switch back to Asya, sitting in the car, watching the birthday scene. She has a sullen face, watching her husband (who is cheating on her for sure as she has just learned in the previous scene from her 'agent' patient) talking to their son and asking about her. Her son says she is parking the car.

Then a car arrives at the birthday venue. Asya checks the car's license plate, comparing it the photo her patient sent her to confirm the affair. Yes, it is the car. We see the woman Asya suspects: Gönül, who is the wife of a famous businessman and Asya's patient. Their daughter, Derin, is also there. They approach the birthday area with a gift. Asya sits in the car, nearly in tears, convinced that Gönül is involved in the affair. Volkan greets them casually and then approaches to Asya to ask what she is doing in the car. She lies, 'they called from the hospital'. Then she gets out and asks for Volkan's car keys, lying again that she wants to take the camera from his car to take good pictures of the birthday to hang with the others. Volkan gives her the keys and gets the birthday cake from the trunk.

Asya goes to Volkan's car, opens the trunk and inspects the sports gloves, soccer shoes, emergency kit, window cleaning spray, and a soccer ball. Just before closing the trunk, she notices a small dent near the handle of the trunk floor. She lifts the spare tire cover and finds a bag. She empties it: a packet of clean underwear, a deodorant, a couple of clothing items and a phone. She turns on the phone to find out the wallpaper picture is Volkan with Gönül's daughter. Asya realizes she was wrong; Volkan was cheating on her with Derin, a much younger girl. Shocked by this photo, Asya glances at them in the crowd, sitting in the birthday area. She recalls meeting Derin at Gönül's exhibition the day before. Asya continues scrolling through the photos of Volkan and Derin, almost crying, and spots Derin at the party. Then she notices the couple who are their neighbors and friends in one of the pictures. They knew about the affair as well.

Bewildered with the news, she scans the crowd. Asya bites her fist and continues to examine the pictures. There are other photos of them together, also with Volkan's secretary. Asya finds her in the crowd as well. Then Asya checks the messages with shaky hands and reads her friend Derya's warning to Volkan, that Asya has left the hospital early. She spots Derya in the crowd. Meanwhile, Derya's voice reads the messages, 'I told you to be more careful', 'She learned about the hotel', 'I convinced her but it was hard', 'Hide your phone well', 'Watch out for Asya'.

Asya falls to her knees, crying and panting from the betrayal. She takes deep breaths, tidies the bag and puts it away, hearing all the lies she had heard from her 'friends'. Then all the voices stop and Asya looks at the happy group of friends who betrayed her. After a moment of consideration, she slowly opens her own car's trunk to retrieve scissors from her doctor's bag. As she walks toward the birthday area, a slow,

sad and eerie melody plays, followed by a voice over of Asya talking to the audience: she had it all, what more could she have wanted?

3.2.3.2 Characters

When we consider the leading characters as the protagonist and the husband, we see some differences between the versions. The protagonist is a strong independent woman with a happy work and family life. She looks rather emotionally distant in all versions. She appears to be restrained and her cool attitude signals the cold blooded revenge she is going to take. She is not a woman who screams and makes a scene under the spotlights. She is calm and composed, her revenge will surely be intricate. On the other hand, her husband is portrayed differently in the versions. First of all, in the original version, Simon is a confident and energetic character but the chemistry between Simon and Gemma is not sparkling. Simon is there for the marriage, but he is rather distant. We feel that Gemma is alone, and right about feeling all the suspicions.

Similarly, in the Korean version we don't watch the happy couple, we know or feel that something is off. Even the age difference is underlined in a few scenes. Even though they are of the same age, Sun-woo appears to be older and her husband appears to be diffident. In the Turkish version though we see a husband who is confident and energetic like Simon but he is also caring and loving towards Asya. So when we learn about the affair, we feel bad that this marriage will end. The Turkish version is successful in creating a dilemma in the audience as well, because we want the protagonist to take revenge but we are also sad that the marriage is shattered.

Similar to the Korean version, the scene opens with the husband of the protagonist in the Turkish version. In both versions we watch the husband walking towards the birthday area with a box in his hand. However, the character portrayals are very different.

Lee Tae-oh walks relatively insecure compared to Volkan, the Turkish version. Simon, in the English version, is also very confident as in the Turkish version.

3.2.3.3 Audiovisual Style

In the British original, the scene starts in a bright daylight, at the birthday place. As Gemma walks towards Simon, we see the colorful light bulbs, flags, and balloons decorating the outdoor space. Decor is giving a joyful birthday environment, which contrasts with the nervous attitude of Gemma. Simon wears a dark blue shirt whereas Gemma wears a light colored coat. The color contrast is also signaling the immaculate Gemma versus the cheating husband Simon. In the South Korean version, we also see a happy, bright environment. However, it is not as sunny as the British version, and the birthday area is decorated classier with white tablecloths, white tulles and yellow light bulbs, and a few colorful balloons. In this version, the protagonist wears dark colors whereas the husband wears a white shirt. This ironic choice of colors might not be on an agenda but the irony kind of helps as the protagonist lies and flirts with the husband to get the keys. On the other hand, the birthday area is not decorated at all in the Turkish version. There are no balloons, or colorful lanterns. There are barrels used as cocktail tables; the decor is bohemian chic with a relaxed elegance. The afternoon sun brightens up the mood and the people are dressed stylishly. We feel that it is a classy event even though there is minimal decor. Asya wears a light colored coat just like Gemma in the English original and Volkan wears a brown jacket over his white shirt. Volkan's colors almost mimics his characterization because he is not a villain nor an angel in the story. There are good parts of him in the deep, as he is still a supporting, caring and loving partner. However, just like his brown coat over his white shirt, he wears an affair that overshadows the happy marriage. Volkan has more dimensions than the other

representations of the husband so him wearing two contrasting colors is fitting to his character representation.

In all versions, there are a lot of close-ups of the protagonist and the phone she is holding while she searches and learns about the news. The close-ups are accompanied with the long shots of the birthday area and the characters that the protagonist realizes to be the betrayers. We see the betrayers in long shots with them being happy and joyful. These long shots are in between the close-ups or extreme close-ups of the upset and shocked face of the protagonist and the phone. However, in the Korean and Turkish versions we see a mixture of close-ups, long shots and medium shots as the protagonist searches and learns about the betrayal. In the Korean version, there is a close-up of Sunwoo's face with a slight high angle shot, just after she gets the keys of her husband's car and just before she goes to the car. This slight high angle close-up highlights the emotions of the character and signals the upcoming action. The long shots of her walking towards the car are followed by the sneaky shots from the front seat of the car as she searches the back of the car. There are other sneaky medium shots from near the surrounding cars which increases the effect of her doing something secret. In the Turkish version though, we see a low angle close-up on Asya's crying face when she learns about the girl. The low angle close up helps to emphasize her vulnerability while attributing her power in the situation. Also different from the other versions, the Turkish version uses slight push-in and pull-out pans on the face of Asya as she experiences the shock and looks at the birthday area. It is possible to conclude that there are more variety of shots in the Korean version whereas there are more variety of camera movements in the Turkish version.

In the British original, there is very minimal music in the background with a few notes, with atmospheric music helping to set the mood of the scene. The nervous

suspicion is achieved with the constant dramatic beats sounding like a pendulum. The music and the beat stops the moment Gemma sees the picture of her husband and the girl on the wallpaper of the phone. With this shocking news we only hear the heavy breaths of Gemma with a very low distant happy background crowd noise. She slips out a tiny cry of pain. Without the music, the scene is raw yet powerful. When Gemma checks the messages the music starts with that beat slowly and stops as she finds the text messages from her friend. At this moment the music and the beat stops again and we only hear the exacerbated breath of Gemma almost in a slowed version with an echo. The music slowly starts again when she grabs a pair of scissors from her bag and walks towards the birthday area. Clearly the presence and lack of music is following the character and opening the audio space for Gemma to feel and show all the emotions in silence.

In the Korean version, there is no music when the scene opens with the husband. When we see Sun-woo sitting in the car, watching the birthday scene with a sad expression is the time the music starts. Then the music slows and stops as she steps out of the car to talk to her husband. She searches the car and we hear more atmospheric music and a repetitive eerie melody that sets the nervous mood rather than actual music. The music stops just before she finds the cover on the trunk, and starts as she raises the cover and finds the bag. The music is both atmospheric and a melody slowly enters. As she empties the bag, the thuds of the objects are echoed. The constant melody of a few notes is divided as we hear the echoed laughter of the woman in the crowd.

Then she finds the phone and a layer of sound is added to the music, and when she sees the girl on the wallpaper the music enters the violin and piano enters. She lives the shock and takes a step back as the music slows down. When she sees the messages from her friend, another music enters with constant melody added to the scene, with a

distribution of an echoed laughter of her friends from the birthday area. An impressive orchestra music sets the mood of the scene and we hear Sun-woo's crying laughter. Then she gathers herself and the music stops. It is all silent as she walks to her own car. The music slowly enters as she gets the scissors from her bag. The music gets higher and the entrance of the chorus elevates the dark mood of the scene as she walks towards the birthday area with a pair of scissors behind her back. Like in the English version, the existence and the lack of music helps to highlight the important moments in the scene. However, just like the abundance of shots and angles, the variety and existence of music, echoes and sounds are more in the South Korean version.

The Turkish version starts with minimal music in the background. The music increases as we see Asya sitting in the car watching the birthday scene with a sad face. The music stops when her husband comes to talk to her. Later, suspenseful music starts as she searches the car. Just before she sees the picture the music stops and starts after she experiences the first shock and pain of the betrayal. When Asya sees her friends in the picture, the music changes, but still with the same mood of suspense. When she reads the messages from her friend spying on her for Volkan, we hear the messages by Derya as a voice over. Later we hear other voice overs from her friends, Volkan and his secretary, all lying to her. The use of voice overs is different when compared to the other versions because the Turkish version is almost reminding the audience that these lies had been told before. After the voice overs, the music slows down until Asya goes to get the scissors from the back of her car. At that moment the music changes to a repetitive piano melody with an eerie mood. The music increases with added layers of instruments as she walks towards the birthday area. Meanwhile we hear Asya voice over, asking 'What more would I want?' just like in the Korean version.

3.2.3.4 The Use/Design of Space and Time

There are two spaces within the scene: the jolly birthday area and the car park. The birthday area is all colorful, full of happy and smiling people in all versions. This happiness in the open birthday space is juxtaposed with the shock and learning of the betrayal at the trunk of the car. Where the protagonist is learning the news is relatively colorless and dull, in a smaller space. All versions achieve this contrast and we come back and forth between the protagonist learning of the betrayal at the back of the car and the people having fun in the birthday area. This duality exacerbates the effect of the betrayal because the emotional pain is contrasted to the joy and vivacity of the guests, especially the friends and husband who have betrayed her.

In the Korean version, Sun-woo parks her car at the other end of the birthday area. She doesn't park at the regular parking area, where many cars park. This option divides the space once more (in addition to the division between the birthday area and the parking space). We see Sun-woo walking towards her husband's car slowly passing by the trees, full of suspicion, and determined to find something in the car. And after she learns of the betrayal, she again walks on the same passage of trees in a different mood, in despair and pain. Her car being in a separate place highlights her separation from the crowd. She is all alone in a happy crowd, just like the single car on the other side of the parking space.

The use of time is similar in all versions with one flashback in the scene where the protagonist remembers the woman her husband cheats her with. She remembers the exhibition of the mother of the mistress and how she introduced her to the daughter. This flashback is accompanied with the shot of the girl from a distance in the birthday place as the protagonist looks at her from afar. The flashback creates a tiny disruption in the flow of the time as the protagonist remembers and realizes that she did not have a trace

of suspicion about her back then. This disruption in time is so tiny but necessary to show the shocking effect of the news. Furthermore, in the Turkish version there are more flashbacks like when she slowly walks towards the birthday area with a scissors in her pocket, a flashback of their marriage enters, she walks a few steps and another flashback of her son's baby times enters. Also as she learns about her friend's messages, she remembers her convincing talks with fast flashbacks.



4. ANALYSIS

The previous chapter examines the contextual and textual details of the selected scenes of the series in the case study. The contextual analysis offers significant insights about the television and drama industries in different countries whereas the textual analysis focuses on the narrative elements. This dual perspective helps to examine the dramas with a layered analysis that offers insights about both the entertainment sector and the story itself. When we dive into the contextual part of the analysis we can consider the dramas as commodities. After all, the dramas are sold, bought and consumed in the television market. On the other hand, when we look at the narrative elements in the textual analysis we see the sociological aspect of the dramas. The adaptation of certain stories across different languages and cultures becomes even more fascinating when we examine the exact scene adaptations. The way a story is chosen to be told and the implications of these choices play a crucial role in interpreting the textual elements of dramas. These interpretations can be guided by discussions of masculinity to explain and make sense of the findings.

4.1 Betrayal as a Challenge to Masculinity

It is important to note that both stories selected for the case study revolve around themes of betrayal and revenge. The thematic proximity of betrayal and vengeance ensures a shared basis that builds a strong framework. However, a striking difference lies in the gender of their protagonists: *Ezel* and its adaptations portray betrayal and revenge through a male protagonist, whereas *Doctor Foster* and its adaptations explore these themes through a female protagonist. This mirror difference between two series offers an opportunity to discover the gender proximities that are closely tied to cultural details. By

selecting series with both female and male protagonists, the analysis establishes a balance that enables a mirrored comparison in *Ezel* and *Doctor Foster* with a perspective allows for a deeper examination of how gender influences not only the portrayal of betrayal and vengeance but also the associated emotional expressions, societal expectations, and narrative trajectories. Within this trajectory of research framework, how emotions are handled when faced with betrayal is discussed with emotional and genre proximities. By comparing these stories, we can critically analyze how masculinity and femininity are constructed, negotiated, and challenged within the framework of transnational adaptations.

4.1.1 The False Testimony in Ezel and Its Adaptations

If there is a word to describe the theme of betrayal in the scene selected for this series, it is “false testimony”. However, false testimony is a very loaded term as it carries the betrayal of the lover and the friends, and includes a heavy incident that resulted in the death of an innocent man. Therefore, the betrayal is so serious that it is beyond infidelity or backstabbing. This betrayal results in a life sentence of an innocent friend and lover. The selected scene depicts the protagonist discovering the betrayal, yet remaining unaware of the full extent and the details. However, he realizes that on the day of his drunken confrontation, Cengiz was wearing the jacket and holding the gun which are the main evidence of the trial.

The protagonist’s way of coping with betrayal differs across versions. The Turkish version refrains from showing the protagonist cry, yet his agony is apparent through his expressions and the music. The Turkish original relies heavily on the music to tell what is the emotion of the moment. We hear the sweet melody of love when Eyşan enters and we hear sad strings music when the evidence is called. The theme of betrayal

is paired with the melody of Eyşan throughout the series; we hear that melody in different moods, sometimes somber, sometimes sweet. Thus, the use of music is like a key to presenting the emotions and the theme of betrayal.

On the other hand, the Romanian version employs techniques such as flashbacks of the incident and interspersing the trial scene with post-trial moments to heighten the intensity of the betrayal. The betrayal of the lover is the one that we witness in the scene but with the flashbacks and knowing what happens after, we sense the betrayal of the friends as well. In this way the betrayal of the friends is conveyed through the fragmented narrative. Additionally, as the protagonist cries on the shoulder of the guard after Eyşan leaves, the audience feels the raw pain of the betrayal more profoundly than the fear of what is coming next. The combination of vulnerability and rage in the protagonist's emotional outburst serves as a simple yet powerful tool to communicate the depth of his anguish.

Similarly, in the Mexican version we see the protagonist crying as the love of his life lies. However, the crying is also accompanied with anger at the end. Just as in the Turkish original, the Mexican version also uses the music to give the sense of suspense and pain, but the scene is the shortest and the most to the point among the others and music alone would not be enough to convey the theme of betrayal. Instead, using majorly close-ups shots of faces help us to see the feelings of the characters and exacerbates the gravity of the situation.

In the context of masculinity, expressions of vulnerability and crying are often socially stigmatized, while anger is certainly a more acceptable response to emotional turmoil. We see the Romanian and Mexican protagonists crying in response to the learning of the betrayal by the lover and friends. Crying challenges conventional norms

of masculinity by exposing a raw, unguarded response that contradicts the stoic and resilient archetype. On the other hand, the Turkish protagonist does not cry and even though we watch him being in emotional pain, we see his sorrowful grimace accompanied by a level of anger. It is possible that *Ezel* refrains from showing tears of a male character as to comply with the masculine imperatives of its filming time. *Ezel* was made in 2009, and those times the stories were tale-like or heroic, but conventional stories tend to portray realistic characters who are open to show their emotions. In recent Turkish series, many male characters do not hide their tears.

Anger aligns with dominant masculine ideals, reinforcing notions of strength and control even in the face of profound emotional pain. In *Yago* and *Vlad*, moments of tears are juxtaposed with intense anger, highlighting an inner conflict between perceived weakness and a desire to reclaim power through vengeance. Even though we see the protagonists cry in these versions, we also see their anger. By depicting both crying and rage, these series complicate traditional masculinity, suggesting that even the most hardened characters cannot escape moments of vulnerability. This duality underscores the transformative potential of betrayal, as it forces male characters to navigate the tension between socially sanctioned anger and the personal turmoil that manifests through tears.

Nevertheless, whether the protagonist cries or not, tension and vulnerability are apparent in all versions with the use of camera movements, sound, music and cinematography orchestrating emotional and cultural proximity. These moments also engage genre proximity, as each version follows the conventions of suspense and melodramatic narratives to frame vulnerability within culturally specific notions of masculinity. The vulnerable moment of the betrayed protagonist in the courtroom raises the stakes of vengeance. Variations in emotional expressions with a shared plot underlines

the transnational power of betrayal and shows how adaptations negotiate local and global expectations of manhood and masculine identities.

4.1.2 The Evidences of Betrayal in Doctor Foster and Its Adaptations

The selected scene depicts the moment the protagonist learns about the betrayal of her husband and her dear friends. Not only does she learn that her husband is cheating with a much younger girl that they all know, but also she realizes that all of her friends had been involved in this secret and took part in the betrayal. Therefore, the scene is full of harsh truths and emotions. Interestingly, the different versions of the series present the scene with different choices of narrative and audiovisual details, character portrayals and distinctive uses of space and time.

The British original is slow in nature but the scene is short and to the point. There are no unnecessary details, the story is told in the most succinct way possible. We see a linear narrative with little dialogue with the husband and a second of a flashback of the girl in the affair. All three versions follow the protagonist in learning of the betrayal, but the Korean and Turkish version uses more embellished storytelling with the echoes of laughter, voice overs, flashbacks and instrumental music. Moreover, the portrayal of the husband is not confident in the Korean version. The insecure husband portrayal affects the gender power dynamics in the scene. The protagonist is a strong woman in all versions, but in the South Korean version the husband's unconfident appearance insinuates the reason for the betrayal. On the other hand, in the British original and the Turkish version, the confident and caring husband makes his affair all the harder to believe and digest.

All versions use the power of silence at the moment of seeing the girl's picture on the phone wallpaper. The silence and the gasp of the protagonist elevates the emotional

effect as we see the pain of betrayal. However, the British original continues the scene without music to emphasize the raw emotions and agony of the protagonist. Only a single piano note, almost like a ringing in the ears, is added to the learning of the betrayal. And a slight atmospheric sound as she walks towards the birthday scene after learning everything. Meanwhile, except for a few moments, the background music almost never stops in the Turkish version. These silent moments are either to make the upcoming second more effective with shocking news to the character followed by a powerful beat of music starting again, or the dialogue scene with the husband. Just as in the Korean version, strings and piano are used in the music and the mood is nervous and suspenseful. On the other hand, the English original uses minimal atmospheric sounds like the repetitive beats or piano keys to establish the mood rather than relying on the music with various instruments. There is no voice over in the British version and the only flashback is right after she sees the girl's picture on the phone. The flashback is one or two seconds long, enough to remind the audience that we had seen her at yesterday's exhibition.

The Korean version is the only adaptation that effectively utilizes spatial design to convey the emotional impact of betrayal. The protagonist parks her car at the opposite end of the birthday area, and we watch her walk to and from her husband's car in the parking lot before and after discovering the truth. This passage between the trees, with the birthday area visible in the background, metaphorically represents the distance between realities; the harsh truth and the blissful illusion. The place itself transforms into a liminal space, highlighting the protagonist's transition from suspicion to certainty.

In all versions, the protagonist watches the happy crowd gathered in the birthday area, visually emphasizing her sense of isolation and emotional disconnection. However, the Korean version further enhances this effect by placing the car at a considerable

distance, physically separating her from the celebration. The act of parking separately from the celebratory crowd also symbolically isolates her from the circle of happiness that her husband and friends share, emphasizing her emotional distance. The echoed laughter of the woman she suspects reverberates through this space, heightening the sense of unease and intensifying the feeling of betrayal. The deliberate use of spatial separation and sound amplifies the protagonist's psychological journey, making the revelation all the more impactful.

The Turkish version seems to be using the flashbacks and voice overs to scale up the emotions by reminding the good old days and the relentless lies. In the flashback of the marriage, the husband directly looks and talks to the camera telling the vows. This choice helps the audience to put themselves in the place of Asya and increases the effect of emotions paired with the betrayal such as anger, pain, disbelief, realization and agony. The variety of camera angles and shots in the South Korean version corresponds to a variety of camera movements and shots in the Turkish version whereas the British version mostly uses close-ups of the protagonist's face to show us how she is handling this hard situation.

These narrative and audiovisual choices reflect not only cultural differences but also nuanced portrayals of masculinity and femininity across the adaptations, illustrating how proximity functions on multiple levels. In each version, the female protagonist's reaction to betrayal highlights a complex negotiation of gender expectations where strength and vulnerability coexist. The confident and caring portrayal of the husband in the English and Turkish versions subtly reinforces traditional masculinity, making his betrayal more shocking and difficult to accept. In contrast, the Korean version's depiction of an insecure husband challenges dominant masculine ideals, suggesting that his

perceived inadequacy may have fueled his infidelity. This portrayal shifts some of the responsibility for the betrayal onto his fragile masculinity, whereas in the other versions, the husband's confidence exacerbates the sense of betrayal. The strong and resolute nature of the female protagonist contrasts with the husband's actions, reframing traditional gender roles and questioning societal expectations of male dominance and female submissiveness. In each version, the female protagonist's reaction to betrayal creates emotional proximity that is further reinforced with cinematography, spatial framing and sound design, which creates a shared experience of strength and vulnerability even when cultural codes differ. The shared struggle to keep the family together and adopt masculine traits in the face of betrayal connects the cultural and gender proximities.

4.2 Revenge as a Masculine Imperative

Revenge is used as an emotional arch for the characters in both stories. It is what drives the story to continue; we watch the characters go after who wronged them. *Ezel* and its adaptations portray the betrayed male character as an anti-hero and his journey of taking revenge as a heroic act. The cold and distant stance and his intricate plan for vengeance appears strong and fitting. However, when the betrayed female character in *Doctor Foster* and its adaptations want to take revenge, she is not portrayed as a heroic female. Although her journey of taking revenge is what makes the series continue, the character's emotional strength and her intricate plans appear unconventional.

In *Ezel*, Ezel's masculinity is built upon stoicism, emotional detachment, and strength. His vengeance is a calculated plan of going after the people who wronged him. However, despite his intricate plan, his emotions interfere and the plan is not perfect. He uses his charm on women seeking to regain his masculinity. On the other hand, Gemma in *Doctor Foster* also appears stoic and her emotional restraint symbolizes her resentment

for life. Her revenge highlights a series of acts from public humiliation to cheating on her husband with his friend. She is a character who reclaims her power through the use of infidelity, a form of revenge that serves to subvert the traditional role of women as passive victims of male action.

The stories differ in their take of betrayal and revenge. In *Ezel*, we see the male characters in the vengeance game, often with power struggle, violence, and being active, whereas the female characters appear passive and a part of the vengeance plan. Even when Eysan betrays Ömer in the beginning, she is a part of a plan of other male characters. On the other hand, female characters in *Doctor Foster* and *The World of the Married* are shaped by cultural attitudes toward infidelity, motherhood, and professional ambition. The Korean adaptation, for instance, places a greater emphasis on family honor and societal expectations, influencing how the protagonist navigates betrayal and revenge. Analyzing the Turkish version gets tricky because the Turkish television system forces the stories to continue even when the original character arcs and the driving force of the story ends. The story goes on and on until the ratings drop and the production is not profitable anymore. Thus, the true purpose of the main character is distracted by the efforts to carry the story on with new characters and topics.

In *Ezel*, the protagonist undergoes a transformation from a naive young man to a vengeful antihero, reflecting honor-driven masculinity in Turkish society. His counterparts in Yago and Vlad undergo similar transformations but are adapted to reflect Latin American and Eastern European masculinities, which may emphasize different aspects of emotional expression and justice-seeking behavior. For example, Ömer (in the Turkish original) returns from military duty, whereas Adrian (in the Romanian version) returns from work abroad. Where Omar (in the Mexican version) returns from is

unspecified but all of the characters are betrayed when they were away. In Türkiye, military duty is obligatory for men and serving in the military is viewed as a rite of passage and a symbol of a duty to the nation. Military duty is often related to honor and ties to masculine and nationalist ideals, so being betrayed while in military duty exacerbates the pain of the betrayal. Work abroad in the Romanian version signals a work class related masculinity as the acceptance of the man being the provider for the family. Both military duty and work abroad are gendered forms of labor and carry connotations about class and sacrifice.

This contrasts with *Doctor Foster*, where masculinity is portrayed through the personal relationships, family values and emotional turmoil rather than institutional roles like military service. Gemma is betrayed despite being a loving, happy wife, mother and a doctor and there seems to be no logical explanation of the cheating. In this context, social reputation and the importance of serving the family and keeping the family together is tied to the personal honor and power in the intertwined relationships. The different frameworks of masculinity in these series intersect through their emotional complexities and narrative drive for the vengeance with blurry lines of justice.

In both *Ezel* and *Doctor Foster*, gender and class are intertwined in the narrative that shape the protagonists' struggles with betrayal and identity within distinct social contexts. *Ezel* portrays masculinity through the lens of a working class man, who achieves a higher economic status and power through gambling and intricate plans in order to take his revenge. The protagonist's masculine identity is closely tied to notions of power, control, and class mobility, reflecting traditional expectations of men as protectors and providers in a lower socioeconomic setting. Conversely, *Doctor Foster* portrays femininity within a middle class family where maintaining social status and a happy

family is very important. The female lead navigates gendered expectations around emotional labor, reputation, and domestic roles. In this case, class acts as a boundary that both constrains and empowers her responses to betrayal. Together, these series illustrate how class mediates the expression and experience of gender, revealing that masculinity and femininity are shaped by socioeconomic positions. Considering the class and socioeconomic context of the characters highlights the role of cultural proximity across adaptations.

4.2.1 Vengeance and Its Consequences

Betrayal in both *Ezel* and *Doctor Foster* serves as a profound challenge to traditional masculinity, forcing the characters to confront not only their emotional vulnerabilities but also the societal expectations placed on them. In *Ezel*, the protagonist's betrayal by Eyşan disrupts his sense of honor and control, two key pillars of masculinity in the narrative. Ezel's pursuit of revenge through manipulation of relationships and romantic entanglements reflects his attempt to regain lost power and assert his dominance.

Similarly, in *Doctor Foster*, Gemma's discovery of her husband's betrayal forces her to confront the consequences of his infidelity. The emotional impact of his disloyalty challenges Gemma's perception of her own strength and power within the marriage. Gemma's response to betrayal reveals a subversion of traditional gender roles, as her actions challenge the notion that women should passively accept such violations. For both *Ezel* and *Gemma*, betrayal becomes a catalyst for reclaiming agency, as they both embark on journeys that defy conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity, using manipulation and retribution to regain control.

In both shows, infidelity becomes a vehicle for expressing deeper emotional and social grievances in betrayal, powerlessness, and the desire for recognition. For Ezel, his masculinity is validated through retribution that is both physically and emotionally intense, while for Gemma, her vengeance is tied to her reclaiming her identity in a patriarchal world where women are often denied agency in such contexts. Ezel's journey revolves around his need to reclaim his masculine power after being betrayed, while Gemma's revenge in *Doctor Foster* challenges traditional gender roles by asserting her own autonomy and emotional power. There are various ways that she seeks revenge such as financial ruin, public humiliation, and even a sexual encounter with the friend of her husband.

Revenge is corrosive. It turns the protagonists into anti-heroes or tragic heroes where the story ultimately drives the characters into a sad and epic ending. The adaptations have different endings. For example, in the *Doctor Foster* and *The World of The Married* we see the on and off spiraling relationship between the protagonist and the ex-husband and a suffering child who hates to be in the middle of the battle of the parents. The ending shows the child leaving the parents. In the South Korean version, the child returns after a year, whereas the British original has an open ending where we do not know if the child returns. In the Turkish version, the betraying husband dies at the end, bearing the full weight of the consequences despite the presence of numerous other characters guilty of infidelity, deceit, and betrayal. In *Ezel* and its adaptations, we see many tragic losses that follow the path of vengeance. Revenge not only consumes the protagonist but also destroys those caught in its wake, highlighting how the corrosive nature of vengeance transcends cultural contexts and reconfigures the boundaries of heroism and morality.

4.3 Transnational Adaptations and the Cultural Framing of Masculinity, Betrayal, and Vengeance

The writers, producers, and directors are not just adapting the series, they are adapting the masculinity itself, considering the gender roles and expectations and questioning what revenge should look like in different cultures. Choe (2022) talks about the concept of affective interlude in Korean Dramas to describe the moments of lengthened emotions that direct the audience to feel the same feelings the character is experiencing. These moments are often without dialogues and accompanied by close-ups and music and represents a semiotic unity that mirrors and reinforces. All of the series offer moments of silence where the character realizes the betrayal and suffers from the betrayal. This is often accompanied by close-ups in all versions, whereas the use of music is different across different adaptations. For example, the British version uses as little music as possible, to create a realistic atmosphere while the affective interlude Choe mentions is apparent in the Korean and the Turkish versions. Can we say that the affective interlude is a cultural choice? It seems like there is a pattern. The cultures with close relationships and heightened emotions like Korea, Mexico and Türkiye are more likely to use the affective interludes.

Transnational adaptations of *Ezel* and *Doctor Foster* reframe the themes of masculinity, betrayal, and vengeance within distinct cultural contexts, highlighting how these universal emotions are shaped by local societal norms and gender expectations. While both adaptations revolve around betrayal and revenge, the portrayal of these themes varies according to the cultural values of each society. In *Ezel*, the Turkish version emphasizes traditional notions of masculinity, where honor, emotional stoicism and the reclaiming of power through vengeance are central to the male protagonist's journey. In

the adaptations in Mexico and Romania, the masculinity of the protagonist is depicted differently. In both countries, the male lead cries, which is a challenge to masculinity in some cases, but probably reflecting the local understanding of male vulnerability in these cultures.

Crying male lead in the Mexican remake contrasts the *machismo* concept which view men as "virile, aggressive, and authoritarian" (Sequeira, 2009, p.7). This exaggerated masculinity is paired with patriarchal ideology and violence which we often see in melodramas (Robles, 2015; Haas & Gonzales, 2019). However, Tufte (2004) argues that melodramas can be used as a tool for social and cultural change and this emotional portrayal can both be a driver or an outcome of the change in masculine ideals. Similarly, Romania is a patriarchal society and male dominance cultivates an aggressive and arrogant masculinity (Pop, 2016). Thus, crying male lead is also not conventional according to the masculine stereotype in Romania as well. Furthermore, when the characters do not cry in public or choose to cry in private they choose to be seen as powerful. "Power is a relationship of visibility" argues Thwaites Diken (2017, p.130) which can also translate that shedding tears visibly renegotiates the power struggle.

The British original *Doctor Foster* presents a more nuanced exploration of betrayal, especially through Gemma's response, which challenges conventional gender roles by shifting the focus from victimhood to active revenge. The British original *Doctor Foster* presents a nuanced exploration of betrayal, particularly through Gemma's response, which challenges conventional gender roles by shifting the focus from passive victimhood to active revenge. In the South Korean and Turkish adaptations, the female protagonists similarly pursue active revenge; however, the ways in which their actions are framed reflect distinct cultural nuances. In the Turkish adaptation, the female lead's

pursuit of revenge is portrayed in a more glorified and empowering light, redefining femininity by challenging traditional expectations of submissiveness and passive suffering. Instead, the character emerges as both emotionally resilient and intellectually strategic, demonstrating a level of strength and danger comparable to that of male counterparts. This reconfiguration of gender roles across different adaptations not only reveals the evolving representation of women but also offers insight into local expectations and cultural attitudes toward femininity and power.

One of the most compelling aspects of *Doctor Foster* and its adaptations is the portrayal of male characters. While much of the analysis often centers around female gender roles and how these roles are challenged and redefined, the male leads who engage in infidelity offer equally intriguing insights into constructions of masculinity. How these male characters react when confronted with their wives' acts of revenge speaks volumes about gender dynamics and the shifting power balance between masculinity and femininity.

Interestingly, despite being female driven stories, the male characters are depicted as relatively passive when faced with female revenge. In the British version, for instance, although the audience may initially despise the male character for his infidelity, the female protagonist's relentless and psychologically manipulative revenge almost balances the scales, making the conflict appear more morally ambiguous. In contrast, the South Korean adaptation portrays the male character as weak and submissive, unable to assert his masculine power in the face of his wife's vengeance. Even when faced with financial difficulties, he remains overshadowed by the protagonist, never breaking out of his portrayal as a defeated and subservient figure.

The Turkish adaptation, however, offers a distinctly different depiction of masculinity. Unlike the British and Korean versions, the cheating husband in the Turkish series displays a degree of charm and emotional complexity, often acting sweetly toward his wife despite his betrayal. This nuanced portrayal creates more emotional tension for the audience, as the male character's duality makes it harder to completely vilify him. Furthermore, the extended duration of episodes and seasons in the Turkish version necessitates additional plot developments, including the mistress's revenge tactics, such as staging a kidnapping. This results in the male character becoming increasingly caught between the two women, amplifying his emotional suffering and highlighting the complexity of his relationships with both. Through these varied representations, the adaptations not only challenge gender norms but also offer a deeper understanding of how masculinity is constructed and perceived differently across cultural contexts.

The adaptations preserve the emotional essence of the story but adapt the cultural framing of masculinity and vengeance, reflecting the distinct gender dynamics and societal values of the societies in which they are produced. Through this comparison, it becomes clear how transnational adaptations filter universal human experiences like betrayal and vengeance through the lens of different cultural and societal expectations, influencing the portrayal of masculinity and retribution.

5. CONCLUSION

This dissertation explores the ways in which transnational television adaptations negotiate, challenge, and mediate masculinity and manhood through visual representation and the themes of betrayal and vengeance. By examining *Ezel* (Türkiye) and *Doctor Foster* (UK), along with their respective adaptations across different cultural contexts (the Mexican *Yago* (2016) and the Romanian *Vlad* (2019); the South Korean *The World of the Married* (2020) and the Turkish *Sadakatsiz* (2020)), this study demonstrates how masculinity is shaped by both local sociocultural norms and broader transnational media flows.

Through a dual layered approach combining contextual and textual analysis, the research has revealed that while betrayal and vengeance remain central narrative forces, their representations shift according to cultural proximities, industry structures, and audience expectations. The Multiple Proximities Theory has been instrumental in understanding these shifts, illustrating how different levels of thematic, emotional, and gendered proximities influence adaptation choices.

The analysis of *Ezel* and its adaptations (*Yago* and *Vlad*) shows that the masculinity of the betrayed protagonist is often entangled with honor, justice and emotional suppression, reinforcing specific cultural codes around male resilience and retribution. Meanwhile, the *Doctor Foster* case study (*The World of the Married* and *Sadakatsiz*) highlights how masculinity in the face of betrayal is often depicted through fragility, loss of control, and the struggle to maintain authority, particularly in contexts where traditional gender roles are being renegotiated. This takeaway itself highlights the perceived gender differences in the face of betrayal in transnational dramas. The male protagonists are paired with honor and pride as they seek justice through vengeance

whereas the female protagonists are paired with family and loss of control as they seek to regain autonomy even when they are fragile and vulnerable. Having both male and female protagonists in two different betrayal themed stories helps to navigate the masculinities in a thematic scope.

The scope of this research is to explore how masculinity betrayal are portrayed in transnational television drama adaptations with a focus of emotional expression and narrative elements. Two case studies with an interconnected theme of betrayal by the lover and the friends allow to have a specific exploration in a targeted structure. By situating these dramas within broader discussions on transnational television flows and gender representation, this dissertation contributes to the understanding of how global formats and the narratives are localized while still maintaining thematic coherence. While examining the dramas and adaptations, the portrayal of masculinity is used like an anchor that help to decipher the gender role differences and emotional expressions in the face of betrayal. The findings emphasize that while adaptation allows for cultural specificity, it also exposes tensions between evolving gender norms and enduring patriarchal structures.

The theme of betrayal and vengeance acts as a common ground for the series selected for the comparative case study. Furthermore, I focus on a very specific scene, the scene where the protagonist learns about the betrayal, in all series and adaptations in the case study. This selection of common theme and a specific scene acts like normalizing the data in the data set statistically speaking. In statistics, normalizing the data means adjusting the values on the data set that are in different scales to a common scale. After normalizing, the comparison of data is meaningful. Here in this research, thematic proximity ensures the normalizing factor and the resulting analysis is enlightening as it offers details of gender, cultural, genre and emotional proximities.

This study demonstrates how multiple proximities, such as thematic, emotional, cultural, genre and gender dynamically interact in transnational drama adaptations. Thematic proximity is the core of the analysis as it creates a common ground for all series with the theme of betrayal and vengeance. Emotional proximity manifests itself in cinematographic details, spatial and sound design, demonstrating the intimate struggles of betrayal and vengeance. Cultural proximity navigates social norms and reveals how socioeconomic factors influence characters' actions and choices. Gender proximity exposes how masculinity and femininity are performed within heteronormative framework. Together, the multiple proximities demonstrate the constant negotiation between global storytelling and local details, highlighting the power of transnational drama adaptations in redefining manhood, gender roles and social belongings across diverse audiences.

The interdisciplinary approach engages media studies, television studies, sociology and gender studies with a framework of Multiple Proximities Theory. The theoretical framework opens up new conversations such as thematic, gender and emotional proximities which are explored through the narrative elements of the series selected from different parts of the world. Having series that come from non-Western media is one of the strengths of the case studies on this research. Examining the contextual and textual elements of series that come from different parts of the world provides a comprehensive outlook on transnational drama adaptations with the focus of the theme of betrayal.

That being said, the diversity of the series selected for the case studies come with some limitations. One of the major challenges faced during the research process was overcoming the language barriers, especially when analyzing the television series and

academic resources across different countries and languages. Since this dissertation involves transnational case studies including Turkish, British, Romanian, Mexican and Korean dramas, accessing primary sources such as the complete series, the viewer engagement comments, and even scholarly works proved to be a significant obstacle. Many academic resources on Mexican, Korean and Romanian contents were limited and the series were not dubbed or with subtitles. Despite these challenges, navigating the language barriers highlights the importance of multilingual research in global media studies.

Another limitation is the cultural context gaps that are not available in the scholarly works. The research provides information about the cultural details only to some extent and there might be some cultural details hidden in the series that might not be discovered due to lack of data and resources available. However, in order to combat this limitation, the scope of the dissertation is exploring the contextual and textual elements that are common for all the series. Furthermore, looking at the masculinity differences and emotional responses in the narrative structure provides a plausible comparison ground for series in the selected case studies.

One potential advantage of the limitations in this research is that they provide valuable avenues for future research and deeper exploration of the topic. There is an intriguing opportunity for further research on the intersection of masculinity and adaptation, particularly in the digital streaming era, where global audiences engage with television content in increasingly complex and dynamic ways. One promising direction would be a cross-cultural examination of gendered emotional expression in different television series. An interdisciplinary approach with psychology and neuroscience could provide interesting and insightful details about the emotional expression such as crying

or laughing in the television series and communicate important findings on masculinity, gender and television dramas. Furthermore, incorporating computer science, machine learning and coding, a large set of television series from a specific time period or a location can be examined. Facial recognition or emotional detection algorithms can be used to analyze how often male and female characters cry or express their emotions across different genres, cultures and time periods. In addition, patterns in stylistic or aesthetic elements in television adaptations could be uncovered with the use of coding.

Consequently, this study demonstrates the transformative potential of betrayal and vengeance narratives in global storytelling. Maintaining the balance between having a comprehensive yet a focused study on transnational drama adaptations with a contextual and textual analysis of the selected series was one of the primary objectives. It is very easy to stray into related yet different topics during research, but maintaining a clear focus on the scope is crucial. There were moments when, after exploring new discussions, I had to revisit the research and revise or remove sections in order to remain aligned with the central objectives of the research. Ultimately, this research marks only the beginning of a larger journey toward understanding how television dramas reflect and influence our perceptions of identity, emotion, and gender across cultures and it is my hope that it sparks new conversations and creative inquiries in years to come.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. CURRICULUM VITAE

Name-Surname: Öykü Bozgeyik

Education:

BA: Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York - *BA* - Economics (2012 - 2016)

MA: State University of New York at Albany, New York - *MA* - Master of Economic Forecasting (2016 - 2018)

MA: Bilgi University, Istanbul - *MA* - Master of Film and Television (2018 - 2020)

(All coursework and thesis completed; degree pending)

Work Experience:

Freelance Writer: EPISODE Magazine – Oct 2017 - Jan 2018

Student Team Coach: Skidmore College, Business Department, 2016

Student Assistant: Skidmore College, Economics Department, 2015-2016

Student Researcher-Assistant: Skidmore College, Government Department, 2014-2015

Peer Health Educator: Skidmore College, Health Promotion Department Marketing Committee, 2014-2015

Marketing Intern: The Walt Disney Company, Istanbul, 2013

Awards and Scholarships:

Magna Cum Laude: Skidmore College, 2016

Dean's List Honors: Skidmore College, all semesters 2012 - 2016

Economics Departmental Honors: Skidmore College, 2016

Phi Beta Kappa, The Oldest Honor Society for the Liberal Arts and Sciences in the US, 2016

Omicron Delta Epsilon, The International Honor Society for Economics, 2015

Patricia Grummon Clegg 1951 International Study Scholarship: Skidmore College, 2015

Finalist at the Kenneth Freirich Business Plan Competition, 2015

Scientific Publications:

Bozgeyik, Ö. (2025). The Co-Rise of Korean Wave and Korean Brands: The Dynamics of National Design Identity and Brand Building. *ART/Icle: Journal of Art and Design*, 5(1), 187-201. <https://doi.org/10.56590/stdarticle.1622098>

Bozgeyik, Ö. (2025). Televizyon dizileri ve sosyal medya arasında materyal ve materyal olmayan objelerin dolaşımı ile beğeni kültürü oluşumu: *Squid Game* örneği. In E. Yıldız (Ed.), *Değişen dünyada kültür ve sanat* [Culture and art in a changing world] (pp. 167–183). Nobel Bilimsel Eserler.

Bozgeyik, Ö. (2025). İş Görüşmelerinin Uyarlanması: Televizyon Dizileri Üzerine Kültürlerarası Bir Çalışma. *REFLEKTİF Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 6(2), 429–445. <https://doi.org/10.47613/reflektif.2025.225>

Bozgeyik, Ö. "Television Dramas in a Transnational Realm: An Analysis with SCOT Approach" *Journal of Popular Communication* (under review).

Bozgeyik, Ö. "Coin Coin and Extra Humans" *Film Critique*. (Istanbul Bilgi University). <https://ftvstudio.bilgi.edu.tr/en/filmcritique/article/coincoin-and-extra-humans/>

Scientific Presentations:

Bozgeyik, O. (July 2025). Adapting Job Interviews: A Cross-Cultural Study of TV Dramas. Reflektif New Issue Launch Panelist - Rethinking Localities in the Audiovisual Field, Online.

Bozgeyik, O. (June 2023). Formation of Taste Cultures Through Indirect Circulation of Immaterial and Material Objects in Television Series and Social Media Platforms: The Case of Squid Game. Culture and Art in a Changing World: Art and Culture Management Conference, Istanbul.

Bozgeyik, O. (June 2022). Taking a social perspective on the changes in film and TV:
Social construction of technology for AI scripts and transnational dramas. Panel
Presentation in Interdisciplinary PhD Communications Conference, Istanbul.

