

CHAPTER 5

***“THEY’RE NOT THAT MUCH DIFFERENT AFTER ALL...”*. THE RECEPTION OF TURKISH SERIES BY GREEKS: BETWEEN ALTERITY AND PROXIMITY**

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DOI: 10.26650/B/SS18.2021.004.005

ABSTRACT

Through this article, I aim to present the results of my empirical research concerning the representations of Turkish culture projected by Turkish television soap operas and their reception by Greeks. More precisely, the narrative that nourished the Greek War of Independence, is based not only to the direct descendants of modern Greeks from ancient Greeks but also to the difference between the modern Greek identity and the Turkish culture which was considered as the exact opposite. Thus, negative stereotypes emerged from both sides and these stereotypes dominate collective imaginaries until today. During the period of the economic crisis, as Greek television channels did not have the means to produce local series, they turned to productions from the neighboring country. Turkish television soap operas propose an “alternative modernity” as not only they contain ingredients that conduct the viewer into a fantasy world of globalized consumerism and romantic love that defies national boundaries, but they also project traditional family structures and gender roles. It is this element that differentiates the soap operas in question from the American prototype. This “alternative modernity” seems to be more familiar to Greek audiences than the modernity proposed by occidental television products. As a consequence, through the consumption of Turkish drama series, Greeks have the possibility to re-examine the representation they have for the Turks and are invited to discover not only the cultural differences but also the common traits between the two populations.

Keywords: Cultural proximity, alterity, intercultural communication, national identities, television drama

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, exchanges between countries and cultures do not cease to grow. Media constantly diffuse worldwide images, information, artistic and cultural productions of various countries (Ladmiral & Lipiansky, 2015).

The narrative (the way in which a society describes itself in a symbolical way) is an extremely important element for this society's self-consciousness (Constantopoulou, 2017) and from a dramatological perspective (Goffman, 1959), for the projection and/or the explanation of a culture and of its attractive characteristics to outsiders (Lundberg et al. 2017). Consequently, it can be understood, that mass media texts play a significant role in narrating a society's shared values and norms to transnational audiences.

Television, is the “principal storyteller” in contemporary society (Kozloff, 1992, p. 67). Despite the discourse of concurrence between Internet and television that accompanied the emergence of the first, television is still a dominant mass media. This, not only because television is still much more accessible than the Internet, but also because televisual consumption is inherent to expectations of sociability that are not satisfied by the Internet (Maigret, 2007). Thus, television is still the main canal through which narratives are diffused to the audience.

Consequently, television narratives can be analyzed as texts conveying the shared values of a society. Similarly, the study of the consumption practices of television texts can inform us on the negotiation of meanings related to identification issues.

Through this article, I aim to present the results of my empirical research concerning the consumption of Turkish drama series from Greeks. First, I discuss my methodology and I analyze the relations between the two countries as well as the historical narratives that constitute the foundation of modern Greek identity which since its conception until today is considered to be “opposed” to the Turkish cultural identity. Then, I present my results and the reason why these series enhance Greeks to better understand Turkish culture and civilization.

AIM AND METHODOLOGY

This study concerns the representations projected by Turkish television soap operas and their reception by fans in Greece. In order to study the consumption of these soap operas, I have conducted an empirical research based on 50 in depth interviews with individuals having different socio-economic backgrounds, different ages and residing in different geographical

areas in Greece¹ between 2016 and 2018. The recruitment of people who participated in my research was realized with convenience sampling and snowball method.

Cultural Identity and Alterity

Identity presupposes *difference*. The consciousness of belonging to the same community emerges only when one is facing other communities that are perceived as “foreign” (Ladmiral & Lipiansky, 2015). Thus, alterity is a crucial element for the construction of one’s identity, as social subjects tend to identify themselves to a particular social group with which they consider that they share similar characteristics and values which are by definition opposed to the characteristics or the values of a different group (Todorov, 1989).

Cultural identity is based upon factors considered as objective (such as heritage, history, political context, ethnic origins, traditions, religion etc.), but it is also based on subjective elements that are part of the consciousness of the members of a community. First and foremost, cultural identity is a social representation that allows a community to define itself and to be recognized by others. This representation is made by images, symbols, stereotypes, myths and historical narrations that allow the community to figure out its own “personality” and its unity.

In philosophy, it has been highlighted several times that self-awareness as a specific identity and singular individuality is formed only in close interaction with others. Thus, for Hegel (2012), self-awareness is only possible through the recognition of another consciousness. Each one tries to dominate the other or to suppress it in order to acquire the certainty of itself. Each tends to assert itself as unique and thus exclude the other. As a result, the sentiment of identity is forged and reaches self-consciousness only by opposition to what is considered to be different and the rejection of the *Other*. Furthermore, Sartre (1943, 1954), pointed out that the *Other* exists as *Other* only if I reject him and consider him as different. Similarly, I exist only if I am denied by the *Other*.

Additionally, psychologists demonstrated that identity is formed progressively since the first months of a baby’s life and always in interaction with others² (Spitz, 1968). Consequently, social subjects form their identity since the moment they are born by learning to recognize what is familiar and similar to them and what is “different” and thus opposed to their identity. The child thus gradually interiorizes the different groups to which it belongs and which are rooted in the history, in the memory, in the experiences and in the representations of the group.

1 The interviews took place in Athens, Chalcis, Thessaloniki and Komotini.

2 Since the first months of a child’s life begins a process by which the individual will come to perceive his own individuality as distinct and separated from others, through affective, cognitive and semantic mechanisms.

In other words, an identity can never be defined in isolation. On the contrary, as Denis-Constant Martin (1995) has pointed out, the only way to circumscribe to an identity is by opposing it to other identities. Because of the process of identity formation described above, the distinctive traits between different social groups are quite often overestimated (İnaç & Ünal, 2013). Therefore, in order to value their own identity, social groups tend to carry out a process of *otherization*. In this sense, individuals tend to construct positive stereotypes for their own social group while at the same time they create negative stereotypes for individuals who are excluded from it (Constantopoulou et al., 1999). In this sense, according to Stuart Hall, “identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render ‘outside’, adjected” (Hall, 1996, p. 5).

Thus, every identity (national, gendered, political, etc.) is formed by opposition to another identity and hence by its rejection. Taking this under consideration, it can be understood, that *Others* are also part of our identity as they represent what *we are not*.

For Benedict Anderson (1991), the nation is an *imagined community* that is socially constructed. Anderson refers to an “imagined” community because “the members, even of the smallest nation, will never know most of their fellows, will not meet them or even hear of them, but in the minds of each one lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 1983, p. 49). In this context, television narratives - and particularly soap opera narratives³ - play a significant role as they provide common images that shape the imaginary community described by Anderson (Dhoest, 2004). National identity refers to the sense of difference that one individual feels towards another. This difference is based on the conceptualization that these two individuals belong to different nations or distinct national groups within a multicultural environment (Smith, 1995). According to Jacques Derrida (1978), there is no culture or cultural identity that does not have its “other” of “self”.

National narratives and Greek Identity: The Turk as the *Other*

The Greek-Turkish antagonism is one of the few oldest enduring conflicts between neighbors worldwide and it is not only based on tangible and objective conflicts (minority issues, the Cyprus problem, interests over Aegean, etc.) but also on emotional elements (Heraclides, 2011).

3 For Alexander Dhoest (2004), soap operas constitute a particular category of television program not only because they occupy an important position in the prime-time zone but also because they are considered to be important narrators of myths in contemporary society.

Historically, the encounters between the two neighboring countries could be classified in three different periods. The origin of this rivalry can be found in the Middle Ages, at the battle of Manzikert in 1071, between Byzantine “Greeks” and Seljuk “Turks”. This first phase of encounters ends with the conquer of Constantinople by Mehmed II the Conqueror (1453). The second period is from 1453 to 1821, which is portrayed by the Greeks as 400 years of “Turkish occupation” and “yoke” while the same period is considered by the Turks as a model of tolerance and multiculturalism, in which the Greeks flourished as no other non-Muslim community. Finally, the third phase of confrontation is the period from 1821 (the start of the Greek War of Independence) until today (ibid, 2011).

During the Enlightenment, Turks (and generally Muslims) become synonymous of the “*Other*”. Against the Turkish “demon” the opposite was considered to be Greece (Moskov, 1972). Upon this logic begins to rise the philological philhellenism that nourishes the Greek national consciousness. Thus, during this period modern Greeks are considered to be descendants of the ancient Greeks. This conception of Greekness, which is supported for various reasons by the philhellènes among the European elites, becomes the dominant narrative upon which Greeks are considered to be part of the “civilized” modern European world while Turks constitute the exact opposite (Constantopoulou & Larochele, 2013). Thus, at the moment of its creation (1830) the Greek state is named Hellas. This name refers to the historical and cultural heritage of the ancient Greece and its claim by the Greeks who are self-defined as Hellenes (Couroucli, 2002).

The historian Constantinos Papanigopoulos, who is considered to be the founder of modern Greek historiography, establishes in the mid-19th century, the concept of historical continuity of the Greek nation from antiquity to the present, making the distinction of Greek history in three different periods: ancient, byzantine and modern. Thus, Papanigopoulos integrated the Hellenistic and Byzantine eras in the Greek narrative and thus was able to achieve historical continuity between Ancient Hellenism, Christianity and Byzantium (Heraclides, 2011). Despite the disagreements between the historical narrative established by Papanigopoulos, the idea that modern Greeks are descendants of the ancient Greeks and have an interrupted history of 3000 years is commonly accepted (ibid, 2011).

The narrative that nourished the Greek War of Independence, is based not only to the idea of direct descendance of modern Greeks from ancient Greeks but also to the difference between the modern Greek identity (which was considered to be “modern”, “European”, “westernized”, “progressive” etc.) and the Ottoman (Turkish) which was considered as the exact opposite (“uncivilized”, “barbarian”, “backward” etc.), (Constantopoulou

& Larochele, 2013). On the other side, Greeks are considered by Turks as a Christian group who lived under the tyrannical Byzantine Empire, who have not any relation to the ancient Greece, who had the occasion to flourish under the Ottoman Empire and who were ungratefully opposed to it without any reason (Heraclides, 2011). Turks are thus considered to be Greeks’ traditional enemies. This is not only due to tangible elements but also to the different historical narratives that constitute a source of conflict and of negative feelings between the two parties (ibid., 2011).

On this point, we have to highlight, that prejudices and stereotypes reflect the relations between different socio-cultural groups. Thus, they are highly influenced by the characteristics of such relations. Hence, a situation of conflict between two countries will cause negative representations for each other. Very often, stereotypes serve as tools in order to justify the existing relations. For instance, conquerors and oppressors always justified their actions by creating an undermining image of the nations and the populations submitted to them (Said, 1978; Ladmiral & Lipiansky, 2015).

On a political level, the bad relations between the two countries are considered from both sides as given and inevitable following Carl Schmitt’s logic according to which the “Other” is the great “Enemy” that can never be a “friend” (Heraclides, 2011).

On a social level, taking a closer look on media representations might be useful in order to better understand Greek-Turkish relations and the enduring negative feelings between the two neighboring populations. Very often, Greek popular culture products represent Turks. This representation is not only negative but also rather stereotypical. A characteristic example of this is the movie entitled *Loafing and Camouflage: Sirens in the Aegean* (2005) as well as its sequels *Loafing and Camouflage: Sirens in the Shore* (2011), *Loafing and Camouflage: I4* and the very recent film *Aegean SOS* (2019).

All these three comedies have as objects the life of Greek soldiers who are doing their military service while there is a conflict or a rivalry with Turkey. In these movies, Turks are always represented as dark-skinned and aggressive individuals who provoke Greeks without any particular reason. Thus, it can be understood, not only that negative stereotypes persist until today but also that the eventuality of an army conflict between Turkey and Greece is still considered as possible. Similarly, Greeks are being otherized by Turkish media products (Yilmazok, 2018).

Turkish dramas in Greek television

Since 2000, the production of Turkish soap operas⁴ is in constant development. These soap operas have indisputably a great success at a local level and are also exported abroad. More precisely, they were first diffused in countries that were in the sphere of cultural influence of the ancient Ottoman Empire (which means the Balkans and the Middle East). Later they were also exported even as far as, Latin America, in China, in Pakistan, in India, in Bangladesh, etc.

Turkish television soap operas contain ingredients that conduct the viewer into a fantasy world of globalized consumerism and romantic love that defies national boundaries (Olson, 2000). At the same time, however, they project traditional family structures and gender roles. It is this element that differentiates the soap operas in question from the American prototype. Alexandra Bucciante (2010, p. 7) has described this peculiarity of Turkish soap operas with the phrase the “Turkish touch”⁵.

Turkish soap operas are now exported in more than 140 countries. One of the most popular soap operas is *Muhtesem Yuzyil* (Magnificent century) that has been watched by almost 400 millions of viewers worldwide. The soap operas in question seem to have even overcome in popularity telenovelas in Latin America that until recently were “dominant” in this particular geographical area.

Among the countries that consume Turkish soap operas, Greece has become a great consumer of these products. This consumption has considerably augmented since the economic crisis. During this period, the local production has been practically diminished. As Greek television channels did not have the means to produce local series, they turned to productions from the neighboring country. On this point, it should be pointed out that the

4 Some researchers use the term “diziler” (translation from Turkish to English: series) to refer to Turkish serial fictions, in order to underline the particularities that differentiate these products from classic American soap operas or Latin American telenovelas. However, since soap opera is a transnational and transcultural phenomenon, its articulation also changes from one place to another. Specifically, as Allen (1989) explains, each country’s experience with the range of texts that are defined as soap operas is different: “It’s like ornithologists, taxidermists and bird watchers who come from a dozen different countries. They all talk about birds, but in one country there are only eagles, in another pigeons and chickens but not eagles, in another parrots and pigeons but not eagles and chickens, and so on” (Allen, 1989: 45). In other words, the communities of viewers, industrialists, and critics that make up the three interpretive communities described by Robert C. Allen are different for each national culture. In this sense, the same television genre can have many variations from one country to another. Turkish soap operas have similarities with American soap operas but differ from them in many ways. Moreover, in non-Western countries the soap opera format is seen as part of the melodramatic tradition since the target audience is mostly female and the stories deal with conflicts between rich and poor. In this sense, Turkish serial fiction should be defined as melodramatic TV series while taking into consideration that the products in question contain stylistic and narrative elements that are peculiar to the Turkish TV industry (Kesirli Unur, 2015).

5 For more information on the representations projected through Turkish soap operas consult the article of D. L. Larochele entitled ““Brad Pitt Halal” and the Hybrid Woman: Gender Representations and Religion through Turkish Soap Operas”, published in 2019.

production of a single episode of a Greek serial fiction costs about 70,000 to 80,000 euros, while the purchase of an episode of a Turkish soap opera costs about 7,000 to 8,000 euros (Moore, 2013). Furthermore, according to the European Bank, Greek households were forced to adopt a certain number of strategies in order to affront the new financial situation. These strategies included reducing the consumption of specific goods, discontinuing subscriptions to services, postponing payments, obtaining an additional job or increasing the number of working hours etc. Consequently, the consumption of “non-necessities” (theatre, cinema, museums etc.) was dramatically reduced. Therefore, Turkish soap operas had an ideal context of diffusion, in this country in a state of lack.

In 2010, the Greek market began to import systematically soap-operas from the neighboring country. More precisely, in June 2010, the soap-opera *Binbir Gece* was the first big success that established the leading role of Turkish soap-operas in Greece. The serial in question that was diffused by *Ant1 TV*, marked very high audience rates and thus was the top program in the prime-time zone during several weeks competing with other Greek products of the same genre that were particularly successful until this moment. Since 2010 up until today over 50 Turkish soap operas have been diffused by Greek TV channels.

FINDINGS

Globalization is considered as the worldwide spread of Western - particularly American - popular culture. However, other de-westernized cultural and media flows may challenge the domination of Americanized cultural products (Iwabuchi, 2002). For instance, Japan is a leading country as far as the production and the exportation of cultural goods is concerned (e.g. anime, television dramas, pop music etc.). As the global economy develops into an increasingly capitalist system, there is constant pressure to commercialize media systems (Straubhaar 1991). At the same time, technological development has favored - especially since the second half of the 1990s - the transnational export of local media content (Barker, 1997), thus making available to national audiences various types of alternative modernity’s that differ from the modernity as proposed by American media productions. In this context, American serial fiction has become both more powerful and influential as well as less hegemonic and less popular (Ang, 2007). The conceptual shift from “cultural imperialism” to “globalization” serves to better grasp this contradictory complexity. Cultural imperialism involves a one-way mechanistic process of homogenizing and absorbing the culture of the colonized into the culture of the colonizer. In contrast, globalization refers to a much more incoherent and

multilateral transnational process whose cultural outcomes and impacts are much more difficult to grasp (Ang, 2007).

In his pioneering study on cultural globalization, Arjun Appadurai (1996), referred to a new global economic culture. This new global economic culture can no longer be understood according to models that describe the structural relationship between an “advanced” center and a “less developed” periphery. On the contrary, this new global economic culture should be understood through a more fluid model of transnational cultural flow in which the United States do not have the leading role but constitute a node in this complex system. On this point, it should be emphasized that the United States continue to play a central role within this complex system. Nevertheless, the hegemonic position previously occupied by the United States is now in competition with other countries such as South Korea or Turkey. In this sense, Appadurai describes a polycentric system in which the United States is only one of the central nodes.

The further development of neo-liberal capitalist modernity has allowed the global television culture to flourish. In this context, global capitalist modernity represents a world that is increasingly interconnected and interdependent (Straubhaar, 1991). Global capitalist modernity goes hand in hand with the proliferation of new versions of modern culture that highlight particular identities that are different from hegemonic Americanism. In other words, this global culture is simultaneously characterized by homogenization and heterogenization, similarity and difference (Ang, 2007). As a result, in recent decades, global television culture has been characterized by the emergence of local and/or regional alternatives that offer new versions of modernity. In this context, the hegemonic role of the United States as the cultural avatar of contemporary modernity seems to be declining in favor of the emergence of new forms of modernity that are more familiar and/or close to American modernity for some countries (Iwabuchi, 2002). In recent decades, Turkey has become one of the central nodes of this complex televisual system described above.

Straubhaar (1991) introduced the concept of *cultural proximity* in order to explain the success of local (de-westernized) media products over global (Americanized) products. According to him, cultural proximity occurs when “nationally or locally produced material that is closer to and more reinforcing of traditional identities, based in regional, ethnic, dialect/language, religious, and other elements” (ibid., 1991, p. 51).

Thus, the particular success of Turkish drama series in Greece could be explained as an effect of the *cultural proximity* between the two countries. As mentioned above, at the moment

of its creation (1830) the Greek state is named *Hellas*. This name refers to the heritage of the ancient Greece and its claim by the Greeks who have self-defined *Hellenes*. Up to this moment, Greeks were named *Rums*. They formed the Rum-millet of the Ottoman Empire and they had as a religious and communitarian leader the Patriarch of Constantinople. The transit from Rum to Hellene symbolizes the transit to the official Modern-Greek identity. The revendication of an identity in continuity with ancient Greece took shape within the group of literate trading communities residing in urban centers and with the support of philhellènes who were literate people with a classical education and militant for the return of Greece among the free and Christian nations. However, this “new”, “modern” and “official” identity (the identity of the Hellene) did not conduct to the abolition of certain ethics, values and habits with Ottoman influence, especially as far as popular class is concerned⁷ (Couroucli, 2002). Consequently, Greek identity is marked by this ambivalence between these two different traditions. While being “European”, the Greek cultural identity is also determined by oriental traditions, customs and ethics. This ambivalence of the modern Greek identity has been highlighted several times by social anthropologists who have conducted field studies in Greece. For instance, Michael Herzfeld (1997) proposed the term “cultural intimacy” in order to describe this phenomenon. By proposing this term, Herzfeld explained that the official cultural affiliation (in our case the modern Greeks’ claim to the heritage of Ancient Greece) does not always correspond with the cultural affiliation at an intimate level (inherited traditions and values by the Ottoman Empire).

Through Turkish drama series are portrayed values, habits and elements that are common to the two countries and do not characterize westernized cultural products. These elements (traditional family structures and gender roles) are what Alexandra Buccianti (2010) has described as the “Turkish touch”. More precisely, the subjects I interviewed during my research seemed to particularly enjoy the gendered roles accorded to men and women (31 individuals), the representation of the institution of family (29 individuals), as well as the representation of romantic love (23 individuals). As a consequence, the *cultural proximity* between Greece and Turkey and more particularly the common elements between Turkish culture and Greek popular identity contribute to the great success of the series in question in Greece over other cultural products projecting the occidental way of life. Thus, Turkish soap operas offer an *alternative modernity* that is closer to Greeks than the modernity proposed by

7 The fighters of the war of Greek Independence (1821-1830) did not have the same origin with the literate communities that initiated the national project. Many of them were speaking diverse popular dialects and they knew neither ancient Greek language nor ancient Greek history and were not involved in the national project from the beginning.

American TV series. The following declarations are representative of this trend:

“They [Turks] have values. They respect the family (...) Turkish series do not project anything vulgar like the American series”, Female – 51 years old.

“I like that they [Turks] don’t mix roles, that everyone has their place. Men are men and women are women. I also like that they respect the family. Everyone in the family has a specific role. The older ones are the most respected. That’s the way it should be”, Female – 24 years old.

“I love that they [Turks] show the true love. Pure love without vulgarities and without underestimating women. Not like in the American series where everyone sleeps with everyone”, Female - 52 years old.

Thus, Greeks seem to identify their everyday life habits more easily to the narratives of Turkish series. This identification of individuals to the characters, to the situations and to the social environments represented in Turkish soaps enhance their emotional attachment to the storylines. Furthermore, Turkish soap operas do not surprise them as they are capable of understanding the interpretations, the intentions, the attitudes, the roles and the social and cultural situations they watch and that they consider as being part of their own lives. This identification with the audiovisual contents dedicated to everyday life and culture creates a sense of proximity to the audiences which not only intensifies their interest for the program but also their emotional implication to them. We can argue, that as far as soap operas are concerned, their appreciation and their quality is evaluated in terms of identification and of representativity. One of the main characteristics of soap operas is their focus on everyday problems in the private sphere (Hobson, 1981; Ang, 1985; Geraghty, 1991; Modleski, 1994). Thus, their perception in terms of quality depends on an important level from their ability to identify themselves with the narratives projected through them. The more these narratives describe realities closer to their lives, the more their qualitative perception is raised.

Through the consumption of Turkish soap operas, Greek audiences have the possibility to discover the common traits between their own culture and Turkish culture. Consequently, several subjects that participated in my research pointed out that through the viewing of Turkish soap operas they realized that the two neighboring populations share several common characteristics and habits. The realization of the similarities between Greeks and Turks stimulated some of the subjects I interviewed (14 individuals) to reconsider some of the negative stereotypes that they may have believed in the past for the Turks. The following declarations are representative of this trend:

“Turks have many similarities with Greeks. I recognize myself through these serials. I recognize my values (...) They look like us. The appearance, the customs, the foods, the hospitality, the importance accorded to God...”, Female, 52 years old

“They [Turks] are not that much different after all... They have the same habits, the same values... I like that, I believe it’s closer to us than Americans”, Female – 42 years old.

“They [Turks] are becoming more likable through Turkish series... how to explain you that? I had a different image of them in my mind before I started watching these series but I realized that we have much in common...”, Male – 57 years old.

“These series really changed my mind in relation to the Orient. Before, I was really reluctant of even visiting Turkey. Now I am more open in discovering their culture (...) They really look like us”, Female – 60 years old.

Turkish soap operas propose an alternative modernity. This modernity - characterized by elements such as traditional family structures and gender roles – is more familiar to the subjects that participated in my study than the modernity offered by occidental narratives. As a result, Greeks do not only better identify themselves with the narratives proposed by Turkish series but they also discover Turkish culture and redefine their definition of the *Other*. Consequently, it seems that Turkish series enhance a *decentration process*. Ethnocentrism is the first and natural movement when social subjects are confronted to alterity. Social subjects tend to consider that their own narratives, values and ways of thinking are natural and thus they constitute the obliged foundation of humanity. Decentration is the process of admitting that the *Other* may be *different* but it is also *similar* as it is also a *human*. Turkish soap operas’ storylines project the lives of human beings that may have several problems too as it is the case of the content recipients. Love problems, social problems, economic problems... All these have as common denominator the vulnerability of human beings. Thus, the Greek audience is invited to look to the *Other* projected through these cultural products as a human being with which they may have several differences (religious, political, historical etc.) but also many similarities.

Consequently, Turkish series function as elements of intercultural communication as they “explain” Turkish culture to Greeks who are invited to evaluate this culture on a new basis beyond the historical and emotional narratives that constitute a source of negative feelings. Thus, they conduct to the recognition of the cultural similarities between the two countries. However, we have to point out that this is not valid for all the subjects’ interviewed during our research. The degree of identification with Turkish soap-operas’ characters and of decentration depends on the instruction level, on the geographical area in which interviewees reside as well as to the personal and family history.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Alterity is a crucial element for the construction of one's identity, as social subjects tend to identify themselves with a particular social group with which they consider that they share similar characteristics and values which are by definition opposed to the characteristics or the values of a different group.

The narrative that nourished the Greek War of Independence, is based not only to the direct descendants of modern Greeks from ancient Greeks but also to the difference between the modern Greek identity and the Ottoman (Turkish) culture which was considered as the exact opposite. Thus, negative stereotypes emerged from both sides that dominate collective imaginaries until today.

The representations projected through Turkish soap operas offered alternatives to the Greek audience. More precisely, through Turkish drama series are portrayed values, habits and elements that are common to both countries and that do not characterize westernized cultural products. Thus, Greeks seem to identify themselves more easily to the characters of Turkish series. Additionally, through the consumption of these soap operas Greek audiences have the possibility to re-examine the representation they have for the Turks and are invited to discover not only the cultural differences but also the common traits between the two populations.

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