

TEACHING MORALITIES OF THE MODERN NATION THROUGH TV SERIALS:  
THE NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF *SILA*

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## Thesis Abstract

Melisa akmak, “Teaching Moralities of the Modern Nation through TV Serials:  
The Narrative Analysis of *Sıla*”

This study basically argues that mass media through which various images are disseminated to the masses, becomes an important part of the daily lives of almost everyone, and it becomes more and more the primary source of identity formation, which was formerly held by traditional institutions. Based on this argument, it offers to redefine ‘education’ in conjunction with cultural studies, and to expand our understanding of education so that education becomes identified with culture itself. This broadest view of education, by emphasizing the role of all sorts of cultural practices in the education of an individual, provides a way to consider not only pedagogy as cultural practice, but also the pedagogy of cultural practices such as television viewing. This study also argues that mass media, as ideological state apparatus, has a great importance in the project of building a modern nation, and, television serials which are successful in attracting the attention of mass audiences play a prominent role in the task of building a modern nation. By accepting the importance of television serials in the nation building process, this study on *Sıla*, one of the most popular melodramas in Turkey, analyzes visual as well as narrative qualities of the serial to investigate how modern-traditional dichotomy is constructed and tries to make narrative analysis of the serial to examine conflict-resolution processes occurring from this dichotomy throughout the serial. I have tried, through the narrative analysis, based on Turner’s (1975) conception of ‘social drama’, to introduce pedagogical messages delivered to audiences through unconventional ways of resolutions reached following conflict situations.

The television serial *Sıla* appreciates the modern over the traditional through suggesting resolutions referring to submission to love instead of social hierarchy and to rule of law as well as social and economic development, to erase the problems based on *töre* (tribal customs).

## Tez Özeti

Melisa akmak, “Modern Devlet Ahlakının Televizyon Dizileri Aracıyla Öğretilmesi: Sıla Dizisi’nin Anlatı Analizi”

Bu alıřma temel olarak ok eřitli imajları kitlelere yayan medyanın, hemen hemen herkesin gnlk hayatının nemli bir parası haline geldiđini ve daha nceleri geleneksel kurumlar tarafından sađlanan kimlik oluřunun birincil kaynađı haline geldiđini iddia etmektedir. Bunun sonucu olarak, eđitimin kltrel alıřmalar ile beraber yeniden tanımlanmasını ve eđitim anlayıřının eđitimin kltr ile zdeř olarak algılanacak şekilde geniřletilmesini nermektedir. Bu geniř bakıř, her trl kltrel pratiđin bireyin eđitiminde etkisi olduđunu vurgulayarak, yalnızca pedagojiyi bir kltrel pratik olarak grmeyi deđil, kltrel pratiklerin (televizyon izlemek gibi) pedagojisini de gz nne almayı mmkn kılmaktadır. Bu alıřma medyanın, ideolojik devlet aygıtı olarak, modern ulus inřasında nemli bir etkisi olduđunu ve ok sayıda seyircinin ilgisini ekmekte bařarılı olan televizyon dizilerinin modern ulus inřasında etkin bir rol oynadıđını da iddia etmektedir. Ulus inřası srecinde televizyon dizilerinin etkin roln kabul eden bu alıřmada, Trkiye’nin en popler melodramlarından biri olan *Sıla* dizisinde, dizinin grsel ve anlatı zelliklerine bakarak modern-geleneksel ikiliđinin nasıl kurulduđu tartıřılmakta ve bu ikilikten dođru ortaya ıkan atıřma-zm srelerini izleyerek dizinin anlatı analizi yapılmaktadır. Turner’ın ‘social drama’ kavramına dayanarak yapılan anlatı analizinde, anlatı boyunca oluřan atıřma ortamları sonucunda varılan beklenmedik zmlerin izleyicilere verdiđi pedagojik mesajların ortaya ıkarılmasına alıřılmaktadır.

*Sıla* dizisi, toplumsal hiyerarři yerine sevgiye nem vermeyi ve treden kaynaklanan sorunların ortadan kaldırılması iin hukukun stnlđn tanımayı ve sosyal ve ekonomik kalkınmanın sađlanmasını iřaret eden zmler nererek modern olanı geleneksel olanın karřısında yceltmektedir.

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*To Welat Ay ...*

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Television is everywhere. Mass media, especially television, are part of the living experience and daily lives of almost everyone everywhere. Through mass media, various images designed to inform, entertain, educate, advertise and stimulate are disseminated to the masses. These images, once out there, are routinely incorporated into people's lives. We all lead media saturated lives with these electronic images, a routine part of the world we live in. No matter how we wish to think about these images, they continue to be part of our world.

With the pervasiveness and the power of the mass media, the institutions and the practices of education have come under attack in recent years. The traditional sources of identity have declined in proportion to the growing power of mass media (Grossberg, 1994). By this growing power, mass media becomes the primary source of identity formation, supplanting the roles formerly held by school and the family (Trend, 1994). Thus, it will not be wrong to argue the fact that the traditional sources of identity - religion, family, and school- have left their powerful positions in teaching moralities to the mass media.

Willis (1990) suggests further that "the field of education is likely to come under even more intense pressure. It will be further marginalized in most people's experience by common [read "popular" or "everyday"] culture. In so far as educational practices are still predicated on liberal humanist lines and on the assumed superiority of high art, they will become almost totally irrelevant to the real energies and interest of most people and

have no part in their identity formation. Common culture will, increasingly, undertake in its own ways, the roles that education has vacated” (p.147).

In this context, there occurs a necessity to redefine the concept of education in conjunction with cultural studies, and to expand our understanding of education so that education becomes identified with culture itself. Willis (1990), in line with this expanding view of education, contrasts sharply with the narrow view of education that defines pedagogy as “a term which signals the practical synthesis of the question ‘what should be taught and why?’ with the considerations as to how that teaching should take place” (Grossberg, 1994), and defines pedagogy in his own terms:

Making (not receiving) messages and meanings in your own context and from materials you have appropriated is, in essence, a form of education in the broadest sense. It is the specifically developmental part of symbolic work, an education about “the self” and its relation to the world and to others in it. Where every symbolic work differs from what is normally thought as ‘education’ is that it ‘culturally produces’ from its own chosen symbolic resources (p.137).

Hence, this view of education requires us to consider, not only pedagogy as cultural practice, but the pedagogy of cultural practices such as television viewing. This broadest view of education emphasizes the role of all sorts of cultural practices and products in education of an individual self. Therefore, the role of the mass media, especially television as a most popular mass medium, in educating masses has to be given attention by educators and to be considered as an object of study.

Mass media, according to Althusser (1970) is defined as ideological state apparatus which serves to legitimize state institutions and build a national consensus. Television as the most popular and powerful mass medium has great importance in the project of building a modern nation. The explicit objective of television is to forge a modern, national culture through the televisual dissemination of discourses of

development and national integration, as Mankekar (1999) argues. The television serials play a prominent role in the task of (re)producing modern and national culture in a sense that they are successful in attracting the attention of mass audiences. Following this argument reflecting the importance of television serials in placing particular ideologies and values of the nation into public conversation (Giroux, 2006) and in intentionally trying to mold the mass culture (Abu-Lughod, 2005), it will be inevitable to accept how important they have become as means to ‘teach moralities of the nation’ to mass audiences.

Television serials have always been the most popular television genre in Turkey. Imported drama was the main genre during prime time, until domestic serials were produced and distributed to mass audiences. Even during the state monopoly period, the TV audience in Turkey watched mostly imported television serials such as soap operas like *Young and Restless* and *Bold and Beautiful* and telenovellas like *Slave Isaora*. With the inclusion of private television channels into the Turkish television industry, a television serial boom was experienced in the last decade (Öncü, 2005). The competition among the private channels has given rise to the popularity of domestic serials and series in Turkey.

Local as well as imported serials have been attracting the Turkish television viewers’ attention. I was also one of the loyal followers of these television serials. While I enjoyed it as a viewer, I also began to wonder why they have become so popular and what ends they serve. Several questions began to come to my mind: Why were the viewers so attracted by these serials? What makes them distinctive from other television programmes broadcasting on Turkish television channels at the same time? How can their popularity be related to the social context as a locally produced serial? Do their

visual or generic aspects have an effect on their popularity? To what ends do they serve as new ways for disseminating modern and national moralities to their mass audiences?

Television serials, in addition to their popularity, are worth examining as cultural texts, since they mostly narrate the modern-traditional dichotomy and they raise crucial issues in terms of Turkey's experience of modernity. It is important to note that I use the terms traditional and modern as basic ingredients of the social imaginary in Turkey (Sirman, 2004). The experience of modernity in countries (such as Turkey) where social practices, especially those related to the position of women in society, are assessed and rendered meaningful only in relation to those in the developed West, refers to post-coloniality (Sirman, 2004). Sirman uses 'post-coloniality', with reference to Hall, as a term that should be used to cover global relations after a particular time, the time of colonization (Sirman, 2004). Following Hall's definition, it can be argued that all localities start to produce their own identity in relation to others and according to the measure of civilization/development in the temporality produced after the global experience of colonization. What is distinctive in television serials is that they narrativize the modern-traditional dichotomy embodied in two or more rival characters, and are dedicated to resolving the conflict arising from this dichotomy to make clear at the end of their narrative what side of this dichotomy has to be valued.

Thus, if mass media is the primary source of education in the so called age of technology, and if television serials have become a new means for actualizing the project of building a modern and national culture, it would be significant as well as inevitable for an educator to critically engage in mass media as a form of public pedagogy and to analyze television serials as cultural texts contributing to identity

formation processes of mass culture through gradually disseminating pedagogical messages to their mass audiences.

The thesis is organized in five chapters. In the first chapter, introductory remarks including statement of the problem as well as the significance of the study are summarized. In the second chapter, related literature is briefly discussed. In the third chapter, the methodology of the study is introduced, and the analysis of the serial is described. Finally, in the fourth chapter, concluding remarks including my recommendations for further studies are introduced.

### Statement of the Problem

This study mainly deals with locally produced and distributed domestic serials in Turkey as new modes of public pedagogy. It aims to investigate the contextual, visual, generic and narrative qualities of these domestically produced and consumed television serials which are the most popular television genre in Turkey, to search for how they construct a modern-traditional dichotomy which is a necessary precondition of the melodrama genre through visuality (setting), genre (melodrama) and narrative structures of these television serials in order to teach moralities of the modern nation to their mass audiences.

The research questions of the study can be formulated as:

- 1) What kind of domestic serials have become so popular among many television serials broadcasting at the same time and why?
- 2) What end do the polarization of good (modern) and bad (traditional) which is a necessary condition of the genre of melodrama and constructed in the narrative of the domestic serials serve?

- 3) What the domestic serials as a narrative of change teach their audiences through resolutions reached following conflictual situations occurring throughout the narrative of the serials?

### Significance of the Study

Even though there are academic studies about cinematographic, visual, generic or narrative qualities of televisual texts in Turkey, none of them concentrate on the pedagogical role of these televisual texts as new means for educating mass culture. What makes this study significant is the fact that it focuses on this unexplored or untouched area of study and it tries to critically engage in analyzing television serials as new modes of public pedagogy. In addition, through seeing televisual texts as educational texts, it proposes a new way of conceptualization of education in a broadest sense. By this broadest view of education, this study may contribute to limited literature about the role of the mass media in educating mass culture, may start a discussion about the role of the televisual texts as new modes of public pedagogy and give rise to further studies in this unexplored issue in the area of education in Turkey.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, several different and contrasting approaches of mass media researches with special attention to the ones, heavily influenced by the Frankfurt School theorists and primarily focusing on the media text itself in order to decipher the meaning of the media messages, will be summarized first. Secondly, the powerful role of the mass media will be discussed as an ideological institution and as a mode of public pedagogy. The importance of entertainment serials successful in creating mass audiences in delivering pedagogical messages to masses as a new technology of communication will also be discussed in this section. Thirdly, the genres of soap opera and melodrama, the most popular genre among television serials in post-colonial contexts as in Turkey, will be introduced in order to understand how the structure of the genre of melodrama provides an excellent opportunity for teaching masses the morality of the modern. Lastly, television serials will be analyzed as narrative of change where conflict resolutions reached after conflictual phases occur in the narrative investing in delivering pedagogical messages to the viewers.

#### Mass Media Researches

Since the 1940's the most enduring question in mass media research has focused on the power of the media. This early research was informed by the Frankfurt School (Althusser, 1970, Horkheimer & Adorno, 1993, Marcuse, 1964) which utilized Marxist and critical theory and argued that mass media served the interest of the ruling class and worked to homogenize mass culture, destroying cultural values and artistic expression

(Benjamin, 1969). These theorists were concerned with the development of working class consciousness, and viewed the media, especially radio and television, as a tool used by the state to legitimize institutions and build a national consensus.

McLuhan (2001), on the other hand, focused on the specific technological characteristics of television. He argued the form of the message is the message itself. For him, the nature of television creates an intrusive environment altering time and space. This powerful medium becomes the message, altering the way that we think about ourselves and creating a global village with a single homogenized culture.

This early concern with the power of the message became the focus of increased criticism and debate in the 1970's, particularly by British cultural studies. These studies invested in reformulating this earlier debate by including either the audience in a more active role, or through the inclusion of a more detailed textual analysis. British cultural studies (Hall, 1980, 1992, Fiske, 1992, Turner, 1996) shifted the debate from one solely focused on the power of the message to one considered the way in which audiences actively engaged in the process of encoding and decoding the message in specific contexts. Within this framework, mass media provides audiences with ways of seeing and interpreting the world, ultimately helping to shape their very existence and participation within society. While the work done by these researchers is extremely varied, what it added to the debate was the inclusion of the audience as a site of analysis and a focus on researching specific communities and cultures and how they see their world, rather than just talking messages and meanings in isolation.

On the other hand, the studies grew out of literary criticism and cultural studies and therefore focused on the text as the primary means of uncovering the media's meaning and messages. This literature is diverse and varied with quite complex

theoretical arguments (Grossberg, 1994, Kaplan, 1983). Its main contribution lies in the ways that it emphasizes signification to shape the contours of fantasy, identity and social practice. While these textual studies acknowledge the importance of the Frankfurt School legacy which stresses the ideological components of media, they reject the notion that the audience is passive and somehow simply seen as consumers of the messages.

Even though viewers are well aware of the difference between real lives and the fictional programs they watch on television, this does not mean that the representations on the television screen carry no meaning nor have any social relevance or power. They still create powerful meanings for people and carry certain 'regimes of truth' which operate within the discourses of any production (Gordon, 1980). Gordon (1980), by referring to Foucault's definition of 'regimes of truth' states: "Each society has its regimes of truth, its general politics of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enables one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each one is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true" (p. 131). So even though a media production is not a reflection of reality, it still contains certain regimes of truth that operates within its discourses. For instance, some of the regimes of truth within a given media text would be the way that characters are created and portrayed, the moral issues that are raised within the story line, and the social messages that are presented to the viewers.

In this sense, the most pervasive approach to the study of mass media has been informed by the argument that the message is the key unit of cultural meaning, that it reflects society's dominant ideologies, and that it is somehow received into the popular

consciousness. According to this argument, heavily influenced by the Frankfurt School theorists, mass media is a powerful ideological institution, reflects the interests of the elite, and is responsible for the emergence of a homogenized mass culture through disseminating dominant ideology of the nation.

More and more researchers began to argue that a focus on actual audience behavior was necessary to understand the ways in which various texts are viewed and interpreted (Ang, 1996, Hall, 1980, 1992, Morley, 2000, Silverstone, 1992). While they admired the theoretical arguments developed through textual analysis, they started asking questions about the relevance of these insights into actual lived experiences of viewers. They rejected the various top down arguments being made by either positivist tradition concerned with quantitative methods or the critical theorists who still tended to view culture as monolithic. Instead, these researchers focused on the ways in which audiences subvert and rework popular texts in order to make their own meanings and to explore their own uses. Their studies focused on actual audiences and audience responses, showing more of a concern with exploring identity formation through utilization of media texts. These researchers focus on the diversity of media audiences, the multivocality of media texts, and the interpretive practices of audiences. However, many of these studies still utilize a linear analysis consisting of three discreet stages, message production, message transmission and message reception.

To work around the problem of utilizing linear analysis, many researchers focus on the consumption of media images as part of everyday life (Abu-Lughod, 2005, Ang, 1996, Mankekar, 1999, Morley, 2000). Many of these authors study the consumption of media images within an analysis of popular culture and modern consumer culture, including a broader analysis of capitalism and the proliferation of mass produced objects

and images in contemporary society. In order to contextualize this analysis of everyday life, these researchers broaden their analysis from the encoding-decoding model (Hall, 1980) to the socio-historical dimensions of textual production and reception, arguing that the cultural competencies necessary for the interpretation of particular narratives are differentially distributed. Therefore, they are arguing that not everyone is located identically in society, and their personal histories, social positions, as well as other aspects of their complex lives effect the ways in which they interpret, play with, consume and influenced by a given message.

### Mass Media, Ideology and Pedagogy

In the contemporary world, the media which has a central position in people's everyday lives is the most important producer of meaning. According to Grossberg (1994), it has a potential to become the site at which "meanings become more than meaning" (p.182), in a sense that it makes claims about the way the world is. Althusser (1970) defines media as an ideological state apparatus which serves to ensure the ideological dominance of the ruling class, in contrast to repressive state apparatuses (military, police) which operates mainly by force. Ideology, in Althusser's memorable words, is defined as "the system of representation in which people live out their imaginary relationship to their real conditions of existence" (p.36) and it works in a way that it positions individuals as the subjects of their own ideological statement and hence of their experiences. People believe themselves to be the arbiters of an experience that is in fact constructed by ideological codes. Althusser (1970) describes this process as interpellation -ideology's ability to assign individuals to specific positions within its own communicative (semiotic) representations of reality. The process of interpellation, then, occurs when

individuals are placed into particular social positions by and within cultural codes. The process works to place people into the various culturally constructed categories of identity. Thus, ideology converts human beings into subjects, and lets individuals mistakenly recognize themselves as self-determining agents, whereas in fact subjects are formed through ideological codes. The subject, in this sense, misrecognizes himself as a unique individual, rather than as a subject constructed through social processes. Mass media, then, form the main ideological institution or symbolic realm through which the manufacture of the dominant consensus is forged. It operates through the production of hegemonic codes that cement the masses all together. Further, the codes that represent the real in mass media are gathered from a limited range of dominant discourses, and the codes preferred or selected to be (re)presented achieve their ideological effect by appearing to be natural. So, the media appear to reflect reality while actually constructing it, just as the subject deceives himself about the source of his subjectivity.

When a huge strata of the population have become cultural consumers with the introduction of mass media, the accents on inwardness, inner conflicts, and psychological ambivalence have given way to unproblematic, cliché-like characterization (Bernstein, 2001). This way, the traditional values of the middle-class ideology have become the norms of an increasingly hierarchical and authoritarian social structure. The more inarticulate and diffuse the audience of mass media seems to be, the more mass media tend to achieve integration through representing ideals of conformity as clear-cut prescriptions of what to do and what not to do. The outcome of conflicts is pre-determined and the message is invariably the identification of the status quo. Thus, according to Bernstein (2001), “what matters in mass media is not what happens in real

life, but rather the positive and negative messages, prescriptions, and taboos that the spectator absorbs by means of identification with the material he is looking at” (p.173) as Adorno states brilliantly.

Following Adorno’s statement, it can be argued that mass media invest in ‘stereotyped way of looking at things’ by providing negative prescriptions of social groups and of their social identities in order to make these prescriptions and identities real in the eyes of the spectators. Even if stereotyped prescriptions or identities circulated in the media are only images, they still create powerful meanings for people and carry certain ‘regimes of truth’ as Foucault states. They come closer to determining the way some people think of and even behave toward members of different social groups in real life settings. And sometimes, if these stereotyped images are repeated often enough in the mass media, “people forget entirely that they are dealing with images; the images become the reality that determines the ways people, institutions, and even the governments act in the world” (p.224), as Grossberg (1994) states.

Hence, the process of (mis)representation of the reality operates as a process whereby the power relations are perceived not for what they objectively are, but rather in a form which renders them as ‘legitimate’ and ‘objective’ realities in the eyes of the masses. In this sense, the media as a force for commonsense learning constitutes a mode of public pedagogy, and contributes greatly to particular forms of recognitions and treatments. The role of mass media as a mode of public pedagogy indicates clearly “how the use of symbolic meaning work to put into play audiences’ attitudes and orientations towards social others and the material circumstances of their own lives” (p. 122) as Giroux (2006) argues.

Defining the frames, within which reality is experienced, perceived and interpreted, is always articulated and connected to the interest of the dominant classes, and it works to legitimize existing power relations and particular types of recognition and meaning, and to reproduce the social system as a whole. For Gramsci, the exercise of control by the ruling classes is characterized through “the struggle of hegemonic leadership” - the struggle to win the consent of mass culture to the existing order. According to Hoare & Smith (1971), Gramsci points to the complex ways in which consent defined as the ways in which the dominant logic is imposed on subordinate groups through the mechanizations of the culture industry and organized as part of an active pedagogical process within everyday life. In Gramsci’s view such a pedagogical process must work and rework the cultural and ideological terrain of popular culture in order to legitimate the interests and authority of the dominant class. Consent is structured through a series of pedagogical relations marked by an ongoing struggle over competing conceptions and views of the world between the dominant class and mass culture. The relationship between power and consent is not framed simply by registering how people are positioned and located through the production of particular ideologies structured by particular discourses, as Giroux (1989) argues. Pleasure also plays a central and important role in structuring the consent that one gives to a particular cultural form. Hence, the consent is not only articulated through the structuring of semantically organized meanings and messages, but also through the pleasures invoked in the mechanisms of cultural forms. If every relationship of hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship (Hoare & Smith, 1971) and pleasure plays a central role in hegemonic struggle (Giroux, 1989), mass media have an important role to play in educating mass culture in order to win their consent to the existing social structure. And,

the producers of these media images and texts as part of the intelligentsia contribute a lot to the process by which the existing power structure within the society is produced and reproduced.

In this sense, if we think the relationship between mass media and its audiences, the people are both pedagogical objects and performative subjects as Bhabha's formulation suggests. The creators of the mass media productions are the performative subjects who seek to shape, inform and educate mass culture, and those who are subjected to the pedagogical discourses of these productions are the intended objects of this hegemonic attempt as well as the performative subjects who not only appreciate and enjoy but also critically interpret, select and evaluate what the intellectuals produce in the context of their everyday lives (Bhabha, 1990). Thus, mass media serves to disseminate the dominant ideology of the ruling class to get the consent of the masses, and to educate mass culture through turning audiences into pedagogical objects of hegemonic and homogenizing discourses of the ruling class produced and delivered by performative subjects.

#### Television, National Integration and Modernity

Television operates as one of the key institutions for the (re)production of national culture. It is a key institution because of the fact, following Anderson (1991), that insofar as nations are "imagined communities", the mass media have roles to play in producing nations and national feelings in shaping national imaginaries. It is a technological medium that constructs an image of the unified nation, built around the experiences that we are all assumed to share, as members of the families as Morley (2000) states, by "creating an instantaneous network in which millions are simultaneous

recipients of the same powerful images” (p.27) as Novak (1981) suggests. In this sense, the long-running serials, through becoming part of the collective memory of entire groups of the national population, invest in national integration as Mankekar (1999) argues.

Television sits, in Turkey and elsewhere, in the home, at the heart of families, and it also has a direct relationship to public pedagogy, promoted as part of the larger nationalist project of building a modern nation. The explicit objective of television is to forge a modern, national culture through the televisual dissemination of discourses of development and national integration (Mankekar, 1999). Therefore, the purpose of television broadcasting in post-colonial contexts (as in Turkey) was always served to political and social projects, and entertainment was and continues to be part of its mission of nation building. Despite the abundance of many genres and the commercialization of television, the official didactic ideology of medium still persists. However a crucial shift from overtly didactic programs to entertainment has been experienced (Mankekar, 1999). Similarly, the Turkish television industry experienced a television serial boom in the last decade, a short period after the privatization of the television channels in the 1990s (Öncü, 2001). The pervasiveness of serials successful in creating mass audiences intensifies the role of television channels in the task of (re)producing national culture. Entertainment programs, especially television serials operate as means for disseminating pedagogical discourses and national moralities. TV serials then, are viewed not simply as entertainment but as a means to mold the national community in the sense that they are concerned with the morality of the nation, and they privilege dogmatic concerns at the national level. TV serials, then, begin to play an

important role in placing particular ideologies and values of the nation into public conversation (Giroux, 2006) and in intentionally trying to mold the mass culture.

Further, television serials are seen and appreciated by state officials and middle-class professional producers as particularly effective instruments of social development, national integration and modernization in the sense that they work with the nationalist project of building a modern nation through disseminating intentionally moral messages of dominant political ideologies as well as popularizing more subtly a distinctive configuration of narrative and emotionality, as Abu-Lughod (2005) states. In this latter way, television serials as a genre with certain conventions (morality and emotionality), may be understood as technology for production of new kinds of selves. They operate as a technology for “staging interiors through heightened emotionalism and thus constructing and encouraging the subjectivity of ordinary people” (Abu-Lughod, 2005). In this sense, the generic convention of emotionality may be even more important to the projects of building a modern nation than are the conscious pedagogical messages, because of the way it stages, and perhaps shapes selfhood. Thus, television serials engendering new modes of subjectivity through heightened emotionalism as well as investing in disseminating moral messages of dominant ideology have to be appreciated as a means of molding the national community, rather than as a mere entertainment.

### TV Serials as Means of Teaching Moralities

A television serial is above all, a continuous narrative in which each episode is connected to each other. The main characteristic of a TV serial as Ang (1985) points out that it “appeals to a historical sense of time: it constructs the feeling that the lives of the characters go on during our absence -i.e. between two episodes” (p.53). To encourage

this feeling, the end of an episode of a serial is in the form of a ‘cliffhanger’: “The narrative is broken off at a moment of a very great suspense, so that the viewers are encouraged to see the following episode if they want to know how the story goes on” (p.53). Ang (1985) argues that the cliffhanger used is a psychological one in Dallas as in the majority of the cases:

An episode ends most often at the moment when one of the characters lands in a new, psychologically conflictual situation. The last shot of an episode is then nearly always a close-up of face of the character concerned, which emphasizes the psychological conflict she or he is in. In one of the following episodes, - it does not necessarily need to be the next one – we are then shown how she or he handles the conflict, but meanwhile time proceeds and life goes on as normal. Such a construction offers viewers the possibility of having the feeling that time in Dallas more or less keeps pace with the time in which the viewers themselves are living. This fact in itself takes care of a specific dimension of ‘everyday realism’ – the life of the Ewings in Dallas flows on just like our own life (p.53).

The historical sense of time constructed through a cliffhanger invests on audiences’ realistic view of the serial. The psychological cliffhanger is a crucial element of emotional realism, which Ang (1985) uses against the empirical realistic view of the television serials, “in which a comparison of realities ‘in’ and ‘outside’ a text is central” (p.36). She brings forth the concept of emotional realism through which “the concrete situations and complications are rather regarded as symbolic representations of more general living experiences: rows, intrigues, problems, happiness and misery” (p.45). In this way, a television serial is recognizable only in terms of the emotional states and reactions to various situations as Ang (1985) suggests, rather than it is understandable in terms of outside reality as the empiricist realistic view of the media text suggests.

This is to ignore the fact that everything processed in a text is the result of selection and adaptation: elements of the ‘real world’ function only as raw material for the production process of the texts. The empiricist

conception denies the fact that each text is a cultural product realized under specific ideological and social conditions of production (p.37).

Hence, Ang's concept of emotional realism is crucial for our discussion of genre, in terms of the centrality of emotions as well as the ideological and social conditions in the production of television serials. In her discussion of *Dallas* as a soap opera, she examines the narrative qualities of the serial, yet stressing at the same time the encoding of the emotionality specific to the melodrama as a cultural form.

Ang (1985), in her study on *Dallas*, pays special attention to the emotional effect of the narrative which is investigated in *Dallas* as well as in many other American soap operas. She uses the term melodrama to introduce "the name for cultural genres whose main effect is to stirring up of emotions" (p.64):

Within the framework of a popular fiction form like the soap opera, exaggerated events such as kidnappings, marital dramas and chance meetings with great consequences should not be regarded and assessed for their referential value, but as bearers of the melodramatic effect (p.64).

According to Ang (1985), the melodramatic imagination in western context is an attempt to insert excessive emotion to untragic lives of people in the modern welfare state through bringing "into the drama of man's quotidian existence the higher drama of moral forces" (p.80):

There are no words for the ordinary pain of living of ordinary people in the modern welfare state, for the vague sense of loss, except in half ironic, half-resigned phrases such as: 'You win some, you lose some.' By making that ordinariness something special and meaningful in the imagination, that sense of loss can – at least for a time – be removed. It is in this world of the imagination that watching melodramatic soap operas like *Dallas* can be pleasurable: *Dallas* offers a starting point for the melodramatic imagination, nourishes it, makes it concrete (p.80).

Hence, according to Ang's argument the melodramatic imagination through which the 'ordinary pain of ordinary people' becomes something meaningful for the people

enjoying the well-being of the modern state is the ultimate aim in encoding the soap opera. It is certainly true that the audience appeal of these serials, with their larger than life emotions and sufferings, has something to do with “the way they compare to the trivialities of mundane middle-class life continuously reproduced in sit-coms” (p.6) as Öncü (2005) argues. But, as Akinerdem (2005) points out the melodramatic imagination is not something belonging only to the realm of the entertainment industry in post-colonial contexts. Rather, it is a mode of conception and representation that may appear to be the very process of reaching a fundamental drama of the moral life and finding the terms to express it that came into being in the nineteenth century in a world “where the traditional imperatives of truth and ethics have been violently thrown into question, yet where the promulgation of truth and ethics, their instauration as a way of *life*, is an immediate, daily, political concern” (p.12) as Brooks (1976) argues. It is a form specific to modern imaginary, as Peter Brooks (1976), inventor of the term ‘melodramatic imagination’ says. Brooks (1976) mainly defines melodrama as “the principal mode of uncovering, demonstrating, and making operative the essential moral universe” by making “the ‘real’ and ‘ordinary’ and the ‘private life’ interesting through heightened dramatic utterances and gestures that lay bare the true stakes” (p.15):

Like the oratory of the Revolution, melodrama from its inception takes as its concern and *raison d’être* the location, expression, and imposition of basic ethical and psychic truths. It says them over and over in clear language, it rehearses their conflicts and combats, it reenacts the menace of evil and eventual triumph of morality made operative and evident (p.15).

Hence, melodrama as a most popular genre in post-colonial contexts, invests in teaching the essential morality of the modern through melodramatic imagination which is created

by heightened conflict situations whose resolutions give pedagogical messages to mass audiences throughout the narrative.

At this point, it would be useful to go deeper in the analysis of the genre of melodrama by comparing and contrasting it with the characteristics of the genre of soap opera to understand further the role of melodramas as new modes of public pedagogy especially in post-colonial contexts.

### Soap Opera

In the soap opera genre, everything appears to personal life, even the issues related to the public sphere: “In the world of the soap opera all sorts of events and situations from the public sphere occur only in so far as they lead to problems and complications in the private sphere” (p.60) as Ang (1985) argues. This point is meaningful when we think in relation to Turkish television serials where most of the serials occur indoors and the main locales of the narratives are always the family residences. Within these narratives, all the issues belonging to the public sphere are portrayed throughout the narratives as the obstacles which lead to conflictual situations in the private life of the couples.

Another important point related to the soap opera genre is the fact that it is “entirely composed of an indefinitely expandable middle” through “placing ever more complex obstacles between desire and fulfillment” (p.184) as Modleski (1981) argues. Because of the ‘expandable middle’ characteristic of the soap opera genre, there are a large number of subplots, which are similar as well as leading to each other in the narrative. The issues related to the private sphere are encoded by repeating similar subplots within a continuous and endless narrative (Ang, 1985, Geraghty, 1999). Ang (1985) defines soap opera as “a continuous coming and going of mini-narratives, in an

uneven rhythm” (p.57). Geraghty (1999) stresses the very similarity of these mini-narratives, suggesting that their coming and going serves to screen all of the possible resolutions that a narrative can end up with. She also attributes a pedagogical role to the repetition of similar mini-narratives, through which a viewer can decide what will be the best way of resolution for the conflictual situation or event that he or she experiences.

Since there is no central narrative in soap operas, there is no central hero either. Not just one but many main characters are involved in the narrative. Modleski (1981) stresses the lack of a central hero in the soap opera genre:

Instead of giving us one ‘powerful ideal ego... who can make things happen and control events better than the subject/spectator can’, soap operas present us with numerous limited egos, each in conflict with the others, and continually thwarted in its attempts to control events because of inadequate knowledge of other people’s plans, motivations and schemes (p.193).

If there is no central character who occupies the most important position from a narrative viewpoint, the role of characters, according to Ang (1985), is assigned by “the community in which they live” (p.58):

In fact the unity of the soap opera is not created by all the individual characters together, but by the community in which they live. In that community (Dallas) they each occupy an established position. This community also appears to determine which possibilities of action are open to various characters. Not a single one of the characters escapes ‘the rules’ of that community; in this sense the soap-community is an enclosed community, like a village, a street, a hospital (p.58).

Hence, the soap opera genre continues endlessly around a number of similar mini-narratives, belonging to the private sphere of life, with no central character fighting out alone against the problems, conflicts and complications happening in the course of the narrative. Since the narrative expands forever and never ends, there is no resolution to be reached at the end of the text.

## Melodrama

As Abu-Lughod's argument on the differences between melodramas in Egypt and American soap operas says, Egyptian melodramas, like Turkish counterparts are finite narratives of ordinary people, unlike the infinitely expandable soap operas. Except from this structural difference between Egyptian and Western television serials, a much more important one which is crucial to our discussion is that melodramas in Egypt, which are the products of the state-sponsored modernist discourse are "more emotional and forthright in their moral lessons than contemporary Euro-American television dramas" (p.113) as Ang (1985) argues.

The founding characteristic of melodrama is the 'polarization of good and evil' to make 'moral and ethical imperatives' clearly defined. This polarization, according to Brooks (1976), is a worldly and personalized because there is no longer a possibility of conceiving moral universe other than in personal terms:

Melodramatic good and evil are highly personalized: they are assigned to, they inhabit persons who indeed have no psychological complexity but who are strongly characterized. Most notably, evil is villainy; it is a swarthy, cape-enveloped man with a deep voice. Good and evil can be named as persons are named – and melodramas tend in fact to move toward a clear nomination of the moral universe (p.16).

The representation of good and evil are concrete individuals in melodrama. Unlike the tragic hero who is divided as a consequence of a moral conflict stemming from inside, both the good (the hero) and the evil (the villain) in melodrama are not divided: they are perfect representative of the 'wholeness'. According to Heilman (1968), 'wholeness' implies neither greatness nor moral perfection, but rather an absence of the basic inner conflict:

Wholeness, in other words, is a technical structure of character and personality; in itself it is morally neutral; it means simply that in goodness or in weakness, the protagonist is, at the level of significant action, not a composition of divergent inner forces that would push him into the arena of choice and self-knowledge (p.80).

Hence, there is no place for inner conflict in melodrama; the conflict is from outside belonging to the ordinary, to the private life. As Brooks (1976) states the morality becomes operative and evident through dramatizing the polarization of good and evil even further:

Melodrama starts from and expresses the anxiety brought by a frightening new world in which the traditional patterns of moral order no longer provide the necessary social glue. It plays out the force of that anxiety with the apparent triumph of villainy, and dissipates it with the eventual victory of virtue. It demonstrates over and over that the signs of ethical forces can be discovered and can be made legible (p.20).

Thus, melodramatic imagination refers to and it is somehow related to modern imaginary by making the possibility of expressing explicitly how the moral order had operated before (tradition). This clear expression and nomination of the tradition as villain is a central concern of modern sensibility. The expression is enacted through the most visible confrontation of good and evil, and the ultimate victory of virtue over the villain. The struggle of good and evil operates in melodrama as the tool of formulating what 'modern virtue' is.

### TV Serials as Narrative of Change

Narrative structures serve as interpretative guides, they tell us what constitute as data, and place a construction on the media text that transforms the alien to the familiar, as Bruner (1991) states:

In my view, we begin with a narrative that already contains a beginning and an ending, which frame and hence enable us to interpret the present.

It is not that we initially have a body of data, the facts, and we then must construct a story or a theory to account for them. Instead, to paraphrase Schafer (1980:30), the narrative structures we construct are not secondary narratives about data but primary narratives that establish what is to count as data. New narratives yield new vocabulary, syntax, and meaning in our ethnographic accounts; they define what constitute the data of those accounts (p.143).

In this sense, it will be helpful to handle television serials as narrative constructions and analyze them accordingly. The experience of following a serial, above all, is to wait for the conclusion with heightened enthusiasm and curiosity. To heighten the curiosity of the audiences, there are conclusions to the events which occur in every episode, but the ultimate ending is always postponed. "The story's conclusion is the pole of attraction of the entire development" (p.170) as Ricoeur (1981) suggests. Thus, the pleasure of following a serial with curiosity continues as long as the conclusion is delayed with a number of obstacles, problems and conflicts occurring in each episode.

The plot of the soap opera which points to the indefinite delay of resolution as a crucial determinant of the genre is built on enhancing the expectation of a conclusion, yet never satisfies the expectation, and succeeds in attracting continuous attention of its viewers. Modleski (1981) argues that keeping the expectation alive, yet never reaching a conclusion serves the ultimate aim of the soap opera's encoding process: there is no perfection to be reached, yet the viewers inevitably desire it. The desire is hidden in the persistent waiting for the fulfillment of the expectation; however the desire persists as long as the expectation is not fulfilled.

According to Roland Barthes, the hermeneutic code, which propounds the enigmas, functions by making 'expectation ... the basic condition for truth: truth, these narratives tell us, is what is at the end of expectation. This design implies a return to order, for expectation is a disorder'. But, of course, soap operas do not end. Consequently, truth for women is seen to lie not 'at the end of the expectation', but in the expectation, not in the 'return to order', but in 'familial disorder' (p.191).

In contrast to soap opera, melodrama has a resolution. Since it has a resolution, the condition for truth is what is reached at the end of the disorder (expectation) -order reconstituted at the end of the disorder. Indeed, the pleasure of the narrative of melodrama genre is in waiting for the (re)solution to the conflicts situations that occur in each episode, leading to, as well as delaying in reaching an ultimate ending. According to White (1981), the audiences of the melodrama need a resolution to every conflict situation that occurred in each episode and an ultimate conclusion to a narrative so as to experience the 'regimes of truth' or 'moralities' they are subjected to:

Insofar as historical stories can be completed, can be given a narrative closure, can be shown to have had a plot all along, they give to reality the odor of the ideal. (...) The demand for closure in the historical story is a demand, I suggest, for moral meaning, a demand that sequences of real events be assessed as to their significance as elements of moral drama (p.20).

The demand for resolution is refreshed in every conflict situation experienced throughout the narrative. The narrative sets out a normative order, and a conflict occurs within that normative order, which is most of the time resolved in an unconventional way to teach moral virtues to audiences. That is to say, every conflict situation reaches a resolution which causes a shift in the normative order of the narrative. Bruner (1991) describes this kind of conflict situation with the term 'breach', which refers basically to the violation of the norm belonging to the realm of the structure of the narrative order:

The perpetual constitution and reconstitution of the past provides the forms of canonicity that permits us to recognize when a breach has occurred and how it might be interpreted (p.20).

In Bruner's (1991) terms, the violation of the norm is a breach which indeed makes a narrative worth-telling. Breach is a first phase in the social dramas, which Turner (1975) uses to refer to "public episodes of tensional irruption" or "aharmonic phases of the

ongoing social process” (p.33) and defined as “deliberate nonfulfillment of some crucial norm regulating the intercourse of the parties” (p.38). According to Turner (1975), the breach is followed by a liminal phase which is described as ‘crisis’ during which:

Unless the breach can be sealed off quickly within a limited area of social interaction, there is tendency for the breach to widen and extend until it becomes coextensive with some dominant cleavage in the widest set of relevant social relations to which the conflicting or antagonistic parties belong (p.38).

After the crisis, ‘redressive action’ comes into play in order to limit the extension of the mounting crisis. The final phase is ‘reintegration’ of the conflicting parties to restate the normative structure after each conflictual situation as Turner (1975) suggests:

When the interest and attitudes of groups and individuals stood in obvious opposition, social dramas did seem to me to constitute isolable and minutely describable units of social process. Not every social drama reached a clear resolution, but enough did to make it possible to state what was then called the “processional form” of the drama (p.33).

The normative structure of the narrative still persists through all the conflicts and changes. Rather, the structure operates as a tool through which changes, conflicts, divergences and resolutions become apparently visible in the eyes of its viewers.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ANALYSIS OF THE TELEVISION SERIAL SILA

When I first began to constitute the data of my research, an easily understandable television serial becomes a confusing “galaxy of signifiers” for me as a researcher (Bruner, p.16). It becomes alien, even chaotic; there is so much going on, all at once, that the problem becomes one of making academically acceptable sense of it. While studying a media text as a researcher, my audience subject position which makes me motivated to watch and find pleasure in the serial shifts to a different subject position belonging to academic discourse or discourses. I, as the researcher, aim to extract a narrative from the whole media text, which I count as data; rather than follow up the serial to just learn what happens next as an audience. Hence, narrative structures become interpretative guides for me to place a construction on the media text as Bruner (1991) suggests.

#### Methodology

The purpose of the study is to investigate how modern-traditional dichotomy is constructed through visual, generic and narrative qualities of domestically produced and consumed melodramas, to examine to what ends this dichotomy serves, and to decipher pedagogical messages embedded in and disseminated by these domestic television serials through conflict-resolution processes coming up from this dichotomy.

### Why *Sıla*?

The television serial *Sıla*, melodrama broadcasting on the private Turkish channel ATV, among many other domestic television serials, is selected as the focus of this research. The reason why *Sıla* was selected is that it was one of the most popular television serials in Turkey according to the findings of the research ‘Television Watching Behaviors of Women in Turkey’ which was conducted by *Radyo Televizyon Üst Kurulu* (the Supreme Board of Radio and Television) on May 2007. Also because it narrativizes mostly modern-traditional dichotomy, which is the main focus of this study since this dichotomy serves to teach moralities of the modern world to the viewers.

The first season of *Sıla*, broadcasting between September 2006 – May 2007, constitutes the data of this research. Even though the serial lasted for three seasons, due to the time constraint only the first season was included in this research. The season considered consists of 38 episodes, and each episode is one and a half hours long.

### Procedure and Analysis

Each episode of the first season of the serial was first, streamed via internet, and I tried to transfer these visual texts into an ordered written data to become ready for the analysis. In transferring these visual texts into a narrative form, the main focus was to first examine how modern-tradition dichotomy is constructed in this television melodrama and to detect conflict-resolution processes arising from modern-traditional dichotomy and consistently occurring throughout the narrative.

In examining how modern-traditional dichotomy is constructed, the contextual, visual (setting), and generic (melodrama) qualities of *Sıla* were briefly described. I first focused on the social context within which the serial was produced as well as consumed. Secondly, I investigated the visual aspects of the serial: the location as well as the material setting -decoration, housing, clothing etc. I handled visuality as the setting of the melodrama. Thirdly, I told the story, which is my reading of a long media text -a melodrama that lasted 38 episodes. Finally, I focused on the genre, since it is one of the features of the serial which gives a frame to a narrative.

After briefly describing the qualities of the serial through which modern-traditional dichotomy is constructed, I focused on detecting conflict-resolutions processes coming up from this dichotomy throughout the serial. I took narrative analysis as a theoretical and methodological path to analyze pedagogical messages disseminated through these conflict-resolution processes. In conducting narrative analysis of *Sıla*, Turner's (1975) conception of social drama was used and the text was handled as a narrative of change, and the conflict resolutions leading to a change in normativity were traced throughout the serial. The conflictual situations, the breaches within the narrative then, were the main objects of the analysis. I tried to identify the conflict-resolution processes gradually occurring within the narrative, and the questions I was seeking to answer during the analysis of the narrative are: What norm is violated, who carries out the resolution, how a resolution is reached and what the resolution teaches.

## Modern-Traditional Dichotomy

The modern-traditional dichotomy is encoded in *Sıla*, through visual, generic and narrative qualities of the serial. The social context within which media text is produced and consumed is also crucial for understanding intentional use of this dichotomy even in television serials. If television serials are cultural texts realized under specific ideological and social conditions, it is meaningful to have a closer look at social context in order to understand the reason why domestic television serials produced recently in Turkey are mostly about tradition. Following Öncü's (2005) classification of Eastern serials (such as *Sıla*), it can be argued that 'eastern' setting is constructed -the best decoration for appreciating modern virtue- as an index of tradition or backwardness, in contrast to the modern throughout the narrative. The generic and the narrative qualities of *Sıla* also contribute a lot to the construction of this dichotomy.

If the genre of the television serials gives frame to the narrative structure of the serials and determines the way the narrative is constructed, it would be meaningful and inevitable to analyze the genre of the Turkish television serials in order to understand how the narrative structure of the serials function as a way of disseminating pedagogical messages of the national ideology. Moreover, it is useful to underline the differences between soap opera and melodrama which appears to be the most popular genre among television serials in post-colonial contexts, where the experience of modernity occupies an important place within the nation-formation process as it is the case for Turkey as well. Despite the similarities in narrative qualities of Turkish serials with soap operas, it has fundamental differences in terms of narrative structure stemming from the cultural context in which it is encoded. If television serials are cultural texts contributing to and

influenced by a larger discursive practice of the culture within which they are produced and consumed, the difference between soap operas which are produced in the West and consumed in the global context, and locally produced as well as consumed serials is crucial to a proper discussion of genre.

### The Context

Books<sup>1</sup> published, films<sup>2</sup> and television serials<sup>3</sup> produced recently are mostly about tradition. The issue of honour crimes suddenly attracts the attention of many institutions as an object of study and they have published several reports about this issue. In addition, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have conducted studies describing honour crimes and analyzing the possible ways of intervention to abolish these crimes. The objective knowledge about honour crimes has been produced with reference to the concept of tradition, without even noticing the universality of patriarchal order, in order to both render the patriarchal hegemony of the modern invisible and legitimate the intervention of the modern into the tradition through development and education.

Violence in the name of honour, a sign of tradition, is always treated as the uniquely Eastern phenomenon caused by the traditional customs of Eastern culture in Turkey. However Mojab (2004) argues that the reason for the increasing intensity of the male dominance against women is the chaotic atmosphere of the war which destroys the social, economic and cultural fabric of Eastern society:

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<sup>1</sup> Faraç, Mehmet. (1998). *Töre Kışkacında Kadın*. İstanbul: Çağdaş Yayınları; Yirmibeşoğlu, Vildan. (2007). *Toprağa Düşen Sevdalar: Töre ve Namus Gereğiyle İşlenen Cinayetler*. İstanbul: Hürriyet Yayınları.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Karanlıkta Diyaloglar’, Melek Ulagay Taylan; ‘Kadına Ağıt’, Berin Balay Tuncer; ‘Mutluluk’, Abdullah Oğuz.

<sup>3</sup> Asmalı Konak, Zerda, Ezo Gelin, Sıla

Where war has led to the destruction of villages and major relocations of the population, the social and economic fabric of Kurdish life has been seriously disrupted. This has unleashed extensive tension, especially in gender relations. War has set off extreme male violence in the form of honour killing (p.16).

Hence, in the period of military conflict and internal displacement which results in destruction of socio-economic conditions of Turkish society as was experienced in southeastern and eastern parts of Turkey in a heightened intensity during 1990's, women have lived in a higher risk condition of being subject to sexual violence due to the destruction of order and law during the periods of emergency in these parts of Turkey. Following Mojab's point of view, it would not be wrong to argue that killings in the name of honour have occurred more frequently in southeastern and eastern regions of Turkey because of the fact that they are the regions devastated by war between Turkish security forces and militants, not because of the traditional and patriarchal structure of Eastern culture which is always and insistently indicated as the fundamental source of violence in the form of honour killing in Turkey.

Therefore, it would be inevitable to ask why violence in the name of honour is always treated as the uniquely Eastern phenomenon in Turkey, even though it can be explained, as it was mentioned above, with reference to military conflict. Before discussing briefly the reason why the issue of honour is mostly seen and discussed as an Eastern phenomenon to be cleaned up from social life, I first want to underline, following Hall (1996), the fact that in the temporality produced after the global experience of colonization, all localities start to produce their own identity in relation to others and according to the measure of civilization/development. The identity of both colonizer and colonized is thus constructed in a relation of identity/difference. Turkish culture, in this sense, needs to create its own contrasting other culture, as Sirman (2004)

argues, in order to hold up the image of Turkish culture as a modern, developed and gender equal culture.

Thus, in spite of the fact that Turkey has never been formally colonized, it can be argued that social practices, especially those related to the position of women in society, are assessed and rendered meaningful only in relation to those in the developed West. Nuclear families, and women active in public sphere and dressed in the European fashion, therefore become signs of modernity, and the concept of honour becomes laden with fear of backwardness (p.40).

Hence, honour is considered as an unresolved problem of 'backwardness' among the population who inhabit 'the East'. The 'backwardness' of the East, continuously produced and reproduced in juxtaposition to the 'developed' West, has become, according to Öncü (2005), "a way of understanding and explaining decades of stark rural poverty, impoverishment and out-migration of Kurdish populations" and "alternative versions of the past - told in terms of enforced 'Turkification' policies, deportations, and mass re-settlement of populations - have been unthinkable" (p.7). In this way, the notion of 'the East' becomes a sign for "a generic construct, inscribed in dualistic opposition to the dominant order" and it refers to "an undifferentiated ethno-religious category to signify those who come from the East, assumed to be Kurdish" (p. 7).

Turkish culture, therefore, struggles in defining 'honour' as a social practice of 'other traditional culture' (Eastern culture) in order to construct its own modern identity. As Sirman (2004) points out this is mainly the effect of the developmentalist perspective that is inclined to see both the honour code and social relations regulated with relation to it as "an anachronism in the modern society they hope to be living in" (p.40). The definition of the concept of honour with reference only to the population who inhabit the East allows us, according to Sirman (2004), to use the concept "with the consequence that the term is seen to be irrelevant to the control of women in other (more developed)

parts of the world (or Turkey)” (p. 41). In the context of Turkey, the relegation of honour crimes to the regions of the country where the social life has been regulated by *töre* (tribal customs) is signaled through the use of the term *töre cinayeti* (customary crimes) to refer to these crimes.

To see honour as a traditional concept is to define what is modern as gender equal and to imagine that it will disappear with development and education. The use of honour, then, serves to neutralize patriarchal hegemony of the so-called modern societies through rendering invisible the modes through which it still regulates or controls the identity and the life of all women who live in different parts of the world. Indeed, the use of the term ‘honour crimes’ with reference only to a particular part of Turkey (southeastern and eastern regions of the country) make the control over women in other more developed parts of Turkey irrelevant or invisible. In addition, it provides a space for legitimizing the intervention of the modern into the sphere of tradition in order to save women from the oppressive customs of the traditional society through various modern institutional mechanisms and maneuvers (Mc Clintock, 1995, Narayan, 1997). The belief in the necessity of helping women dominated by traditional customs of tribal structure of Eastern culture legitimizes the intervention of the modern to uplift and educate the population in order to end male violence exercised upon women in the form of honour crimes in the particular under-developed parts of Turkey. In this sense, it becomes crucial to define the tradition and know its violence and its resistance towards transformation, development and modernization to render the modern intervention legitimate (Koğacıoğlu, 2008). Thus, the reason why special attention was given recently to speak about tradition and to find social actors oppressed under the tradition has been rendered acceptable and legitimate.

## The Genre

*Sıla*, which mostly invests in good-evil dichotomy, is a melodrama about tradition as well. It has to be classified as melodrama, not as soap opera because it, like any other locally produced serial in Turkey, first of all, reaches a resolution at the end. Unlike the imported soap operas, Turkish serials reach a resolution. Furthermore, we can argue that the central theme and central hero, while lacking in the soap opera genre, is indeed the founding characteristic of the Turkish serials, among which *Sıla* occupies an important place. As we have seen in the previous section, the story revolves mainly around Boran (the leader of the tribal community) and Sıla (the wife of Boran as well as the representative of the modern) and the two appear as the central hero and heroine of the serial. This may be the case in the soap operas, since the centrality of emotional experiences of individuals is a common feature of the genre. However, what is distinctive, in *Sıla*, from the soap opera genre is the fact that they are the central characters in the narrative because they give a new way of thinking to the old-fashioned customs of the Genco community. This distinction in *Sıla* can only be understood by taking into consideration the context of Turkey, where the experience of modernity occupies an important place within the nation-formation process.

Hence, despite the similarities in narrative qualities of *Sıla* with soap operas, it has fundamental differences in terms of narrative structure stemming from the cultural context in which it is encoded. I argue that these differences cannot be understood independently of the experience of modernity in Turkey. Locally produced melodramas (such as *Sıla*), unlike soap opera produced in the West, are not something belonging only to the realm of entertainment. Rather it “may appear to be the very process of

reaching a fundamental drama of the moral life” (p.12) as Brooks (1976) suggests. So, it is “more emotional and forthright in their moral lessons than contemporary Euro-American television melodramas” (p.113) as Ang (1985) argues. In this sense, it is meaningful to think of *Sıla* in relation to melodramas produced in postcolonial contexts, about which we have an idea through the writings of Abu-Lughod (2005), Mankekar (1999) and Rofel (1994).

In terms of genre, melodrama both as a literary and a television genre refers to stories telling of the struggle between good and evil and the ultimate appreciation of good over evil (Heilman, 1968). This is the primary reason why I prefer to call *Sıla*, as well as other domestically produced serials similar to *Sıla*, melodrama. The plot of *Sıla* is mainly constructed on the struggle of modern (the good) and traditional (the evil), which is a necessary precondition for the genre melodrama. I call *Sıla* a heroic melodrama, since there are two central heroes of the narrative: Boran and Sıla. Boran is a local hero fighting against the negative traditions of the tribal society in which he has grown up. Sıla is an outsider who has lived in Istanbul and is brought into the society to marry Boran. She serves as a model for local female protagonists who eventually struggle to break with the traditional customs of the tribal society. The main tension which sustains the narrative is their struggle to cope with modernity, represented by their love.

Love in *Sıla* is depicted as a threat to traditional order of the tribal society as well as an index of modernity. The struggle of good and evil is enacted in the confrontation or dilemma of the order of tradition vs. modernity, where tradition is represented as villain and constructed as essentially the bad side of the struggle. The two sides of the struggle are mainly represented by Boran-Sıla (the good) and Cihan (the evil). Cihan, the

older cousin of Boran who tries to safeguard the interest of the tribal community against the modernity, is the representative of the tradition. Hence, the two sides of the main struggle between tradition and modernity are personalized and clearly represented in the name of two rival characters: Boran and Cihan (Boran's role as the tribal leader is also questioned). The serial ends, with the appreciation of the good, when Boran shoots Cihan (tradition) for the sake of his familial unity (modern).

### The Setting

Mardin, the setting of the serial *Sıla*, is a city situated in the South Eastern Anatolian region of Turkey, located on a rocky mountain overlooking the plains of Mesopotamia, known for its unique architectural, archeological and historical merits and with its very mixed population consisting of Arabs, Kurds, Turks, Syrians and Yezidis. The author as well as the director of the serial Gül Oğuz states that she preferred Mardin as a setting of the serial despite the fact that there are some other cities, in the South Eastern Anatolian region, where the number of honour killings is higher, because of its 'strange beauty' and the 'naturalness' of its people:

It is very strange, very beautiful here. Like Jerusalem. Three religions, five cultures... I chose it for its visuality in the first place. (...) There is naturalness in humanity that comes from living so close to life and death, closely interrelated with violence and in touch with the soil <sup>4</sup> (Hürriyet Pazar, 17 September 2006).

As it is the perfect case in *Sıla*, 'the East' is framed for consumption in a number of television melodramas currently on the air. I use the term 'East' as Öncü (2005) defines

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<sup>4</sup> Burası çok tuhaf, çok güzel. Kudüs gibi. Üç din, beş kültür... İlk olarak görselliği için seçtim. (...) İnsanlarda toprakla ilişkili, şiddetle iç içe, ölümle yaşam arasında olmanın getirdiği bir doğallık var.

it: “a kind of unsettled space or an unresolved problem in that space, which continues to plague the health and well being of the Turkish nation” (p. 1). The eastern serials in Turkey, Öncü (2005) argues, attract the viewers’ attention because of the fact that they are a mise-én-scene of this symbolic geography.

Traveling in the direction of ‘the East’, means moving backwards in time, towards a distant past fraught by ethnic cleansings and sectarian violence - which refuse to go away in the present. Its symbolic geography marks the ‘outside of the nation, at the margins. Yet it is such an “indelible part of the nation’s body” (to directly translate from Turkish) that it must be defended against all threats to tear it apart, “at any cost” - as recently demonstrated by the ravages of the fifteen year war of attrition between armed Kurdish dissidents and the Turkish military (p. 1).

The setting in *Sıla* is also constructed as the East, as an index of tradition and backwardness – a major threat for the modern Turkish nation. The essential ingredient of the popularity of the eastern serial, according to Öncü (2005), must depend on “their depiction through settings, cultural references, characters and narrative plots that are identifiable to the mainstream Turkish public as ‘Eastern’” (p. 11). What differentiates Eastern serials is not the way they tell the story, but the locale of the narrative where they take place - in the ‘world of East.’

The emptiness and the strangeness of the land as a setting is the crucial feature of Eastern serials in order to mark the land and the people as Eastern, as Öncü (2005) argues:

While much of the action takes place indoors, viewers are constantly reminded of the ruggedness of the land, which lies beyond. The harshness, the barrenness of the land itself is used both to remind the viewer that this is the ‘East’, and also to accentuate the intensity of emotions characters experience. When characters stare out of the window towards the mountain ranges beyond for instance, or a car (sometimes convoys of cars) speeds along a highway, which stretches across a desolate, barren landscape, we know as viewers, that this is a moment of high drama (p. 11).

The construction of the ‘East’, as well as the emotional intensification in the narrative of melodrama goes together in the scenes of empty lands. The trope of empty land, above all, is “the sign of a place outside time and history, waiting, indeed beckoning, for Western intervention and development” (p. 12), according to Öncü (2005). So the way of reading emptiness in Eastern serials may surely be as “enunciating colonial stereotypes of ‘backwardness’ or the outposts of civilization” (p. 12) as Öncü (2005) argues. Moreover, the excessive emotions experienced by the characters along the narrative are heightened by screening out an empty landscape which reminds the viewers continuously that they are spectators of the East. This is the case in *Sıla*, when Boran (the hero) stands on the terrace gazing at the small town and large empty land surrounding it while trying to make his final decision after his sister runs away to her lover without getting permission from heads of the tribal community, or when Sıla (the heroine) runs away hastily after she escapes from the house in order to return to İstanbul or when Boran (the hero) speeds his car along a highway in order to catch Cihan’s (the evil’s) car before something terrible happens, or Boran (the hero) rides his horse in the empty fields after he rapes Sıla (the heroine), or when Boran meets Emre (Sıla’s ex-boyfriend) on the terrace of hotel overlooking the plains of Mesopotamia to show all the land and the people he owns in order to threaten him, or when Sıla (the heroine) gives up the idea of escaping to Istanbul after she gazes at the empty lands of Mardin while Azad (Sıla’s brother) tries to persuade his lover Narin (Boran’s sister) to escape for the sake of Sıla (the heroine) and their love.

The setting of *Sıla* is constructed as the ‘East’ also through the indoor images of the tribal manor house referred to as a *konak*. The typical image of *konak* in an eastern serial, according to Öncü (2005), is such that there is a large courtyard, and rooms are

organized around it. The *konak* is not only a physical setting as such, but also an “organizing center of bristling tensions among extended family members” (p. 13):

The manor house is a multi-family dwelling set around a large courtyard, commensurate with the wealth and political influence of a large landowner. As such, it has numerous dependents, - rural tenants, overseers, armed guards – that come and go into the courtyard, but rarely enter the house itself. These are visually depicted as rustic-looking characters, wearing black (Kurdish) pantaloons with saggy looking rear ends, and red-and-white checked (poşu) scarves on their heads or shoulders (p. 13).

The organization of the *konak* indeed illustrates how the social life is hierarchically organized among the tribal community as well as among the members of the family. Public conversations take place in the courtyard which is open to every member of the community. The hall where most of the serious topics concerning to the family are discussed, on the other hand, has a much more privileged position: it belongs only to the members of the family. The bedrooms are the private spaces of the members, organized according to the familial hierarchy. The male child of the family and his wife (Boran and Sila) own a flat in the *konak* with a balcony and bathroom, whereas the female child of the family and her husband (Narin and Azad) live in a smaller and modest room. The parents (Firuz and Kevser) have a bedroom situated on the top floor of the *konak* overlooking the plains and the houses of their own lands.

In the organization of the tribal community, the basic reference is ‘the tribal codes of morality’. What is repeatedly verbalized as “our moral codes” by the characters of the serial serves to define communal ‘us’, which threatens to disintegrate unless its moral codes are protected by each member of the entire tribe. So the world of the East is framed in terms of the loyalty to tribal codes of morality, rather than the law of the state as a primary source of governance. The outside world is a threat to this communal

harmony (Öncü, 2005) and every conflict situation has to be solved according to the moral code of the tribal community.

In order to clarify the modern-traditional dichotomy, Istanbul is also used as the setting of the serial. Indeed, Istanbul is Sila's (the heroine's) original place, where she wishes to live with Boran (the hero). Hence, Istanbul is the place of modernity so that Dilan (Sila's sister) goes there to pursue her education, Azad (Sila's brother) comes there with Sila (the heroine) to become a business man, Narin (Boran's sister) changes her dress style and Zinhar (Boran's uncle) does not wear his traditional head scarf (poşu). The fantasy of moving to Istanbul is a crucial subplot of the narrative.

Thus, encoding the setting of the serial as 'east' serves to attract viewers' attention in the sense that it is a mise-en-scene of the symbolic geography of the East, as Öncü (2005) argues. The construction of the setting as 'east' is an important element of constructing the tradition, and hence the best decoration for appreciating modern virtue by contrasting it with what is traditional, hierarchical or eastern. The narrative makes use of the tension between the traditional and the modern and very much focuses viewers' attention to the evil characteristics of the traditional way of life experienced in the East, in contrast to good aspects of the modern living conditions of the West.

### The Story

The story begins on the day when Narin (Boran's sister) runs away with Azad (Sila's brother) in order to marry him. It is the moment that Boran, *ağa* (leader of tribal community) as well as the hero of the serial, has to make a decision between either allowing the murder of both Narin and Azad or getting married to a woman from Azad's family as Firuz (Boran's father) reminds him with the words:

Firuz: Look son, it is not easy to keep twenty thousand people together. I warned you before you became an *ağa* (leader of tribal community). There comes a day if she deserves it you take your mother's life. There comes a day if she deserves it you put a red belt around your sister's waist and organize a wedding. It's always been this way and it always will be. Now, you cannot kill your sister Narin, I can understand you. It hurts me too. But if you don't want any bloodshed, go ahead and marry the girl in return to your sister. Save us from the pain of losing a child, honour us with a grandchild.<sup>5</sup>

Boran decides to marry in order to prevent his sister's death. Sıla, the heroine of the serial, has been brought from Istanbul, where she lived with her step family to whom she was sold when she was a child, to marry Boran. They get married at the very beginning of the serial. But, their marriage is an arranged and forced one and they begin to know and love each other in the course of their marriage. Hence, the overarching problem of this narrative is to carry on in this marriage despite all the problems they come up against at the very beginning of and during their marriage.

Boran, as the male hero, stands for the 'social' in the narrative in the sense that the life in Genco community entails a set of social norms and he, as the head of the community, is dedicated to preserve the normative order of the community. He is, at the same time, a handsome, educated and respectful *ağa* (leader of tribal community) whom Sıla falls in love with at first sight. Boran, at the very beginning of the narrative, is portrayed as having excess heroic virtues and the narrative is dedicated to curing those excessive parts of traditionality during their marriage.

After the wedding, Sıla starts to live with Boran in his *konak*, as *gelin ağa* (wife of the leader of tribal community). In contrast to the heroic virtues of Boran, stemming

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<sup>5</sup> Firuz: Bak oğul, yirmi bin kişiyi bir arada tutmak kolay değildir. Ağalığı sana vermeden önce de demiştim. Gün gelir anan hak ederse canına kıyarsın, gün gelir bacın hak ederse kırmızı kuşağı beline dolayıp düğün kurarsın. Yıllardır böyle gelmiş böyle gidecek. Şimdi, Narin bacına kıyamazsın, anlarım. Benim de içim sızlar. Ama kan dökülmesini istemiyorsan, var git bacın karşılığı kız al. Bizi evlat açısından kurtar, bizi bir torunla şereflendir.

from the social position he is assigned to, Sila's heroism comes from her naturalness, which is depicted as modern virtue. She feels free of the social norms that limit the people's thoughts and behaviors. The only bond in her life is her great love towards Boran and this great love weakens all other obligations people have towards each other in the community. That is to say, love has a destructive character in a sense that it creates a dangerous confrontation between the social (tradition) and the natural (modern). Hence, the narrative has to cope with the issue of love as well as tribal order in order to restate the normative order to reach a happy ending.

The main theme of the serial is Boran and Sila's love, and the narrative is built on the troubles they go through in their marriage. One of the troubles narrated as one of the main subplots of the narrative is the necessary priority of *töre* (tribal customs) in Boran's life as an obligation of a social situation he is assigned to - the head of the tribal community. Boran (the social) always confronts Sila (the natural) who is not accustomed to living under the rules of *töre* (tribal customs) and who insists on resisting the bondage of social obligations. Sila argues with Boran to fight against the rules of *töre* (tribal customs) which treat the people of the community as slaves in order to free the people through investment, education and development, but Boran makes her remember the fact that an *ağa* (leader of tribal community) cannot change the rules of *töre* (tribal customs) with the words:

Boran: Leaders of tribal communities do not write *töre* (tribal customs), they just implement them properly.<sup>6</sup>

Boran is in trouble, stuck between his great love towards Sila and his assigned social obligation of being the head of the community. Sila blames him of being a cool

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<sup>6</sup> Boran: Ağalar töre yazmaz, sadece uygular.

murderer and stays away from him whenever violence occurs in the community. On the other hand, he is blamed for ‘becoming a toy in his wife’s hand’ among the community if he does not take the proper actions that *töre* (tribal customs) dictates.

In order to become free from the rules of *töre* (tribal customs), Sila intends to escape from Mardin several times, in the course of the narrative, in spite of her great love towards Boran. At the very beginning of the serial, Sila escapes by slipping out the door of the *konak* when she catches an unexpected opportunity to run away. But she is caught by Cihan, the villain of the serial, and brought back to the *konak*. In the middle of the serial, she escapes to İstanbul with Azad and Narin with the help of Emre, her ex-boyfriend, after Narin has lost her baby due to the harsh treatment of her mother towards her husband Azad. Following their escape, Celil and Boran are sent to İstanbul after them with the decision of the tribe council in order to clean up the honour of the community by killing all three escapers. Then, death sentences for all three of them are delayed for a while after Sila’s pregnancy becomes known. At the very end of the narrative, she runs away to Europe with Bedar, her mother, and Emir, her younger brother, in order to give birth to her son in a place far away from Mardin leaving Boran (the social) behind.

In addition to the necessary priority of tribal customs in the life of Boran, Boran’s jealousy towards Emre, who is Sila’s ex-boyfriend from İstanbul as well as the lawyer of her family’s holding, is also narrated as a threat to their great love and becomes a crucial subplot within the narrative. Indeed, Boran is aware of Emre’s love for Sila, which drives him mad in the very beginning of the narrative. He uses violence against Sila, rapes her, after Sila goes to meet Emre in Mardin in order to talk about business issues with him. Afterwards he blames himself for treating her violently and

tries several ways such as sending her a rose on the top of a dove in order to be forgiven by her. Boran's excessive masculinity is mostly narrated through jealousy.

Sıla also gets into trouble with the women around Boran. The first is Yezda, Boran's ex-wife. She is a very beautiful woman for whom Boran resisted his family in order to marry her. They love each other very much, but she commits suicide because she blames herself for not being able to give a child to the head of the community. Sıla gets jealous of her after she listens to their love story from Narin, tries to get in Yezda's and Boran's room which stays locked always and begins to act intimately with Boran to win his heart. The second threat is an outsider: Gizem enters *Sıla* in the middle of the narrative, as Boran's business partner - indeed Emre's female counterpart. This is the period after Sıla's escape to İstanbul, a period when both Sıla and Boran question their love towards each other. Gizem is a business-woman, spending a great deal of her time with Boran in the office – the holding of the Genco family in İstanbul. Indeed nobody likes Gizem, since she is not only a rival to Sıla, but a serious threat to the well-being of the Genco community since Sıla decides to have an abortion due to the fact that Boran falls in love with Gizem.

Hence, *Sıla* is a love story that narrates Sıla and Boran's love as it passes through difficult twists and turns. Difficulties stemming from the priority of tribal customs in Boran's life (social) and their jealousy towards each others' intimate relations (natural) are narrated. Throughout the narrative, "the social" is questioned ("the natural" is left unquestioned) and is attempted to be solved by submission to love on which familial unity is based as well as to rule of law which is the ultimate morality of the modern. Hence, the truth of the serial is the superiority of love over other forms of relationships as well as of the law of *töre* (tribal customs) - the modern to the traditional.

## Conflicts-Resolution Processes

It has been already mentioned that *Sıla* is a melodrama, in which the hero and the heroine's love is the central theme. The narrative basically revolves around their involvement in the conflict-resolution processes. According to the logic of melodramatic genre, the one who solves the conflict is the hero of that narrative. The themes worked out through the narrative ends either with a catastrophic event, or the hero's unexpected decision that causes a major turn in the normative order. The term 'breach' refers to those processes which create fundamental changes in the normativity of the narrative. To focus on conflict-resolution processes occurring consistently throughout the narrative enables us to analyze the major turns which cause the change in the norms, and to identify the hero within the narrative.

The focus of conflicts revolves around the issue of tradition. *Sıla* is, above all, a love story, but not a usual one, as I stated before. Boran and *Sıla*'s love is narrated from the time they were married by force in order to save the lives of two lovers Azad, brother of *Sıla* and Narin, sister of Boran. From that time on, they face several problems that have to be resolved. The narrative also problematizes various issues in order to resolve the conflicts which are related to the issue of tradition: social and economic under-development, and violence against women in the form of honour killings etc. Hence, the narrative is mainly dedicated to resolving the conflicts arising from the traditional social order which is experienced in Eastern parts of Turkey.

There are two main issues to be handled with reference to tradition throughout the narrative. First is the issue of social hierarchy based on the tribal order and threatened by *Sıla*'s submission to love as a new kind of relationship for the tribal

society. To bring love to the tribal society creates a problem in the normative order and this problem has to be resolved. The narrative is dedicated mainly to the solution of this problem. It is crucial to note that the issue of love is not a novel theme for Turkish literature, but an old issue to be considered in the making of the new nation. Sirman (2000), in her study on Halide Edip's novels written during the establishment of Republican Turkey, traces the narrative construction of women as 'national and conjugal subjects' in love stories. She argues that the issue of love, which is resolved by appealing to God in traditional love tales, is questioned again in the modern period. The authority of the old rule is replaced by modern sensibilities, and the women of modern Turkey are constructed as emotional subjects who willingly sacrifice their personal desires for loyalty to a collectivity larger than the person, to notions of the companionate family, and further to the well-being of the nation. Hence, the meaning of love is figured with reference to basic structure of modern imaginary where the issue of love has been a central focus, as Sirman (2000) argues.

Modernity in Turkey is conceived as being made up of collectivity of nuclear families within which reign peace and serenity. Relations between husband and wife, parents and children are supposed to be regulated according to love (*sevgi*), rather than the obedient respect of traditional Ottoman society. (...) According to this imaginary, the Ottoman family was the locus of strife and subordination, especially for women who were subjected to the double inhumanity of polygamy and repudiation. The modern republic, by contrast, recognized women's rights within the family and made them (not so equal) members of the family. The existence of past in imaginary form serves to attribute the present the task of signifying modernity (p. 266).

So, the feminine as well as masculine sides have to struggle against traditional social order to reach the true form of the nuclear family. Both Boran as the leader of the tribal community and Sila are constructed as the subjects of love, passing through difficult twists and conflicts based on the hierarchical structure of tribal order. Sila prioritizes

love against social obligations while Boran has to both respond to her love and act as the head of a large and powerful tribal community.

The narrative, apart from declaring consistently the superiority of love over the rule of tribal order, also tells us what kind of love has to be attained as well as appreciated. Through contrasting Boran and Sila's love with Cihan's relationship with his lover Esma, the narrative prioritizes love for reaching the true companionate family, instead of *aşk* (passionate love) which has always been an old conflict to be resolved in the making up of the new nation. Sirman, in her study on Halide's Edip's novels written during the establishment of Republican Turkey, traces the narrative construction of women as national and conjugal subjects in love stories and she argues that the problem of passionate love is questioned again in the modern period. The meaning of love, according to Sirman (2004), is figured with two mutually exclusive Turkish words:

*Aşk*, passionate love and *sevgi*, the deep attachment between intimate persons such as friends, parents and also between the individual and the nation, citizen and state and among citizens themselves that creates the fraternity described by Anderson in his analysis of nationalism... According to Halide Edip's version, *aşk*, when transformed into *sevgi*, has the power to curb both femininity and masculinity to create the subjects of companionate family (p. 236).

As Sirman's statement suggests, the women of modern Turkey are constructed as emotional subjects who willingly give up their personal desires (passionate love) by appealing to the notions of companionate family, and further to the well being of the nation.

The second important issue brings the problem of honour into question, which constitutes a significant subplot of *Sıla*, an issue which was also in the media discussions in the period it was aired. Honour is one of the most problematic issues in the experience

of modernity in Turkey. Sirman (2004) points out different viewpoints to honour crimes which are contested in post-colonial contexts:

Those who live according to the code of honour see such violence as necessary for the protection of virginity and of gendered values, while those who try to struggle against them define these crimes and the value system they are related to as ways to controlling women and their bodies. The politically hegemonic groups in these societies, in their turn, see these crimes as remnants of a traditional order that will be eradicated through education and modernization (p. 39).

Resolving the problem of honour killings is a contested issue of the hegemonic discourse of modernization in Turkey, since it is depicted as ‘an anachronism in the modern society’ to be eradicated only through development and modernization.

I will elaborate how the serial resolves these main two conflicts in order to uncover pedagogical messages that are disseminated through the ways in which the resolutions are reached following these conflicts.

### The Problem of Social Hierarchy

Sıla’s entrance into the Genco community as Boran’s wife is the initiator of social drama, an aharmonic phase in the narrative, because Sıla enters the community as an outsider. Sıla is brought from İstanbul to Mardin to marry Boran, because Narin (sister of Boran) and Azad’s (brother of Sıla) run away to come together. Sıla is a new-comer in Mardin, even though she was born there, she grew up in İstanbul, and not a part of the harmonic structure within which Genco community lives. Hence, she does not understand the value system on which the social order of tribal community is based and resists consistently against it in her own way. Boran tries to explain to her that the social order in the community is regulated according to *töre* (tribal customs) on the very first night that they come together with the words:

Boran: This is your honour. And your honour is your brother's life and my sister's life. I took you as a wife in return for 'berdel'. If this marriage didn't occur your brother and my sister would be killed. In this land the law is *töre* (tribal customs). In *töre* (tribal customs) neither your nor my judgment counts.<sup>7</sup>

But, she challenges him by reminding him that the country they all live in is a free country, and he cannot hold her by force even if he is a powerful head of a tribal community, and she escapes when she catches an unexpected opportunity to run away. Following her first attempt to escape, a catastrophic event occurs in the narrative with Azad's shooting by Cihan while Sıla is running away to escape. Azad's shooting is the first scene of harmful violence that is witnessed by Sıla, and the scene is accompanied with background music about the unfairness of *töre* (tribal customs) that is repeated whenever honour violence occurs in the narrative:

This is not God's order, this is the mind of mortals  
It's not coming from God, are babies born with guns?

Töre töre, töre, could man become slave of man  
You put hatred in this heart, what kind of justice is this?<sup>8</sup>

With the arrival of Boran, a redressive action occurs. He brings Sıla back home, and resolves the conflict by saying that she did not escape, but she went out to come to his office and he explains what happens if she escapes:

Boran: If ever you run away from this house, all the tribe will start looking for you. They will kill you and Narin and Azad as well. Then I cannot stop this death.

Sıla: But why? Why do their lives depend on mine?

Boran: It is the *töre* (tribal customs).

Sıla: How can you be so cool talking about death?

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<sup>7</sup> Boran: Bu, senin namusun. Senin namusun da, ağabeyinin canı, kız kardeşimin canı. Seni berdel karşılığı gelin aldım. Eğer bu nikâh kıyılmasaydı, ağabeyinle kız kardeşim ölecekti. Bu topraklarda yasalar törelerdir. Törelerde ne senin ne de benim hükmüm geçer.

<sup>8</sup> Allah'ın emri değil bu, kulların aklı/Haktan gelen değil bu, bebeler doğar mı silahlı  
Töre töre, töre, olur mu kul kula köle/Kin koydun bu kör yüreğe, böyle adalet olur mu

Boran: I told you earlier, the life of all of us depends on *töre* (tribal customs). There is no turning back.<sup>9</sup>

Even though Boran explains repeatedly to her that the social and normative order of the society in which they live is regulated according to *töre* (tribal customs), Sıla struggles to bring a new form of relationship to the community. According to her, love is the only bond that brings people together, and it serves to undermine other types of relationships based mainly on social hierarchy.

The problematic of their love is narrated around Boran's jealousy, and Sıla's insistence on resisting against *töre* (tribal customs). They are doubtlessly in love, but Sıla consistently speaks about her desire to escape. Besides, Boran is a head of a tribal community with his obligations predetermined by *töre* (tribal customs). He is also a tough man, an 'eastern man', so that he claims to control the boundaries of Sıla's desire to resist *töre* (tribal customs), as well as anything else related to Sıla. The problem is that Sıla does not want to stay within those boundaries. In contrast to Boran, she is 'a western woman'. That is to say, she is depicted as outside those power relations of which Boran is the center.

In the beginning, Sıla was unaware of the power struggle between Boran and Emre, which turns around her desire to escape to İstanbul. Emre is the ex-boyfriend of Sıla, as well as the lawyer in the company owned by Sıla's family. Emre challenges Boran, by reminding him that there is law in the country, and he cannot hold her by force for a long period of time. On the other hand, Boran is aware of this challenge, and

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<sup>9</sup> Boran: Ne zaman ki bu evden kaçarsın, bütün aşiret peşine düşer. Seni de, Azad'ı da Narin'i de öldürürler. O zaman bu ölümü durduramam.

Sıla: Neden peki, neden onların hayatları bana bağlı?

Boran: Töre böyle.

Sıla: Nasıl bu kadar sakın bahsedebiliyorsun ölümden?

Boran: Sana daha önce de söyledim, hepimizin canı töreye bağlı. Bundan dönüş yok.

threatens Emre to leave Mardin and stay away from his wife, presenting him with the power he has and the wealth he owns in the region. As soon as Sıla becomes aware of this struggle, she makes Boran jealous of Emre by calling him back to Mardin to discuss business issues of her company with him (Sıla becomes the owner of her family's holding after her parents die). Sıla's meeting with Emre results in the most violent scene between Boran and Sıla. Boran learns about their meeting, and gets drunk while waiting for her to come home, and attempts to rape her.

Boran's rape of Sıla is the most apparent declaration of the harmful phase of their love, which gives way to Sıla's escape. But, apart from Boran's rape, Sıla's failure to resist against tribal customs in her own way is also a determinant factor in Sıla's escape. Sıla fails because she causes, while trying to solve the problem in her own way, the death of Süleyman, brother of Zeyşan, who is forced by her family to marry her rapist for the sake of the honour of her family. Sıla's escape with Azad and Narin, following Boran's rape and Süleyman's death, constitutes a breach. It is crucial to remind the reader here that a breach, which occurs in the narrative through catastrophic events, highlights the need for change in the normative order. That is to say, Sıla's escape carries the potential to turn their imbalanced relationship into a true companionate family, and to resist together against tribal customs of the community for the sake of their familial unity.

Following the breach of Sıla's escape, a mounting crisis occurs. *Aşiret meclisi* (the council of tribal community) comes together and declares the fact that all three (Sıla, Azad and Narin) have to be killed for the sake of the honour of the tribal community. The mission to clean the honour of the community is assigned to Boran and Celil, father of both Sıla and Azad. Both are sent to İstanbul to fulfill their missions

assigned by the council. After a period of high tension, a series of redressive actions to resolve the breach of Sıla's escape occurs. The pedagogical message that is underlined by these resolutions is the superiority of familial unity based on love over communal unity based on social hierarchy.

The first one of these redressive actions is Narin's release by Boran. She goes to meet her brother, as well as the protector of tribal order, to surrender to him. Although she comes to him to free herself by accepting to die as the rule of tribal order says and she knows very well what has to be done following a conflict situation like this to be resolved according to the norm of the tribal order, she still challenges him by appreciating love, instead of social obligations.

Narin: I went after my love. You considered all of us slaves but you are the real slaves.<sup>10</sup>

Narin, similarly to her challenge against Boran, challenges his father Firuz, when both she and her husband Azad are taken from their house to be killed after Sıla's first attempt to escape, with the words:

Narin: Father what have I done for you to turn away from me? Azad and me, we, went after our love, we have never done anything to damage our honour. Now the result of loving is death? Since you are so dedicated to killing us, I would like you to know that our love would not end. Don't forget that your sentence is only on our bodies.<sup>11</sup>

Boran's release of Narin after her challenge to him represents the fact that he also appreciates love, even though he is at the center of social obligations as a leader of the social order. Celil's devotion to his family after his suicide attempt following his attempt

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<sup>10</sup> Narin: Ben sevdamın peşinden gittim. Hepimizi köle bildiniz, asıl köle sizsiniz.

<sup>11</sup> Narin: Babaaaa, benden yüz çevirecek ne yaptım babaaa? Biz Azad'la sevdamızın peşinden gittik, namusumuza helal getirecek hiçbir şey yapmadık. Şimdi, sevmenin sonu, ölüm? Madem bu kadar kararlısınız bizi öldürmeye, sevdamızın bitmeyeceğini bilin isterim. Unutmayın ki, hükmünüz bedenimizdir

to kill Sıla is the articulation of the superiority of familial unity. He confesses his devotion, instead of fulfilling his mission to kill his children as council of the tribal community assigns to him for the sake of communal unity of the tribe, with the words:

Celil: I wanted to kill the old Celil and become a new man. They are the ones who are mistaken. I didn't kill my children and I never will.<sup>12</sup>

A redressive action that begins to take place with Boran's saving of Sıla's life is also a declaration of the superiority of love and familial unity. Cihan, the villain of the serial, brings a father and a child from Mardin to fulfill the decree of the council by killing Sıla. Boran, the hero, learns the fact that he is attempting to kill her, and arrives at the right moment at the right place, and saves Sıla's life. Hence, he shows his devotion to his family by his act of saving his wife's and baby's lives (Sıla is pregnant when Boran saves her life) even though the council gives the mission of killing her to him.

Boran's saving of Sıla's life does not lead to a resolution. There occur some other crises till they come together to form a family. The first crisis is about Sıla's jealousy towards Gizem, who begins to work close to Boran as his assistant, and with whom Boran spends most of his time. She accompanies Boran after he is injured when he saves Sıla's life, and Sıla gets jealous of their intimate relationship, and stays away from Boran. The second crisis is about Boran's jealousy towards Emre. He gives up meeting Sıla after he gets jealous of Emre for being too close to her. The third crisis is Boran's refusal of Sıla's appreciation for saving her life by saying that he saved her life, not because of his love of her, but to save his baby's life, and it ends up with Sıla's car accident when she tries to catch him. After a period of estrangement, a reintegration

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<sup>12</sup> Celil: Eski Celil'i öldürüp, yeni bir adam olmak istedim. Yanlış olan onlar çocuklarımı öldürmedim ve öldürmeyeceğim de.

takes place with the meeting of Boran and Sıla following Sıla's call. Boran's explanation about his refusal is the declaration of their familial unity, and Sıla's pregnancy is metaphoric, in this sense, preceding the transformation of Boran and Sıla's relationship into a family.

Boran: We are not separate, we are a family, we are one.<sup>13</sup>

The crisis constituting a threshold in their relationship is revived in several other subplots, when Emre is seriously injured after he is shot in front of Sıla's house. Boran is blamed for Emre's shooting and arrested. His innocence is proven, and he is released after a short period in prison. But Sıla blames herself for Emre's injury, and she refuses to stay close to Boran. However a redressive action occurs after Abay's (Boran's best friend) warning of Sıla. She returns to their house where they begin to live together by leaving Emre, a threat to their familial unity, behind. Following Sıla's return, Boran proposes to Sıla. Boran's marriage proposal is metaphoric in a sense that it is a declaration of the fact that their first marriage is not a real one, and they become a family with this marriage which is accepted by each side voluntarily.

Boran: The wedding dress you wore before was not yours and the woman inside was not the woman I love. Let's start over again. I am asking you, would you be my wife?<sup>14</sup>

Another crisis in their relationship is about Sıla's holding's investments in Mardin. Sıla accepts ceasing her holding's investments following Boran's warning, but she changes her mind after Ayşe, a maid in the *konak*, comes to take shelter in Sıla's house after her husband beats her violently. She gets angry with Boran, and quarrels with him about her

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<sup>13</sup> Boran: Biz ayrı değiliz ki, bir aileyiz, tekiz.

<sup>14</sup> Boran: Daha önce giydiğin senin gelinliğin değildi, içindeki de benim sevdiğim değildi. Yeniden başlayalım. Seni senden istiyorum, karım olur musun?

decisiveness to change social order which is regulated according to tribal customs to bring a new form of relationship (based on love) into the society.

Sıla: What you don't understand Boran is that you don't build your home on love. Look at Ayşe she barely saved her life, and those who did not survive (...) You grow people who serve the *töre*'s (tribal customs). My problem is not with people but with *töre*'s (tribal customs). I want to present these people other services. I will build a world where people don't live the *töre*'s (tribal customs).<sup>15</sup>

A redressive action occurs, following Boran's return to Mardin after his quarrel with Sıla. He calls the members of the council together, and he manages to postpone the decree to kill his wife Sıla. Boran's effort to stop the decree about his wife whose actions threaten the unity of the tribal community he is obliged to protect, is the articulation of the appreciation of conjugal love over communal unity. To stop Sıla's decree does not lead to a reintegration in the narrative. A crisis, which starts with Firuz's sending of one of his fellowman to İstanbul to kill her, and deepens with Sıla's kidnapping by Cihan to bring her back to the *konak*, and ends up with a possibility of Sıla's losing of her baby (symbol of their familial unity) due to harsh treatment from Cihan, occurs immediately after the redressive phase. A mounting crisis occurs in the narrative with the confrontation of Boran and Cihan in the village square. The resolution of the confrontation of good (Boran) and evil (Cihan) is again a declaration of familial unity since Boran does not kill, but only punishes Cihan who is a threat to his familial unity by ousting him from the tribal community, and forgives his family. After a period of high tension, reintegration occurs with the baby's survival and Firuz's acceptance of Sıla after Boran's attempts to make him accept all the three (Boran, Sıla and their baby)

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<sup>15</sup> Sıla: Senin anlamadığın yuvalarınızı sevgi üzerine kurmadığınız, Boran. Bak Ayşe'ye canını zor kurtardı, ya kurtaramayanlar. (...) Törelere hizmet eden insanlar yetiştiriyorsunuz. Benim meselem insanlarla değil, törelerle. O insanlara başka hizmet alanları sunmak istiyorum. Törelere değil, insanların yaşadığı bir dünya kuracağım.

together as a family. Hence, the breach constituted by Sıla's escape is resolved, and reintegration finally occurs. The one who carries out the resolution is Boran, by showing his devotion to his familial unity. After reintegration occurs, a crisis occurs with Firuz's fainting after Sıla's resistance to him about raising her son away from the hate of tribal customs, in the narrative, but it leads to further reintegration since Sıla's first intervention after he faints saves his life. Sıla's saving of Firuz's life, even though he attempts to kill her, is the articulation of the superiority of love (new form of relationship which is brought into the society by Sıla to change the social order based on social hierarchy) which overcomes all the conflicts experienced in the tribal society.

Boran: There are a lot of things that we would learn from you. We will get over this hatred by love.<sup>16</sup>

Even though reintegration occurs with the acceptance of Sıla by Boran's family, the conflict caused by Sıla's escape does not reach a final resolution due to the fact that the council of tribal community insists on killing Sıla after the period of breastfeeding is completed in order to clean the honour of the tribal community. At the end of the narrative, Sıla's escape to Europe with her mother Bedar and her younger sister Emir, following a series of catastrophic events, constitutes a new conflict situation in the narrative. Resolution to that conflict clearly delivers a pedagogical message to viewers about the superiority of familial unity. Following Sıla's escape, Boran (good) and Cihan (evil) confront each other again in the narrative. Boran stops Cihan when he goes to the airport in order to prevent Sıla's escape and to kill her for the sake of the honour of tribal community. Boran stops him, and points his gun at Cihan, as the representative of

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<sup>16</sup> Boran: Senden öğreneceğimiz çok şey var. Bu kini sevgi ile aşacağız.

tradition, and challenges him saying that he has to obey the power of *töre* (tribal customs) as the leader of tribal community.

Cihan: I am the tribe, I am the *töre* (tribal customs). You cannot point a gun at me.<sup>17</sup>

Resolution to that final conflict situation with Boran's shooting of Cihan, especially after he declares himself the representative of the tradition, is the clearest declaration of the superiority of protecting familial unity (modern) against the threat of tribal customs (tradition) throughout the narrative.

### The Problem of Honour Violence

There are several subplots in which Boran has to cope with the issue of honour issue within the narrative. The first revolves around a girl named Helin, who tries to escape to Germany with Boran's help in order to continue her education there, when her family forbids it in order to get her married while she is young. Boran's personal efforts will not be sufficient for her escape in the conflict situation occurring at the very beginning of the serial, and she is caught by her brothers' at the German border and killed.

The second conflict situation arises when *kan davası* (blood-feud) is revived between two families when one of the families begins to use water owned by the other family because of the fact that the river passes through the lands owned by the family. Boran tries to resolve the problem by deciding to "an equal distribution" of the water between two families:

Boran: Let's become patient first. There is a lot of water that would be enough for both of you. Why is this selfishness? And haven't you said this is God's water? You may own the land but you don't own the water so you will share. The past is in the past, everyone served their sentence and didn't all the fight

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<sup>17</sup> Cihan: Ben aşiretim, ben töreyim, bana silah çekemezsin.

begin because of this water? Now we have to solve this by using our mind, not with our guns. Otherwise there will be a lot more people hurt. Water with blood won't serve anyone. From now on the water will be shared equally and this problem will be solved.<sup>18</sup>

This event is one of the earlier manifestations of the rule of law over that of tribal order, and Sıla's attempt to question Boran's position within the Genco community. But the problem does not reach a resolution with this event since a just decision like this is not acceptable according to the rule of *töre* (tribal customs). Cihan, the villain of the serial, comes to the stage and encourages men of the family which have the right to use the water, to resist Boran's just decision and to take their right of being the only owner of the water back, as the *töre* (tribal customs) says.

Cihan: Okay. Boran is trying to be just but this is against the order. If the order is broken then we cannot keep people. *Töre* (tribal customs) is our path. Boran is trying to change this order. Can an order of hundred years be changed?<sup>19</sup>

Following a mounting crisis coming from the resistance of the family against Boran's just decision, Firuz, the father of Boran, makes Boran change his decision and give their rights back to the family.

Firuz: The tribe cannot be ruled with right and wrong but with *töre's* (tribal customs). People cannot be ruled with justice but with power.<sup>20</sup>

Following the shift in his decision, one man from each family is killed, and Boran's effort to resist the unjust nature of *töre* (tribal customs) as the leader of the tribal

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<sup>18</sup> Boran: Önce bir sakın olalım. Kıyamet kadar su var hem size hem size yeter. Bu bencillik niye? Hem sen demedin mi, Allahın suyu diye? Tarlaların tapusu sizde olabilir ama suyunki değil bu yüzden de paylaşacaksınız. Geçmiş geçmişte kaldı herkes de cezasını çekti, hem bütün dava da bu sudan çıkmadı mı? Artık bunu aklımızla çözmeliyiz, silahlarla değil. Yoksa daha çok can yanacak. Kana bulanmış bir sudan da kimseye hayır gelmez. Bundan sonra su eşit pay edilecek ve dava da dava olmaktan çıkacak.

<sup>19</sup> Cihan: Tamam Boran Ağa adaletli davranmak istiyor ama bu yaptığı düzeni bozuyor. Düzen bozulursa insanları tutamayız. Bizim rotamız töremiz. Boran Ağa bu düzeni değiştirmek istiyor, yüzyıllık düzen değişir mi hiç?

<sup>20</sup> Firuz: Aşiretle doğrularla değil, törelerle yönetilir. İnsanlar sadece adaletle değil, güçle yönetilir.

community remains again inconclusive in resolving the problem. The enforced shift in his decision shows us the fact that he also has limits even as the leader of the tribal community in challenging the rule of *töre* (tribal customs).

In the third conflict situation, Boran faces a much more serious problem to be resolved. It is Zeyşan's pregnancy, and the only resolution to such a serious problem is to kill her in order to clean her family's honour according to *töre* (tribal customs). Zeyşan escapes from her family, and shelters under Boran's roof. To resolve the problem, he does not give her back to her family, and decides to her marriage with the boy who made her pregnant -he assumes that he is her lover. Boran's resolution of this serious problem indicates that he alters the obligations belonging to *töre* (tribal customs) and gives love (natural) a chance to have authority over patriarchal hierarchy (social). In this sense, the resolution proposed by him is the declaration of the superiority of love over the rule of *töre* (tribal customs), and makes him distinct from others living in the tribal community.

But the problem does not reach a resolution following Boran's decision of giving her a chance to marry her lover. As soon as Sila learns that the boy who made her pregnant is not her lover, but her rapist, Boran's limits in resisting against the rule of *töre* (tribal customs) even as the leader of the tribal community again becomes an issue through the resolution process of the problem. He, at the very end, has to accept his father's act to give the victim back to her family to get her married to her rapist, even though he himself does not give her back.

In the middle of the serial, when a redressive action is about to occur by Boran and Sila's reunion following a mounting crisis starting with Sila's escape to İstanbul, a conflict situation to be resolved occurs with Ruken's escape from Mardin to İstanbul

with Boran's help when her family decides to punish her due to her speaking on the phone with her boyfriend. To resolve the conflict situation, Sila also takes part in the resolution process with Boran by taking the responsibility of hiding Ruken in her friend's house till Boran takes her back to help her escape to Europe. But the resolution of the conflict is again finalized by the death of the victim. Her brother finds her at Sila's friend's house, and forces her to suicide by making her jump from a bridge.

Brother: Whatever you do, there is no escape. Everybody lives for honour.<sup>21</sup>

From this event which is resolved with the death of the victim, and which underlines the fact that 'there is no escape from tribal order', following conflict-resolution processes in the narrative show us the possible ways for erasing the problem of honour violence such as making economic and social investments in the region, cooperating with the police force of the state and accepting the rule of law over that of tribal order.

The resolution of the conflict situation which revolves around Ayşe, a female servant of the *konak* and starts with her coming to Istanbul to take shelter at Sila's house following her husband's violence towards her, shows us what has to be done, instead of trying to make the victims escape, to resolve the conflict-situations related to the honour issue. In resolving the conflict situation, Sila, instead of Boran, will be the hero who will lead the resolution. Boran, as one of the members of the tribal society, proposes a smoother process of change accepted as well as internalized by the members of the society who are used to living according to tribal order. However she proposes a much more radical change realized through economic as well as social development in order to free all the women of the region from male dominance based on social hierarchy.

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<sup>21</sup> Ağabey: Ne yaparsan yap kurtuluşun yok. Herkes namusu için yaşar.

Sıla: All of this is because of the *töre*'s (tribal customs). You have accepted without questioning all of these years, the marriages resulting in death, the women loosing their voice due to beatings, babies losing their interest in life even before beginning to live (...) It's always been this way but it won't be like this anymore. Since there is no escape from *töre* (tribal customs), I will do my best and I will change this order.

Boran: Sıla, you cannot teach people at once that what they thought as true for years is wrong. You cannot get rid of the habits they have been accustomed to in a short time. Then they wouldn't accept the change, they will get together and resist it. Some things change slowly.

Sıla: Sometimes taking the time hurts more. If the arm has gangrene, the cure is to cut it off.<sup>22</sup>

Following her discussion with Boran, Sıla opens a factory as well as a school to help make the people who are dependent on tribal leaders of the community to live on their own through earning their own living and getting access to education to become free from the bondage of the tribal order. But Sıla faces three serious problems after the factory begins to operate. Since the factory is a threat to the power of tribal order in a sense that it employs the people who are working for tribal leaders, a response comes soon with the explosion of the factory due to a leakage of electricity planned by Cihan, the villain of the serial. Following the explosion, Sıla has to close the factory to protect the lives' of the employees. But, following female employees' insistence to re-open the factory, Sıla decides to re-open it, with the support of Boran. But a much more serious response comes from Cihan. He first threatens Azad to stop the operation of the factory,

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<sup>22</sup> Sıla: Bütün bunlar senelerce sorgusuzca kabul ettiğiniz törelerin sonucu, ölümüne yapılan evlilikler, dayak yemekten sesi kısılan kadınlar, kızlar, daha hayata başlamadan hayata küsen bebekler. Hepiniz birlik olup neden isyan etmediniz, bunca zaman nasıl kabullendiniz bunu hiç aklım almıyor. Bu böyle geldiyse, böyle devam etmeyecek. Madem törelerden kaçış yok, elimden gelen her şeyi yapacağım. Bu düzeni değiştireceğim.

Boran: İnsanlara doğru bildiklerinin yanlış olduğunu bir anda anlatamazsın Sıla. Onların senelerdir bağlı olduğu alışkanlıkları bıçakla kesip hayatlarından çıkaramazsın. Yoksa değişikliği kabul etmezler, el birliği olup karşına dikilirler. Bazı şeyler zamanla değişir.

Sıla: Bazı şeyleri zamana yaymak daha fazla zarar verir. Kangren olan kolun tedavisi kesip atmaktır.

and when he resists, he kills him by throwing him from the top of a hill. However Azad's killing does not lead to a resolution either but, instead encourages the people to resist and to give support to Sila's family to continue to operate the factory. In the final phase, following a rumor about friendship between a boy and a girl working at the factory, men of the families forbid their daughters to work at the factory, and come to the factory and take them back. At this time, Narin, Boran's sister as well as Azad's wife, as a powerful local woman, leads a resolution to the problem by giving support to Sila's efforts to invest in the region for the sake of women living under the pressure of tribal order.

Following Sila's radical response against honour violence to change the social order causing problems through making economic and social investments in the region, Boran, as a local hero, also starts to act more radically as opposed to his previous actions which implicitly show us his limits even as the leader of the tribal community in resisting the *töre* (tribal customs). Coming conflict situations in the narrative, therefore, will indicate to us what will be other possible ways of resolving the problem of honour where the hero is a powerful local hero.

The first problem to be resolved by Boran is about a boy who is brought to İstanbul by Cihan, the villain of the serial, with his father to kill Sila. . Boran, even though he is shot with the boy's gun, takes the child away with him preventing witnesses of the violent act from reporting the event to the police, and registers him in school. This resolution indicates the fact that providing the children access to education, instead of raising them as 'the defenders of the tribal order' without making them know other possible ways of looking at life will be the solution for erasing honour violence experienced in the region. Social development through increasing access to educational

opportunities is underlined as the solution for resolving the honour violence. Economic development through creating possible ways of employment to free the people from the bondage of tribal order is consistently offered to us as a way to change the social order upon which honour violence is based throughout the narrative.

Boran's radical response against honour violence which comes after Hamdi's, (Ayşe's husband) beating of Ayşe, the female servant of the *konak* also shows us divorce as another possible way of resolving the problems related to honour violence. Even though divorce is not a usual as well as acceptable act in tribal society where "a married woman has to leave her husband's house in her shroud only", Boran, as the protector of the tribal order, proposes to divorce her from her husband who exercises violence upon her. This event clearly shows the shift in Boran's approach to resolve the problems related to honour violence from acting regarding to maintain tribal order towards responding to the problem in a much more radical and modern way. Boran, in this event, even though his father Firuz tries to change his mind by saying "Don't bring new customs to the old village", makes Ayşe divorce from her husband. So, the resolution to the problem revolving around Ayşe with the divorce is one of the clearest manifestations of the acceptance of the rule of law over the rule of tribal order in the narrative in resolving the problem of honour violence.

In another conflict situation, an educated brother of a girl who escapes from her house when her family forbids her to continue her education comes to Boran, the hero of the serial, to get his support when he refuses to kill his sister. But the younger brother of the girl goes to Cihan, the villain of the serial, to take the responsibility of killing his sister following his educated brother's refusal to do so. Cihan encourages the younger

brother to kill his sister by saying that “tribal customs will be the only way to be followed”.

Cihan: We went to school too, but we learned our life from the *töre*’s (tribal customs), we never forgot our origins.<sup>23</sup>

As opposed to Cihan’s reaction to the conflict situation, Boran encourages the educated brother to resist the social order which sees the killings of the girls legitimate in such a situation changes.

Boran: Rebel, you are an educated man, if even you remain silent no one will talk. Rebel and so that the things that have been going wrong all this time can be corrected.<sup>24</sup>

The reaction of Boran, in this event, clearly indicates to us the importance of education and the crucial roles assigned to the educated adults in fighting to change the social order in the narrative. At the resolution phase, Boran, with the educated brother takes the girl from the younger brother who is about to kill his sister, brings her to the police station and makes a speech about the necessity of cooperating with the state in fighting for erasing the honour violence in the region.

Boran: I am also the child of the tribe, we ruled without taking any lives. There are people dying still because of the harsh rules of their families. I can try to protect people as much as I can but what about the ones I am not aware of? Who will protect them? Of course the state. If we can be in cooperation we can have better results. To protect people from being killed around here requires a more systematic action. I am ready to do my part.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Cihan: Biz de okul okuduk, ama hayatımızı törelerden öğrendik, aslımızı unutmadık.

<sup>24</sup> Boran: İsyân et, sen okumuş adamsın, sen de susarsan kimse konuşmaz. İsyân et ki bunca zaman yanlış giden şeyler artık düzelsin.

<sup>25</sup> Boran: Ben de aşiret çocuğuyum, hiç can almadan hüküm sürdük bu topraklarda. Ailelerinin sert kararları yüzünden hala ölen insanlar var. Ben elimden geldiğince herkese kol kanat germeye çalışırım ama ya haberim olmayanlar, onları kim koruyacak? Tabi ki devlet. El birliği içerisinde olursak, daha iyi sonuçlar elde edeceğimize inanıyorum. Buralarda daha fazla insanın kurban edilmemesi sistemli bir çalışma gerektiriyor, ben elimden geleni yapmaya hazırım.

This conflict-resolution process is really crucial in the narrative in a sense that it introduces police, an institution of the state, as an agent to be cooperated with in order to erase honour violence, even though according to the norm of tribal order, which is also the norm of the narrative, cooperation with the state is strictly illegitimate. This shift in the normative order provides us with an opportunity to follow a possible way of resolving the problem of honour violence following the shift.

Cooperation with the state will be consistently underlined as a resolution to the problem through other conflict-resolution processes in the narrative. Boran, when a boy comes to him after his father kills his daughter first and then himself, cooperates again with the police in order to resolve the problem, and takes the boy to the police to solve the situation. The police arrest Cihan, the villain of the serial, following the boy's confession of the fact that Cihan is the one who decreed that his father kills his daughter. The arrest of Cihan, a powerful figure in the tribal community, clearly indicates a shift in the normative order. As the representative of norm of the narrative, Cihan, following his release, comes to Boran to remind him of the rule of the tribal order:

Cihan: Where did you hear the children of the *ağa* (leader of tribal community) informing on each other to the police? The *ağa* (leader of tibal community) gives the sentence himself. He doesn't ask for the help of his wife nor the police. They know who lives with honour and who will take care of them. I cannot tell people to go to the state and they will take care of you. Being an *ağa* (leader of tribal community) requires this.<sup>26</sup>

But the rule of law is clearly appreciated, at the very end of the narrative, rather than the rule of tribal order with Boran's surrendering as the leader of the tribal community, to the police after he shoots Cihan, the representative of the norm of the tribal order.

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<sup>26</sup> Cihan: Ağa çocuklarının birbirlerini polise ispiyon ettiği nerede görülmüş. Ağa dediğin hükmünü kendisi verir, ne karısının eteklerine sığır, ne de kolluk kuvvetlerinden yardım dilenir. Kimin namusuyla yaşayıp kimin onlara sahip çıkacağını biliyorlar. Ben insanlara gidin devlet size baksın diyemem ya, ağalık bunu gerektirir.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSION

This study clearly argues that mass media, an ideological state apparatus serving to build a modern as well as national culture through the televisual dissemination of discourses, has become a primary source of education in the age of technology. If so, it becomes significant as well as inevitable for an educator to critically engage in mass media as a new form of public pedagogy and to analyze television serials successful at creating mass audiences as cultural texts which have a crucial role in identity formation processes of mass culture.

From the very beginning of the study, television serials are defined as new modes of public pedagogy which serve to (re)produce modern and national culture by placing particular ideologies and values of the nation into public conversation (Giroux, 2006) and by intentionally trying to mold the mass culture (Abu-Lughod, 2005). This study was mainly focusing on television serials, namely melodramas, as cultural texts, since they mostly narrate the modern-traditional dichotomy which raises crucial issues in terms of Turkey's experience of modernity.

#### Summary and Conclusion

In the analysis of *Sıla*, as locally produced and consumed melodrama in Turkey, the term melodrama, which is mostly used in defining the locally produced and distributed television serials in studies of mass media in post-colonial contexts, was first traced (Abu-Lughod, 2005, Mankekar, 1999). The main reason for this specificity is that melodrama, contrasting to western soap opera, reaches a resolution as it is also true for

Turkish melodramas. Melodrama reaches a final resolution because it entails a normativity: It is about truth.

The Turkish experience of modernity, similar to experience of post-colonial contexts, can be also called ‘post-colonial tragedy’ in a sense that people living within a post-colonial condition see themselves as the tragic hero in the genre of tragedy, as having to cope within an impossible choice between modern versus traditional imaginaries. However, in melodrama, as a literary genre, in contrast to tragedy, the conflicts are not impossible: They reach a resolution to teach the ultimate moral at the very end of the story.

From this perspective, *Sıla*, as a melodrama, first sets out a normativity belonging to the traditional order. Then a conflict occurs between tradition and the modern, with *Sıla*’s entrance to the normativity of the tradition, and through unexpected resolution of the conflict, a breach occurs in that normativity. At the end the breaches in norms are resolved by breaking up with the norms and submitting to love as well as law, and hence to the modern. What ultimately reigns, at the end of the narrative, is the modern. Hence, in *Sıla*, modernity is encoded as the ultimate possibility of overcoming the normative order belonging to the traditional realm. This is the final resolution the melodrama suggests to the impossible conflict of the traditional versus the modern: The modern reigns over the traditional. By reaching a resolution at the very end of the narrative, the melodrama shows us the fact that the conflict is not impossible any more. Instead it aims to teach us the ultimate moral of the modern.

Since a melodrama constructs its narrative through the actions of its characters representing the two conflicting sides, it was crucial to seek to decipher who the hero of the normative shift is. Starting from the point that the one who solves the conflict is the

hero, the breaches consistently occurring in the narrative were traced to find out how heroism was encoded. The melodrama, first of all, was structured around the male protagonist, Boran. He was the man who was assigned to solve the conflicts and carry out the resolutions. However, from the very beginning of the narrative, Boran's powerful position began to be questioned as Boran fell in love with Sila. Sila, as the representative of the modern, was the central agent in the process of questioning. She was encouraging as well as supporting Boran to act in so called modern ways even though he had to act according to traditional order as the leader of the tribal community. But Boran, who is the one who takes the actions to solve the conflicts, was the central hero of the narrative.

The study, apart from seeking the hero, tries to show how Boran was encoded as the representative of the modern realm, and Cihan the traditional, arguing that the tradition is imagined as the evil, and the modern as the good. But, moving a step forward, the main agent of the modern and hence the good in the narrative was love. The narrative, suggesting resolutions based mainly on a submission of everything and everybody to love, indeed presented love as the central subject and the hero, a narrative structure which defeated Cihan's heroism belonging to the traditional realm favoring social hierarchy over love.

Thus, *Sıla* is, above all, a love story which hails the viewers as the subjects of modernity to appreciate the modern over the traditional through suggesting resolutions, consistently occurring conflicts coming from modern-traditional dichotomy throughout the narrative, based on submission to love, acceptance of the rule of law as well as the necessity of social and economic development to erase the problems caused by the normative order of the *töre*'s (tribal customs).

## Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on how the normative structure of modernity is constructed in television serials to investigate modern-traditional dichotomy and how this dichotomy serves to appreciate the normativity of modernity over the rule of traditional order as the natural as well as proposed way of doing things.

Due to time and effort constraint, this study only focused on answering two main questions in doing the analysis of the television serial *Sıla*: 1) how is modern-traditional dichotomy constructed and 2) what are the resolutions suggested to the conflicts coming from this dichotomy. But, the answer of the question ‘how the viewers are interpellated to the normativity of modernity constructed through this television serial by suggesting resolutions appreciating consistently the modern over the traditional’ remains out of the scope of this study.

## Recommendations for Further Studies

This study initiates a discussion on how the normative structure of modernity is constructed through and represented in locally produced and consumed television serials in Turkey as a suggested way of doing things, as opposed to the normativity of traditional order. But, the answer to the question ‘what kind of normativity does modernity necessitate’ or to the issue of ‘power relations that are condoned through recourse to the modern’ remains out of its scope. This requires further studies on media texts and television viewing practices in Turkey.

The aim of this study, as was said above, is to explore how modern-traditional dichotomy is constructed in television serials to teach moralities of the modern nation to

the viewers. Hence, this study does not try to investigate the viewers' responses to what they see on the television screen. But, how the viewers are interpellated to the normativity of modernity through their socio-cultural positions as well as their desires is worth investigation. It would be useful to grasp the media ethnographically to find an answer to the question 'which subject positions the viewers of the media texts are hailed within the new normativity of modernity'.

## APPENDIX

### SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHS FROM *SILA*

- 1 : Boran gives Sila a rose when he first meets her
- 2 : Boran and Sila's dance at their wedding
- 3 : Sila at the window
- 4 : Sila on the balcony
- 5 : Sila in the bedroom
- 6 : Boran in the bedroom
- 7 : Council of the tribal community
- 8 : Cihan
- 9 : Boran takes Sila home
- 10 : Boran and Sila in the bedroom
- 11 : Boran, Sila and their baby
- 12 : Boran points his gun at Cihan



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