Romanticizing Rape in the Turkish TV Series: 
Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? and the Female Moroccan Fans

Ouidyane EL Ouardaoui
Chouaib Doukkali University, El Jadida, Morocco


Abstract

Turkish TV series first appeared on Arab television in the period of 2007-2008. Ihlamurlar Altında[Under the Linden Trees] (Kanal D, 2005) and Gümüş [Silver] (Kanal D, 2005) were the first Turkish series that aired on Arab TV. They were translated from Turkish to Arabic as Sanawat Aldaya’a [The Lost Years] and Noor, and were shown on MBC (the Middle-East Broadcasting Channel) from 2007-2009. Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? [What is Fatmagul’s Fault?] (Kanal D, 2010), known in the Arab world simply by the title of Fatma aired on MBC in 2013, after being dubbed in Syrian Arabic. Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? traces the psychological and social sufferings of a simple village girl who was sexually assaulted by four men, a few days before her wedding’s date. Fatma’s story undergoes a drastic change when she voluntarily accepts to marry one of the rapists, Kerim, though the viewers find out later that he did not touch Fatma but did nothing to save her, too.

In this paper, I discuss through close textual analysis how the television drama Fatmagul does not only contribute in normalizing rape, but also exploits the commonplace melodramatic ingredients in fiction that are characterized by excess such as the loss of consciousness, eavesdropped
conversations, last-minute rescues and unpredictable love stories (Brooks, 1995) in order to romanticize the most aggressive sexual aggression against women. I point out to the alarming effects of these messages on the specific category of Moroccan female audience, who instead of condemning the rapists, develops sympathy and even identify with the emotional struggle of the male protagonist Kerim who was involved in the rape incident. I have joined a number of Facebook fan pages of Fatmagul and I have also looked at numerous constructed Youtube videos about the series so that I can have access to and analyze the comments and reactions of the Moroccan female fans.

Keywords: Turkish drama, the romanticizing of rape, female Moroccan fans.

0. Introduction

Turkish TV series first appeared on Arab television in the period of 2007-2008. Ihlamurlar Altinda [Under the Linden Trees] (Kanal D, 2005) and Gümüş [Silver] (Kanal D, 2005) were the first Turkish TV series that aired on Arab television and were originally shown on Kanal D, which is one of the most significant nationwide TV channels in Turkey. They were translated from Turkish to Arabic as Sanawat Aldaya’a [The Lost Years] and Noor, and were shown on MBC (the Middle-East Broadcasting Channel) from 2007-2009. Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? [What is Fatmagul’s Fault?] (Kanal D, 2010-2012), known in the Arab world simply by the title of Fatma aired on MBC in 2013, after being dubbed in Syrian Arabic. However, a large number of Arab young viewers, including the Moroccan youth, watched the series on YouTube or on other related sites where the series aired in the Turkish language but with featured Arabic subtitles.

Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? traces the psychological and social sufferings of a simple village girl who was sexually assaulted by four men, a few days before her wedding’s date. At the beginning of Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?, the depiction of rape follows a traditional line in which the female protagonist, Fatma, traumatized and devastated, has to face the social stigma of being raped, reinforced by the fact that she lives in a small and closed village in the west coast of Turkey. However, Fatma’s story undergoes a drastic change when she voluntarily accepts to marry one
of the rapists, Kerim, though the viewers find out later that he did not touch Fatma but did nothing to save her, too. The unexpected part of the story is when Fatma falls in love with Kerim, who thanks to the dramatic twits in the plot magically turns to be her savior.

This paper looks at how the issue of rape in Fatmagul is being romanticized and turned into a love story, which appears to be the only way for the rape victim, Fatma, to overcome the past sexual abuse and start a normal marital life. I discuss through close textual analysis how the television drama Fatmagul does not only contribute to normalizing rape, but also exploits the commonplace melodramatic ingredients in fiction that are characterized by excess such as the loss of consciousness, eavesdropped conversations, last-minute rescues and unpredictable love stories (Brooks, 1995) in order to romanticize the most aggressive sexual aggression against women. I point out to the alarming effects of these messages on the specific category of Moroccan female audience, who instead of condemning the rapists, develops sympathy and even identify with the emotional struggle of the male protagonist Kerim who was involved in the rape incident. I have joined a number of Facebook fan pages of Fatmagul and I have also looked at numerous constructed YouTube videos about the series so that I can have access to and analyze the comments and reactions of the Moroccan female fans.

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of TV series and the way their universal themes and visual attractions have made them welcomed TV products at a global level. I then examine the rape scene in Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? which is considered to be one of the most disturbing scenes in contemporary Turkish drama to the extent that Arab TV officials felt the need to censor different parts of it before airing it on MBC. Finally, I look at the supportive reactions of the Moroccan audience to the unusual love story between the rape victim Fatma and Kerim, who is accused of sexual assault along with his other three friends. I rely mainly on social media, particularly on Facebook and YouTube, to trace the reactions of the Moroccan female fans, who constitute part of the Arab online fan community, to see the way they affectively respond to the elements related to the love story in Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?.
1. The Worldwide Success of Serialized TV Shows

Serialized TV shows or TV series are generally divided into two main genres which are telenovelas and soap operas. It is worth differentiating between these two genres for a better understanding of the distinct elements of the Turkish TV series. Telenovelas are a popular TV genre that initially emerged in Latin America particularly in Brazil and Mexico during the early 1950s. They are historicized by reference to radio shows that were sponsored by soap manufacturers in the United States during the 1930s. Telenovelas along with soap operas have been the most watched form of global TV entertainment worldwide. Telenovelas differ from the soap operas primarily in terms of form; this is in spite of their reliance on a melodramatic serialization structure. Lozano and Singhal (1993) assert that the term “telenovela” (which literally stands for television novels) is typically used to refer to TV serials produced in Latin America, but is known as soap opera in the United States. However, these two types of melodramatic serials diverge in certain important respects. American soap operas run for years or even decades, as in the case with *The Bold and The Beautiful* (1987-present). A roughly analogous chronological time is represented through the effect of changing circumstances and the aging of the actors themselves. By contrast, the seriality of telenovelas is finite with typically conclusive endings. Whereas American soap operas are mainly conceived as daytime serials that target female viewers, the highest rated telenovelas are shown in primetime slots that serve a wider audience even if shown during the day. Finally, the most popular Latin American actors aspire to be featured in telenovelas. This is unlike the cult of stardom in the United States, which is more often tied to Hollywood cinema.

On the other hand, the Turkish soap operas, known as diziler in Turkish, have more relevance to telenovelas than American soap operas. Turkish diziler usually have two seasons that can run over two years utmost. Most Turkish diziler would have definite endings and the featured actors are usually very popular in both the film and TV industries. Also, Turkish series are typically produced as high-budget and target different social classes and varied target viewers, not necessarily only the female audience. The most high-budget ones are
shown in prime-time slots, in which one episode that runs for average 100 minutes is aired every week. However, in case the rate of viewership does not meet the producers’ expectations, the TV series can face the risk of being cancelled or shortened to no more than twenty episodes.

The successful Turkish diziler are believed to have offered Arab viewers “a familiar context of arranged marriages, respect for elders and big families living together” (Kimmelman, 2010). Arab broadcasters supported this rhetoric of cultural proximity in order to assist in promoting TV series that originate from a predominantly Muslim country. Nonetheless, both the dialogue and visual content of Turkish diziler have been subject to the same rigorous censorship procedures as any other imported global TV series. This censorship practice is due to the differences between the general parameters of Arab and Turkish television. Unlike Arab television, the secular political ideology in Turkey allows for greater latitude in depictions of the sexualized body along with narratives that challenge cultural taboos. Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? has also been subjected to rigorous censorship procedures, particularly in relation to the rape scene and the dialogues around the topic of rape.

Also, the popularity of Turkish diziler on the satellite pan-Arab TV channel MBC has provoked the ire of religious authorities in the Arab world. In Saudi Arabia, in particular, there have been claims that Turkish diziler promote “anti-Islamic” values by depicting alcohol consumption, pre-marital sex and the acceptability of abortion as a matter of course. The Saudi religious clerics assert that this could negatively affect the conservative cultural values of Arab viewers (Buccianti, 2010, p. 9). These claims have had a limited effect on the popularity of the Turkish diziler, since MBC continued to purchase them to keep pace with increased demand in the Arab media market. Different Arab TV channels headed by MBC have purchased 50 Turkish diziler between 2008 and 2013 due to their continuing success among Arab viewers (Carney, 2013). However, as demonstrated in the next section, Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? has undergone censorship in relation to a number of scenes and dialogues, particularly the rape scene.
in order to make the content of the TV series appropriate for the cultural parameters of Arab television.

2. *Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?* and the Romanticizing of Rape

*Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? [What is Fatmagul’s Fault?]* (prod. Ay Yapım, Kanal D, 2010) depicts the life of Fatmagul (Beren Saat) who is happily engaged to Mustafa (Firat Celik). The engaged couple live in a small and beautiful village in the west coast of Turkey, close to the coastal city Izmir. The couple’s living standard is very mediocre. Fatma had to drop out from school at an early age so that she could assist her simple-minded brother in running daily errands. Her fiancé, on the other hand, is a humble fisherman. Fatma has only one hope of getting married to Mustafa whom she loves unconditionally, and which will enable her to have a separate life from her annoying and constantly nagging sister-in-law. In one morning, Fatma wakes up very early so that she can bid goodbye to her fiancé, before he embarks on his fishing trip. This morning would be a turning-point in Fatma’s life. As she hastily runs to catch up with Mustafa, four young men, who were under drugs, get hold of Fatma, sexually assault her as they take turns in raping her. The rape scene can be considered as one of the most troubling scenes in contemporary Turkish drama. The rape scene lasts for four minutes in which Fatma’s screams are interrupted by the crazy laughter of the four rapists.

Thanks to the daring persona of the Turkish actress, Beren Saat, playing the role of Fatma, the rape scene is shot in detail in which Fatma’s face that expresses mixed emotions of pain, shock and fear is the main focus. Some parts of the rape scene were censored on MBC because they cross the cultural borders of Arab television. The shots in which Erdogan tears up Fatmagul’s dress and touches her breasts after having poured wine on her captured body were edited. Also, the part in which Erdogan, who is depicted as the most cold-blooded and the most aggressive of the four, unzips his trousers has been omitted. In the Arabic version what mainly remains is Fatmagul’s loud screams, scared and agonizing facial expressions accompanied with her stifled tears as the rapists take turns in violently raping her while hysterically laughing.
After being treated in the local hospital and kept for a few days to recover, Fatma’s anger and anguish increases as she notices that her family members and friends treat her with pity, but their eyes carry multiple questions regarding the details of the incident. The traumatized Fatma will eventually have to face the growing doubts from her fiancé, the continuous blame of her sister-in-law and the reserved pity of the people in the village. Fatma’s case deteriorates as she realizes her weak stand in the face of the wealthy and influential families of the three rapists Erdogan (Kaan Tasaner), Selim (Engin Öztürk), and Vural (Bugra Gülsoy). This distressing chapter in Fatma’s life supposedly comes to an end when she agrees to marry one of the rapists Kerim (Engin Akyürek), a simple blacksmith, who accepts to marry her to save her life, as she attempts to commit suicide several times, but also to protect his rich friends, who have been exploiting his great sense of guilt to push him to marry Fatma. Troubled and nostalgic for Mustafa, who abandoned her after having accused her of having an affair with Kerim, Fatma could not stand living with Kerim (he never tries to touch her) and pleas for divorce. However, Kerim starts to have feelings for Fatma, and proves this to her when he files a rape case against him and his friends.

In the second season of Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?, Kerim would be portrayed as a hero because he is the only person who opens charges against those who were the cause of Fatma’s long and painful sufferings. Nevertheless, Kerim has the courage to file the case only after he has discovered that he is innocent and did not participate in the rape. Kerim could not remember the details of the rape incident because he was under drugs, but later he would gradually remember and he would also indirectly know from the rapists that he did not touch Fatma, who had passed out by then. Thus, Kerim would be released though he attended the incident and did nothing to help Fatma. After continuous attempts to circumvent accusations through different means, the three rapists would be sent to a long prison sentence, and Fatma eventually falls in love with Kerim and she bears his child at the end.

The series Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? represents an uncommon and even a disturbing love story. The rape victim, Fatma falls in love with Kerim, who attended the sexual aggression against her from three of his friends
without trying to help or interfere. In addition, Kerim could have also assaulted Fatma if she had not already passed out. The role of Kerim is played by the aspiring Turkish actor, Engin Akyürek, who is famous for his innocent facial expressions and low-pitched voice, qualities that facilitated his portrayal of the passive and confusing character of Kerim. In fact, there are many details in the story that are inserted in order to “cleanse” Kerim from the taunting accusations of sexual assault. First, Kerim is represented as a passive and helpless man who agrees to marry Fatma in order to appease his feeling of guilt and save her life though he could never face her or even look at her in the eyes. Kerim also decides to try all means to help Fatma overcome pain and the social stigma attached to her from her close family members, such as her sister-in-law. In the episodes that follow Fatma’s marriage to Kerim, Fatma would always treat Kerim with anger and contempt but he constantly remains patient and kind.

Apparently, Kerim never tries to touch Fatma or even have close conversations with her though he would make gestures to bring back the smile to her cold and cheerless face. More importantly, when Kerim finds out that he is innocent of the rape, he faces Fatma with this fact and pleas for forgiveness and a chance for a stable and normal life. The consequent events of the story would be presented from Kerim’s point of view so that the audience can develop sympathy for him and forget his involvement in the rape scene. Gradually, the audience would also expect Fatma to forgive Kerim and accept his love. Thankfully, Fatma remains rigid and angry and does not give in to Kerim’s advances. Only after Kerim reports the crime to the police and is consequently arrested along with the three rapists, does Fatma start to have feelings for him. From a feminist perspective, Fatma’s reaction is empowering as she is able to make her voice heard and struggles in order to open charges against the offenders though this happens only in the middle of the first season as a result of the family pressure that Fatma had to endure to remain silent.

Thus, there are many dramatic details in the plot that renders Kerim as a savior and justifies Fatma’s growing attachment to him. When he is released, Kerim helps Fatma have her own food business and rent a new beautiful house for them though he still finds it extremely difficult to
physically get close to her. This detail is added to highlight the continuous devastating effects of sexual assaults. Generally, all these dramatic details are being inserted in the story to help Kerim’s character change from being the man who passively attended the rape of an innocent girl to the hero who struggles to bring justice to Fatma’s case and who is ready for all types of sacrifice in order to bring back peace and stability to Fatma’s life.

However, the fact that the TV series offers a possibility for people taunted with sexual assault to start a normal life with the sexually aggressed victims raises serious questions regarding the issue of rape. Following the code of 434 of Turkish Criminal Laws that thankfully lost its validity in 2004; the rapists could escape accusations if they married the ones that they had sexually abused (Yener, 2013). Similarly, in Morocco, until recent times, article 475 in the penal code allowed rapists to marry their victims in order to avoid punishment. However, the newly adopted law no. 103-13 guarantees more protection for rape victims (Human Right Watch, 2018). In Fatmagul, the fact that Fatma voluntarily agrees to marry Kerim in order to evade the social stigma of being “a rape victim” sends out a dangerous message regarding women’s rights and the laws that oftentimes fail to protect them from the most intense types of aggression. More to the point, in her close study of how rape is depicted in the old film version of Fatmagul as well as the contemporary television drama, the Turkish researcher, Yasmin Yener, criticizes the way Turkish newspaper responded to the depiction of rape in Fatmagul. Yener asserts that the widely-read Turkish newspapers such as Zaman, Hurriyet and Radikal, have had serious issues with the way rape is depicted in Fatmagul. For her, instead of supporting the strong feminist cause of the series, these newspapers attacked the boldness and the length of the rape scene, claiming that such visual content is considered disturbing for the Turkish audience. I would agree with Yener that the depiction of rape in the series is being “unaestheticized” that is represented in a shocking and repulsive way. This detail serves to reinforce the feminist spine of the series, which is also supported by the daring person of the actress playing the role of Fatma, Beren Saat, as previously mentioned. In addition, the big controversy over the rape scene in Fatmagul has contributed to its popularity both inside and outside Turkey.
3. The Moroccan Female Audience and the Depiction of Rape

It should be noted that the Moroccan audience has mainly watched *Fatmagul* on MBC in which the rape scene has been censored and shortened and thus, its strength and repulsiveness have been mitigated. As discussed earlier, the censoring of imported TV series on Arab television has a long tradition in which scenes and details that cross already-established boundaries are constantly edited. This censorship might partly justify the supportive stand of the Moroccan female viewers towards the romance that starts to develop between Fatma and Kerim, who is involved in sexual abuse. However, as in my case, a large number of fans, particularly the ones active on social media platforms, resorted to the internet to watch the uncensored versions of the series and to express their feelings towards the different dramatic elements in *Fatmagul*.

The appeal of soap operas to female viewers in particular has enhanced their global success. Louise Spence (2005) explains that soap operas can be considered as an outlet for women viewers, given that they allow for a private space and time, thus, granting them a certain type of autonomy. Spence also argues that the process of watching soap operas by women involves a set of reactions that include joy, fancy and even contradictory feelings that can be gained privately or collectively. She describes soap opera female fans as “coparticipants in pity, sorrow, compassion, pain, condemnation, joy, or happiness” (Spence, 2005, p.71). Her main contention is that soap operas offer female viewers in general and housewives in particular the possibility of experiencing pleasure among all their daily commitments. As Spence (2005) puts it, “these daily dramas transform household desires (the despair of their context) into the possibility of embracing pleasure or perhaps even a reminder of our capacity for pleasure” (Spence, 2005, p.167). This applies to the way the majority of Moroccan female viewers feel regarding the Turkish diziler. The Moroccan female audiences derive different types of pleasure in their watching experience of the Turkish diziler in relation to the visual attractions of the physical attraction of the characters, the clothing fashion, the settings, and the stories.

To closely examine the reactions and feelings of the female Moroccan fans in regards to *Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?* to better understand the
series’ quality of affect, I have joined several fan pages in social media, particularly on Facebook. The majority of the contributors to the Facebook fan pages are girls and young women who not only post the pictures and videos of their favorite Turkish characters but also diligently seek out all uncensored intimate scenes between female and male characters on Internet sites with uncensored versions of these shows. More significantly, Moroccan female fans have been emotionally moved by the caring behavior of Turkish male characters towards their partners, which can be traced through their comments and discussions. Thanks to social media platforms that enable the masking of the identity of the user, female fans are able to voice their opinions about how they perceive the ideal moral, physical and sexual traits of men, taking Turkish male characters as models. Drawing on the arguments of Brown (1994) and Baym (2000) who have extensively studied online female fandom regarding soap operas, these Moroccan female fans have been empowered through their new capacity to convene online in order to freely gossip over the different aspects of their favorite diziler, particularly the taboo topics of sexuality and sexual relations, thus defying the dominant social hierarchies that belittle their feminine discourse and watching experience.

The strong impact of Turkish diziler on female Moroccan viewers, who are typically the largest audience, is more pronounced in the virtual world of social media. As in my case, an important number of Moroccan viewers watched Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? on YouTube with featured Arabic subtitles and in its original form without any type of dialogue or scene censorship. My choice to use the Internet in order to watch my favorite Turkish TV series was personally and academically driven. As mentioned earlier, the original Turkish episode lasts for average two hours while the dubbed one lasts for only average forty minutes with important interruptions caused by censorship. Accordingly, I preferred to watch the original ones though oftentimes the Arabic subtitles are not provided. To solve this linguistic problem, I started taking Turkish language classes in order to be able to understand more the freshly released online episodes and then I became able to compare between the original and the censored versions. In parallel, I joined most of the Facebook fan pages talking about Fatmagul and the main characters. I was surprised to find out about the nonchalant way
the Arab female fans felt towards the rape incident and astonished to see the degree to which they are emotionally engaged with the male protagonist Kerim.

Moroccan female fans, who are part of the online Arab female community, used the social media forum *Engin Mad Fans*\(^1\) to express their great admiration for the personal and physical traits of Kerim (Engin Akyürek). This can be seen as a key effect of *Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?* on this particular category of female viewers, most of whom are aged between 17-30.\(^2\) Female fans from Morocco and other Arab countries have one common objective on this Facebook page, which is expressing their strong admiration for the physical qualities of Kerim such as his long dark hair, big black eyes and his smile, in addition to his caring and romantic behaviors towards Fatma. The fans’ fascination with the personal characteristics of Kerim (Engin Akyürek) made them criticize the cold way Fatma has been treating Kerim.

The Moroccan female fans seem to confuse the personal and physical traits of the actor, Engin Akyürek, with the role he plays in *Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?*, who is the timid and passive Kerim that develops to be more assertive, particularly after his innocence is proven. The young actor Engin Akyürek is famous for being shy and reserved; starting from his very first featuring and winning of the first part in an acting contest in Turkey called *Turkiye’nin Yildizlari (Turkey’s Star)* in 2004. His innocent facial features, low voice tonality and his scarce participation in TV talk shows have confirmed these characteristics. Hence, the reputation of the actor, Engin Akyürek, has contributed to the sympathy the Moroccan female fans developed towards the character Kerim. They seem not to consider the part in the series where Kerim passively attends the sexual aggression against Fatma, and probably did not sexually assault her because she had already lost consciousness.

\(^{2}\) My findings are based on my first hand experience with the Facebook page as I am myself a fan. I have also been in personal contact with the administrator of the page who is Egyptian and who has provided me with information regarding the goal of the group as well as the age range of the girl fans.
Instead, the Moroccan female viewers as part of the online Arab women fans focus on the plot twists that have made Kerim the only savior for Fatma more than on the fact that Kerim remained passive, watching his three friends taking turns in raping Fatma. This is highlighted in the short scenes of Fatma and Kerim that have been uploaded on YouTube. The majority of these scenes depict Kerim as the ideal man, embracing the characteristics of kindness, generosity and having the status of a gentleman. Among the titles of the videos on YouTube that idealizes Kerim are “Kerim offers his last sacrifice to Fatma-episode 61,” “Kerim reconciles with Fatma and kisses her hand-episode 83,” “Kerim re-ensures Fatma and tries to calm her down-episode 19” “Kerim keeps his promise to Fatma.” These titles indicate the amount of sympathy that Arab and Moroccan female fans feel towards the character of Kerim and their total support for the growing love between Kerim and Fatma. The majority of the comments on these videos are from Egyptian fans as the comments are written in Egyptian Arabic. Nonetheless, the Moroccan female fans also devoted their time to express their engagement by writing comments in Moroccan Arabic or in French such as “serie super”, “fantastic” “at least Fatma did not die and there is a happy ending,” and “I watch it every morning at 7am.”

In the same vein, the comments from both the Moroccan and Arab female fans on the videos mainly focus on the character Kerim. Some of the comments are “this actor is genius, his role is very nice”, “who can imitate the way Kerim walks?” “Kerim is an uncommon personality that would never reoccur in Turkish drama” “Kerim is so sweet” “I love Kerim’s hair, who is like me?”

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maintained the same emotional stand towards Kerim even on the video that shows devastated Kerim describing the rape incident to the police. Instead of accusing Kerim, female fans comment with expressions such as “these are terrible moments for Kerim that are installed in his mind” “Kerim was only joking when he caught Fatma while his friends are the ones that raped her” “oh poor Kerim” “poor Kerim, he feels very remorseful.” On this video, there is only one comment that blames Kerim, it says “if I were Fatma, I would never forgive Kerim because he was the one who pointed to her and who caught her first;” however, another fan jumps in and defends Kerim saying “he was very drunk and unconscious.” Thus, again the majority of the comments show sympathy towards Kerim more than the rape victim, Fatma. For these female fans, the fact that Kerim was unconscious, and now feels pain and remorse and he is the only one that decides to report the rape crime are sufficient factors to forgive him and even sympathize with him. In her study of the depiction of violence in a number of contemporary television series, Aysun Akıncı Yüksel points out that Turkish drama typically adds the elements of the loss of consciousness or the heavy consumption of drugs and alcohol by the male protagonists that would serve as excuses for their sexually violent acts. This detail is inserted so that the heroes are not depicted as evil characters and hence “forgiving becomes commonplace” (Yüksel, 2013). I would confirm that the loss of consciousness is one of the long-standing elements used in drama to offer it the amount of excess that serves to emotionally engage the audience. In the case of Fatmagul, the audience is encouraged to sympathize with Kerim while they also carry hopeful expectations regarding Fatma’s feelings towards Kerim.

What is peculiar about the videos found on YouTube is the way the fans appropriate sections of Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne? The female fans appropriate Arab pop songs in the resulting remixed videos. They typically use the most recent successful regional songs that are suitable with the dramatic parts of Fatma. Songs are not always in Arabic as fans also make use of Turkish music, and the videos typically consist of the most emotionally charged moments as well as the passionate scenes that have been censored on Arab TV. Among these videos are the ones

that use the very romantic songs of the regionally popular singer Wael Jassar. These types of videos again illustrate the extent to which the female fans feel attached to the love story that develops between Fatma and Kerim and see no harm in the fact that the rape victim Fatma is falling in love with Kerim, who has been involved in the most traumatizing incident in her life.

It should be noted that YouTube has experienced a remarkable rise in viewership from soap opera fans in many Arab countries and Morocco is no exception. The Internet has facilitated the congregation of soap opera fans who in the past had difficulty in coming together to share this interest due to actual distances and scheduling conflicts. In fact, the different ways the Arab and Moroccan online fans construct and remix the YouTube videos from the different sections of Fatma facilitated the engagement of these fans with specific scenes, as indicated in the titles of the videos themselves. In this context, Emma F. Webb affirms that online fans usually assume more “textual” ownership over their favorite soaps than the offline ones do because they spend considerable time on the Internet discussing and evaluating the storylines, the characters, and the realism of the acting. The same applies to the Moroccan female fans of Fatma who have become increasingly attached to the character of Kerim and show less interest in the psychological sufferings of Fatma or the horrific nature of rape as a crime.

The other categories of Moroccan female fans who usually don’t use the Internet to watch the Turkish diziler, have had access to them on MBC. There has been a recent shift to dubbing the Turkish diziler into regional dialects instead of standard Arabic (Fusha). This has contributed to the current success of imported Turkish soap operas that started to be dubbed into colloquial Syrian Arabic. The primary reason for the shift to vernacular dialects is to make imported Turkish diziler more accessible to a wider demographic of Arab viewers. Though standard Arabic is the shared official language in Arab countries, it remains an unspoken language in daily life and limited to the educated elite.

Thus, given the high rates of illiteracy in the Arab world, in Morocco, for instance, it is almost 40 percent (Skalli, 2007); the move to regional dialects was directed towards increasing the popularity of these imported TV series. Despite the fact that the Syrian dialect is not as commonly understood as the Egyptian, but the loyal Moroccan audiences of the Turkish diziler have grown more accustomed to it and the language barrier gradually withers. The profusion of the Turkish TV series with Arabic subtitles on the Internet and their accessibility on Arab TV made them easily available to Arab viewers, particularly to the female fans. This consequently guarantees the prevalence of a number of alarming messages, as in the case with *Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?* The dramatic plot twists in this series have incited the viewers, the female viewers in particular, to focus and support the possibility of a love story between the rape victim, Fatma, and the guilty Kerim, thus belittling the gravity of sexual assaults against women and opening possibilities for love or marital relationships between the rape victims and the rape criminals.

4. **Conclusion**

The strong interest of the Arab viewers for the Turkish TV series is reflected in their continuous airing on different Arab TV channels. *Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?* has been one of the most successful series both inside Turkey and internationally. This is the result of its controversial visual content. In *Fatmagul’un Suçu Ne?*, rape is being normalized as it turned into a love story between the rape victim Fatma and Kerim, who passively attended the horrible sexual aggression against her. As pointed out, a number of dramatic elements were added to make Kerim appear as the only savior for Fatma. For instance, it is only thanks to Kerim that Fatma is able to open charges against the three rapists whose lives would eventually be ruined. Kerim’s motive to stand by Fatma was first due to his great sense of guilt before he started to have feelings for her and slowly but successfully wins her affection as well.

Hence, the way this TV drama makes rape turn into a possibility for romance confirms the alarming effects of such series on the Arab audience in general and the Moroccan female audience in particular. Female viewers in Morocco and other Arab countries showed almost no criticism towards the past problematic behaviors of Kerim during the
violent scene of rape. Instead, they rapidly forgave Kerim, sympathized with him and supported his love for Fatma. As demonstrated in this paper, this type of reaction raises questions about the extent to which TV drama can lead to popular sympathy for those involved in rape, thus underestimating the most aggressive sexual aggressions against women. More to the point, my discussion of the reactions and the comments of the Moroccan female fans in social media platforms confirms the growing importance of social media to TV series fans. Moroccan fans are increasingly feeling more comfortable and encouraged to voice their opinions and express their feelings on social media about the different visual and content details of their favorite Turkish series

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