

A TURKISH DRAMA IN THE LAND OF TELENOVELAS: THE RECEPTION OF *FATMAGUL* IN BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT

In 2015, Brazilian free-to-air television network Band started to air Turkish TV dramas. *Fatmagul*, the second Turkish drama aired by Band, achieved considerably high audience ratings and engaged audiences online, drawing attention to the emerging phenomenon of Turkish TV dramas. In this work, I rely on discussions about melodrama and transnational media flows to investigate Brazilian viewers' perceptions of *Fatmagul*. More specifically, I aim

to understand how this foreign narrative is related to the context of Brazilian audiences' daily lives and identify the differences and similarities Brazilian audiences see between Turkish and Brazilian productions regarding the narrative content. To gather data on the audience profile and general preferences, I shared an online questionnaire on groups about *Fatmagul* on Facebook. Among the respondents, I selected five female viewers from varied backgrounds and conducted in-depth interviews. The results point out that viewers relate to the melodramatic structure and moral of *Fatmagul*, especially concerning the emphasis on romance and the protagonist overcoming obstacles. Results also suggest that viewers reject more realistic narratives presented by Brazilian telenovelas, which they consider too sexualized and not family-oriented.

1. INTRODUCTION

Telenovelas are authentically Latin American. They started to be produced in the region during the 1950s as an adaptation of radionovelas to the brand-new technology of television (Martín-Barbero and Muñoz 1992). In the following decades, telenovelas acquired a particular style related to the social formation of each country, thus helping the construction of national identities (Martín-Barbero 1993). Furthermore, countries with established television industries, such as Brazil and Mexico, have been exporting telenovelas worldwide since the 1970s (Mazziotti 1996).

However, productions from another origin are now drawing attention globally. Turkish TV dramas (or *dizi*), which have a melodramatic narrative structure that resembles telenovelas, have been exported to 146 countries since the mid-2000s (Mourenza 2020). Turkey overcame Brazil and Mexico and is second only to the US in television exports (Bhutto 2019). The popularity of Turkish TV dramas represents a radical shift in the television landscape since they broke through the borders of Turkey's cultural-linguistic market and reached places culturally and geographically distant, such as Latin America.

In 2014, Chilean television network Mega was the first in Latin America to invest in Turkish "telenovelas" – the denomination they received after some adaptations to Latin American consumption habits, such as shorter episodes and daily broadcasts. Back then, Chilean television was going through a period of economic crisis, so instead of producing telenovelas like its competitors, Mega decided to air *One Thousand and One Nights* (*Binbir Gece*), a Turkish TV drama that combined a high-quality technical production with fewer expenses (Ashley 2019). Surprisingly, *One Thousand and One Nights* was the most-viewed TV program that year (Tali 2016). The second place was taken by *What is Fatmagul's Fault?* (*Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*), another Turkish TV drama aired by Mega (Lopes and Orozco-Gómez 2015).

The impressive debut of Turkish TV dramas in Chile influenced the expansion of the phenomenon in Latin America. In 2015, six Turkish "telenovelas" were aired in Argentina, eleven in Chile, two in Ecuador, four in the United States,¹ seven in Peru, and six in Uruguay (Lopes and Orozco-Gómez 2015). Brazil also followed the trend, and the television network Band (short for *Rede Bandeirantes*) started to air *One Thousand and One Nights* during primetime that same year.

1 I refer to the Spanish-language television networks focused on Latin American audiences.

Band remained behind its competitors, but audience ratings that until then did not surpass one point quickly jumped to three points (Uol 2015b). These numbers encouraged Band to air *What is Fatmagul's Fault?* later that year, and it reached five points in audience ratings (Uol 2016). Between 2015 and 2019, Band aired seven Turkish TV dramas, with a brief break of three months in 2017, when Band produced a national version of the Turkish reality show *Exathlon*. However, *What is Fatmagul's Fault?* prevailed as the most successful one in terms of audience ratings.

In light of the remarkable popularity of Turkish TV dramas in Brazil, this article investigates a niche Brazilian audience's perception of *What is Fatmagul's Fault?* My research questions are 1. how is this foreign narrative related to the context of Brazilian audiences' daily lives? and 2. what differences and similarities Brazilian audiences see between Turkish and Brazilian productions regarding the narrative content? Discussions about the melodramatic structure, Brazilian telenovela, and transnational media flows support this analysis. Even though the results cannot be extended to all Turkish TV dramas aired in the country, I expect to shed some light on the rise of these productions in Brazil and Latin America.

2. MELODRAMA

Latin American telenovelas and Turkish TV dramas tend to portray narratives emphasizing emotions and moral values. These characteristics are associated with melodrama's classical structure, whose roots go back to France in the 18th century: popular theaters were banned for causing too much tumult, and only plays without dialogues were allowed for the working class, thus motivating the intense use of music, sound effects, exaggerated acting and, foremost, the appeal to sensations and feelings. The result was a spectacle that distanced itself from the theater considered refined, based on verbal rhetoric and literature (Martín-Barbero 1993).

Over the centuries, the melodramatic structure was reproduced in other cultural products. It is possible to identify melodrama's influence on narratives due to two basic operations: schematization and polarization (Martín-Barbero 1993). The first operation, schematization, can be described by characters' emptying of psychological depth. Characters are converted to mere archetypes, such as "the betrayer", "the avenger", "the victim" and "the fool". The second operation, polarization, refers to the Manichaeism of the melodramatic narrative. Melodrama shows a constant confrontation be-

tween “good” and “evil” that culminates in justice in favor of good, reinforcing a set of values that have to be followed by society to maintain its order (Thomasseau 1984).

The moral universe of melodrama creates a melodramatic imagination that merges the drama of morality with everyday life (Brooks 1995). Melodrama had multiple offshoots around the world that spread this melodramatic imagination. Therefore, the genre can reach past cultural differences since audiences in different cultural-linguistic contexts are acquainted with melodrama’s formula (La Pastina and Straubhaar 2005). By knowing the rules, they can anticipate the protagonist’s fate, identify the hidden intentions of the villains, and be sure true love will triumph, for example. Instead of ruining the suspense, this is considered something that connects the viewer to the story (Oroz 1999).

In Brazil, the telenovela is the most remarkable example of a contemporary product derived from melodrama’s classical structure. The format has undergone radical changes over the years, but it keeps some melodramatic characteristics.

3. TELENOVELA IN BRAZIL

The television was launched in Brazil in 1950, and the first telenovela, *Your Life Belongs to Me (Sua Vida Me Pertence)*, was aired between 1951 and 1952 by TV Tupi. It was an almost literal adaptation of radionovela’s melodramatic script to television (Mattos 1990). Brazilian telenovelas only detached from radio’s influence in the 1960s due to the emergence of videotape, which allowed productions to be aired daily and commercialized (Mazziotti 1996).

In the mid-1960s, during the beginning of the military dictatorship, television started to establish itself as a mass medium. In this context, the television network Rede Globo, founded in 1965, grew thanks to the friendly relations with the military, soon leading the Brazilian television market and becoming the largest producer of telenovelas (Lopes 2003).

The 1970s consolidated the telenovela as the most popular and lucrative Brazilian cultural product. To function as a showcase of national modernity and ideals to be followed, Brazilian telenovela acquired a particular style close to the country’s social formation. Despite keeping ties with melodrama’s classical structure, Brazilian telenovelas broke with the rigor of the Manichean narratives and archetypal characters, incorporating more realism (Martín-Barbero and Muñoz 1992). This innovation was introduced by *Beto Rockfeller*, produced and aired by TV Tupi in 1968, which presented a pro-

tagonist that was not entirely good nor entirely evil and promoted discussions about contemporary themes (Hamburger 2005). Rede Globo adopted and improved *Beto Rockfeller*’s formula, turning the combination between the archaic and the modern into a striking feature of the Brazilian telenovela (Lopes 2009).

The industrialization of the telenovela allowed Globo to replace U.S. imports with national productions in its programming, including during primetime (Martín-Barbero 1993). Moreover, Globo’s telenovelas entered the international market and reversed the usual direction of transnational media flows – until then, television fiction was produced and distributed by a few developed countries and consumed by the rest of the world (Hamburger 2005).

In the 1990s, Globo institutionalized “social merchandising”, a strategy to include explicit pedagogical messages in telenovelas. Thus, problematic subjects were not merely represented: there was an intentional effort to promote information through the plot and educate the viewers (Mazziotti 2006). Over the years, subjects addressed by Globo’s telenovelas have ranged from mental health, racism, domestic violence, and migration to human cloning (Lopes 2009). More recently, aligned with current debates in Brazilian society, telenovelas present discussions about gender identity and homosexuality through characters who distance themselves from stereotypes and clichés. Some examples are the elderly lesbian couple from *Ambitious Women (Babilônia)*, aired in 2015, and the transgender men’s pregnancy in *Edge of Desire (A Força do Querer)*, broadcast in 2017. These initiatives received backlash from some segments of society, such as evangelical politicians, who argued that Globo’s telenovelas want to “destroy families” (Uol 2015c).

Perhaps as a reaction to these transformations in Globo’s telenovelas, more conservative narratives are emerging. RecordTV, a television network owned by Edir Macedo, the founder of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, has been producing biblical telenovelas since 2015. *Moses and the Ten Commandments (Os Dez Mandamentos)*, the first biblical telenovela aired by RecordTV, was based on Moses’ story and tripled the television network’s primetime audience ratings (The Guardian 2015). *Moses and the Ten Commandments* even overtook Globo’s first position in audience ratings when the episode of the parting of the Red Sea was broadcast (Uol 2015a). Meanwhile, SBT has been producing children’s telenovelas since 2012. These telenovelas are mostly remakes of Mexican scripts and are broadcast during primetime to target families (Carabet 2016). Amid

these changes, Band – which stopped producing telenovelas in 2008 and since then has been broadcasting foreign productions – brought Turkish TV dramas to its primetime programming in 2015.

Even though audiences tend to prefer national or local productions, melodrama's classical structure can work as a strategy to reach audiences within other cultures. This strategy is used by Globo's productions to some extent and now seems to be used by some Turkish TV dramas to boost transnational media flows.

4. TRANSNATIONAL FLOWS AND CULTURAL PROXIMITY

The notion of cultural proximity proposed by Straubhaar (1991) states that audiences tend to prefer local or national content. When this preference cannot be met, usually because the country does not have economic and professional resources to produce television fiction, audiences look for productions from the same cultural-linguistic market. It means that they prefer productions from countries that share linguistic, historical, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and geographical similarities (Sinclair 1996).

One example of this preference are the exports of telenovelas between Latin American countries: audiences seem to prefer productions from other countries in the region, which have similar cultures, than from the United States. Audiences tend to choose productions from the United States only when it comes to genres that are too expensive to produce even for countries with a consolidated television industry, such as action series or feature films (Straubhaar 1991).

However, this process is also influenced by cultural aspects and trends that may operate at a national level or within subnational or specific groups. Straubhaar (2007) adds that other factors influencing audiences' choices are genre proximity, value proximity and thematic proximity.

La Pastina and Straubhaar (2005) illustrate the multiple proximities within audiences' reception by exploring the success of Mexican telenovela *Marimar* in a small rural community in northeastern Brazil, even while *King of Cattle (Rei Do Gado)*, a Globo production about a rural setting, was being aired. These viewers had traditional moral values better represented in Mexican telenovelas than in Brazilian ones, mainly because *Marimar* was strongly associated with melodrama's classical structure.

Telenovelas generally rely on melodrama's structures and archetypes, but some of them are closer to the original formula. Mexican telenovelas are centered on universal themes and portray one-dimensional characters, while Brazilian telenovelas introduce more realism (Mazziotti 2006). Therefore, Mexican telenovelas provide content that does not challenge viewers' values and beliefs, attracting conservative audiences (La Pastina and Straubhaar 2005).

Erasing certain elements that are too specific within a cultural-linguistic market is a strategy to make productions more exportable. Straubhaar describes this process as "delocalization": it consists of "minimizing certain kinds of cultural specificities in a cultural product for export to lower the possibility of a cultural discount by the foreign audience" (2007: 171). Cultural discounts include references, pacing, visuals, and jokes that foreign audiences are unfamiliar with.

As many cultures are familiar with melodrama, the flow of content influenced by the melodramatic structure is facilitated by the genre proximity. In the case of Turkish TV dramas, although they tend to focus on domestic viewers, the melodramatic structure seems to help their expansion among international audiences.

5. TURKISH TV DRAMAS

In the late 1990s, Turkish television saw a significant rise in the local production of fictional dramas (Yesil 2015). Thanks to the development of the national TV industry, exports gradually increased until Turkish TV dramas had their global breakthrough: in 2008, the pan-Arab network MBC broadcast *Silver (Gümüş)* and achieved outstanding audience ratings (Salamandra 2012). Afterward, the popularity of Turkish TV dramas rapidly expanded to the rest of the world, including regions that shared no cultural or linguistic ties with Turkey.

Interestingly, the global success of Turkish TV dramas was a surprise to Turkish TV executives as they were focused on producing content for the domestic market (Algan 2020). To increase the international marketability of their products, producers adopted a strategy aligned with the delocalization through "the presence of melodramatic storylines and universal themes, and the de-emphasis on national identity along with the market reorientation" (Yesil 2015: 52).

This expansion has motivated research on narratives presented by Turkish TV dramas, the perceptions of audiences within various cultural-linguistic markets, and the sociopolitical consequences of this phenomenon. Works approaching

the popularity of Turkish TV dramas in the Middle East and North Africa highlighted that these productions contributed to positioning Turkey as a cultural, political, and economic power in the region (Salamandra 2012; Kraidy and Al-Ghazzi 2013; Yanardağoğlu and Karam 2013; Anaz 2014; Berg 2017; Ozalpman and Sarikakis 2018). Similarly, works investigating the success of Turkish TV dramas in the Balkans, where the first productions started to be aired between 2008 and 2009, emphasized that Turkish TV dramas are creating curiosity about the Turkish lifestyle, constructing better views towards Turkey, and even improving diplomatic relations (Panjeta 2014; Balaban 2015; Aydos 2017).

More recently, works have been exploring the phenomenon of Turkish TV dramas in Latin America. There, the positive results achieved by these productions are attributed to the changing television landscape and the audience identification with the melodramatic structure as Turkish TV dramas offer familiar narratives portrayed in “exotic” scenarios (Ferreira 2017, Ferreira 2021, Weber Imaral 2021; Ashley 2019; Aslan 2020; Valverde 2020; Cassano Iturri 2021; Antezana Barrios et al. 2021).

What is Fatmagul's fault? is a prototypical example of a Turkish TV drama that closely follows this melodramatic structure. Produced by Ay Yapım and aired by Kanal D, it was originally broadcast in Turkey between 2010 and 2012. By 2013, the series was already bought by thirty-seven countries around the world (Williams 2013), becoming an international hit in the following years.

6. FATMAGUL IN BRAZIL

What is Fatmagul's fault? (*Fatmağül'ün Suçu Ne?*) is centered on the story of Fatmagul Ketenci, a rape survivor fighting for justice. Initially, Fatmagul lives in a small village on the Aegean coast with her brother, Rahmi, her sister-in-law, Mukaddes, and her nephew, Murat. She is engaged to the fisherman Mustafa Nalçalı, and they plan to marry and move into a house they are building.

Fatmagul's dreams are tragically interrupted when she goes to the beach to see Mustafa before his departure on a fishing trip. She is raped by Selim Yaşaran, the son of a rich and influential businessman, his cousin Erdoğan and their friend Vural, who also comes from an upper-class family. Kerim Ilgaz, a friend from a humble background, was also present and, despite not directly taking part in the abuse, did not intervene to stop it.

The next day, Fatmagul is found unconscious by Ebe Nine, Kerim's adoptive mother. Her life then turns into a nightmare: beyond the trauma, she also has to deal with village inhabitants discrediting her accusations, Mustafa blaming her for what happened, crime perpetrators threatening her with their social influence, and her own family discouraging her from reporting the crime. On top of that, Mukaddes is bribed by the Yaşaran family and forces Fatmagul to marry Kerim. Kerim takes the blame for his wealthy friends out of remorse – he was under the effect of drugs on the night of the crime and believes he raped Fatmagul too. After the wedding, the couple and their respective families move to Istanbul to start a new life somewhere no one knows about the incident. Nevertheless, Fatmagul still finds the strength to seek justice, both for herself and for other victims of sexual violence. Kerim supports her fight and, as time goes by, they fall in love.

In Brazil, the controversially romantic perspective of Fatmagul's story inspired a new title for the drama: *Fatmagul: A Força Do Amor*, or, translated to English, *Fatmagul: The Strength of Love*. Other adaptations concerned the episodes' duration and frequency, which went from 90 minutes once a week to 50 minutes six times a week, and the soundtrack, which included a song from Brazilian *sertanejo* duo Bruno & Marrone as Kerim and Fatmagul's theme. After these adjustments, *Fatmagul*, as the TV drama was often called in the country, was aired by Band between August 2015 and April 2016.

Fatmagul achieved popularity not only on television but also online. On Twitter, *Fatmagul*'s official account would post tweets about episodes in real-time, which engaged followers. *Fatmagul*'s official Facebook page had almost 340,000 likes, and posts also engaged followers. Besides, fans created many Facebook groups dedicated to *Fatmagul*. In these groups, viewers discussed episodes, shared content related to other Turkish TV dramas, and posted fan productions, such as fanarts and fanfics. There were even groups that promoted offline meetings among members. In the next section, I explain the methods used to understand the rise of *Fatmagul* in Brazil.

7. METHODS

Researching reception requires thinking production and consumption articulated to mediations of familiar daily life, subjectivity, fictional genre, and technological devices (Lopes 2000). To contemplate this complex web of interactions, I

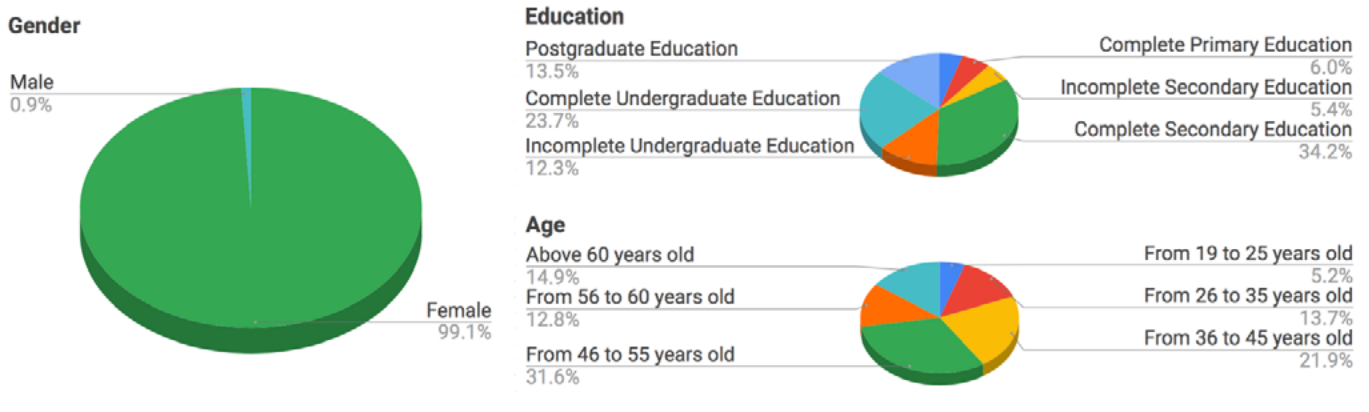


FIG. 1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF AUDIENCES

combined quantitative and qualitative methods through an online questionnaire and in-depth interviews.

I began by mapping Brazilian fan groups dedicated to Turkish TV dramas on Facebook. Afterward, I shared an online questionnaire comprising sixteen questions – eleven closed-ended and five open-ended – on these groups to gather data on the audience profile and general preferences (see Figure 1). The questionnaire was available from March 30, 2017, to April 20, 2017, and received 333 valid answers.

Data collected through the questionnaire provided relevant clues about the audience. For instance, almost all respondents were women, which corresponds to the industrial definition that categorizes telenovelas as TV programs for females: these productions tend to be grounded on melodrama’s excess, and feelings are culturally considered a part of the women’s world (Hamburger 2005). This scenario has been changing for Globo’s telenovelas as their productions distance themselves from the classic melodrama formula, and men comprise more than 30% of telenovelas’ audiences (Lopez & Orozco-Gomez 2017). It seems that either Turkish TV dramas have a stronger appeal among women, or male audiences are not active in the fan groups. Additionally, the fact that most respondents are above 36 years old suggests that these women grew up during the expansion of the Brazilian TV industry and the hegemony of Rede Globo, thus being well-versed in the rules of melodrama and telenovelas (Hamburger 2005).

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents could provide their contact information if they wanted to further collaborate in the research. Among these respondents, five female volunteers from varied backgrounds were selected to represent the different education levels, age ranges, and regions that came up in the questionnaire (see Table 1). In-depth

interviews were conducted with each volunteer via video call between October 25, 2017, and October 30, 2017, to better understand their individual experiences with *Fatmagul*, Turkish TV dramas, and telenovelas in general.

Name ²	Age group	Location (City/State)	Education
Ana	From 26 to 35 years old	Aracaju/SE	Incomplete Secondary Education
Maria	From 36 to 45 years old	São Paulo/SP	Complete Undergraduate Education
Luiza	From 36 to 45 years old	São Paulo/SP	Complete Undergraduate Education
Helena	From 56 to 60 years	Curitiba/PR	Complete Primary Education
Regina	Above 60 years old	Belo Horizonte/MG	Postgraduate

TABLE 1: VIEWERS SELECTED FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The data gathered through the questionnaire and interviews revealed the perceptions about *Fatmagul* and Brazilian telenovelas. Besides, aspects concerning new consumption habits adopted by the Brazilian audience emerged.

8. BRAZILIAN TELENOVELAS VERSUS TURKISH TV DRAMAS

Almost 80% of questionnaire respondents and interviewees said that watching telenovelas is a common habit in their dai-

² All names are fictitious.

ly lives. This information reinforces the idea that they are acquainted with the consumption of this kind of television fiction and its rules. However, this does not mean that they watch any telenovela or the most popular ones: it was possible to identify a preference for telenovelas that follow a more traditional structure and a rejection of Globo's productions' realism and modernity.

When questioned about the usual time they watch telenovelas, the most mentioned time by both questionnaire respondents and interviewees was 8 pm. Since it is Brazilian primetime, this answer was expected, so it required further investigation to identify which of all the telenovelas broadcast at this time they were watching. *Band*, despite being in the fourth position in popularity in Brazil, was the favorite option for 81% of questionnaire respondents and all interviewees. On the other hand, although Globo is the leader in audience ratings in the country, only 7% of the questionnaire respondents claimed to watch its telenovelas.

In the in-depth interviews, it was possible to further investigate the rejection for Globo's telenovelas. Luiza, for example, explained that she started watching *Fatmagul* because other telenovelas aired at that time did not interest her, especially Globo's ones. For her, Globo's productions do not correspond to what is expected from a telenovela:

No, I don't like Globo's telenovelas. They've become so artificial for me, I don't know. Honestly, it doesn't please me. I think telenovelas have to be like telenovelas. SBT ones, which are mostly from Mexico, they're real telenovelas. Tearjerkers. (Luiza, personal communication, October 28, 2017)³

Ana also watches Mexican telenovelas aired on SBT during the evening. She refuses to watch Globo's telenovelas: "I don't like Globo's telenovelas. They're not educational. Too much spiritism, too much sex. Well, how can I say it... Too many messages about homosexuality." Luiza, Ana, Helena, and Regina all agreed that Globo's telenovelas are too explicit when it comes to sex. Regina, who works as an educator, thought it was inappropriate to show certain scenes of intimacy on television. In her opinion, this excessive exposition ends up banalizing sex and affection, and negatively influences children that might be watching it. Ana complemented this idea:

[...] Brazilian telenovela is too pornographic, too much pornography. Here in Brazil, virginity is out of fashion. A teen who is a virgin is an outcast, do you understand me? This is what telenovelas convey. (Ana, personal communication, October 18, 2017)

The women interviewed did not feel comfortable watching Globo's telenovelas with family members. Regina, for example, commented she often felt like "sinking through the floor" because of sex scenes shown while she was watching it with her elderly brother-in-law. In contrast, Helena said she could watch *Fatmagul* accompanied by her autistic son since she considered it lighter than Globo's telenovelas. Similarly, Luiza told us she watched the TV drama with her 70-year-old mother and her 19-year-old nephew. She detailed her experience:

[...] *Fatmagul* talked about a very delicate issue, that is, sexual abuse and the victim-blaming women suffer after being abused, but it wasn't something heavy. I didn't feel embarrassed watching it with my 70-year-old mother, or with my nephew, who is 19 years old. The difference you see between *Fatmagul* and some Brazilian telenovelas is that you feel embarrassed. Even in kissing scenes, you think: "well, does it have to be this way?" Of course, we know it happens like that in real life, but it's a telenovela, something supposed to be watched with your family, with someone by your side, and you feel embarrassed watching it... I really don't watch them. It's not like "oh, you have too much pudency". I think everything needs limits. And Turkish telenovelas, they are more respectful. They make you imagine what's going to happen, but they don't show it explicitly, you know? It's not necessary to show, excuse my French, the actor with his butt out, you know? You just imagine it happening. (Luiza, personal communication, October 28, 2017)

All other interviewees praised this "lightness" mentioned by Luiza and Helena. Maria, who thought she would not bear to continue watching *Fatmagul* after the rape scene, changed her mind in the following episodes. For her, the TV drama transformed a tragedy into something optimistic, and showed that if you have support from your loved ones you can overcome your traumas. Meanwhile, Ana and Regina thought the TV drama was not as heavy as Globo's telenove-

3 Interviews were conducted in Portuguese. All translations are mine.

las because of the tenderness of Fatmagul and Kerim's relationship. According to Ana, their intimacy evolved gradually, through touches and kisses on the cheeks. For Regina, the fact that the couple only had intercourse by the end of the TV drama got back the idea that sex should be something special.

These arguments suggest that questionnaire respondents and interviewees are more conservative and prefer telenovelas that reflect their moral values instead of questioning them. This hypothesis was reinforced by the answers concerning their favorite themes in *Fatmagul*.

9. FATMAGUL'S MELODRAMATIC STRUCTURE

One of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire asked what interested people the most in *Fatmagul*. Answers were varied, but I was able to divide them into five categories: Fatmagul's overcoming, the fight for justice, the romance between Fatmagul and Kerim, the opportunity to get to know another culture, and the actors' good performance. Aspects related to the first three categories were the most mentioned by questionnaire respondents.

In the in-depth interviews, interviewees showed they were able to project issues presented by *Fatmagul* to their daily lives. Despite being a foreign narrative, they considered the portrayal of violence against women, rape culture, and *machismo* in Turkish society close to the Brazilian reality. Ana, for example, said it seems that women in Turkey and Brazil do not have the right to wear whatever they like because men believe a woman's value can be measured by their clothes or their behavior and will use this to justify violence. However, this proximity to Brazilian culture was not what caught their attention. As in the questionnaire, interviewees emphasized their interest in Fatmagul's capacity to rebuild her life, her struggle to achieve justice, and her love story with Kerim. These three categories of interest in *Fatmagul*'s storyline are associated with melodrama's classical structure: the persecution from the villains against the heroine, the final justice for the good ones, and the true love able to overcome all the obstacles.

As pointed out by Martín-Barbero (1993), melodrama relies on schematization and polarization, thus using archetypal characters and Manichean storylines. In this context, Fatmagul's archetype can be classified as "the heroine": although suffering the rape and the consequences that followed the crime, she stands firm to her principles and re-

mains good, pure, and virtuous. The villains, who represent evil and persecute her throughout the narrative, are Selim, Erdoğan, and Vural, the men who raped her, Mustafa, her abusive ex-fiancé, and Mukaddes, her greedy sister-in-law. The firsts go unpunished after committing the crime thanks to their influential connections and money and try to stop Fatmagul from reporting them through corruption, manipulation, and cruelty. The second one blames Fatmagul for being raped, sets their house on fire, and decides to take revenge on her for ruining their wedding plans and humiliating him before the whole village. The third negotiates Fatmagul's silence with the crime perpetrators' family in exchange for money and constantly sabotages the relationship between Fatmagul and Kerim because of her jealousy. The heroine fights tirelessly against all of these villains throughout the episodes, and in the end, they are punished for everything they did to harm her and her loved ones. Vural is accidentally killed by Mustafa, Mustafa kills himself, Selim and Erdoğan are condemned for their crimes, and Mukaddes is also convicted.

For Maria, Fatmagul's transformation from a scared girl into a confident and brave woman while overcoming her traumas and facing her enemies was one of the aspects that interested her the most. This shift was also highlighted by Regina, who commented that, despite looking not older than 18 years old, Fatmagul endured so much suffering in her life that she was forced to mature. Regarding the final scene, in which a pregnant Fatmagul, walking around her hometown holding hands with Kerim, says that many other women around Turkey have been victims of sexual abuse and are still waiting for justice, Regina opined:

I really, really liked it! Her speech about the other cases she was still seeing around her, in other cities, and making a call for other women to do the same thing as she did... Because these women come from a Muslim culture in which they have to shut up... But that wasn't her case. She blew the whistle, right? She rebelled against it [...] (Regina, personal communication, October 31, 2017)

However, this final scene – which resembles Globo's social merchandising actions – did not please everyone. Luiza said she understood the message intended but would rather see the couple with their baby already born, enjoying life as a family. Ana and the questionnaire respondents made similar comments, which seems to indicate a preference for the

representation of an ideal nuclear family. In telenovelas' endings, children and pregnancy symbolize a long-lasting love (Almeida 2007).

The relationship between Fatmagul and Kerim may come across as controversial since he witnessed her rape without interfering and then they were forced to marry, but it was one of the favorite aspects of *Fatmagul* to both interviewees and questionnaire respondents. To them, Kerim truly regretted what he did, and through his sincere love, he achieved forgiveness.

Fatmagul and Kerim's relationship had a slow development. In the beginning, Fatmagul could not stand Kerim's presence, but he patiently waited until she believed in his good intentions. Even when Fatmagul was rude to him, Kerim kept an affectionate, respectful, supportive, and loyal attitude toward her. After some time, Fatmagul forgave him, and they fell in love – a love that was pure and strong enough to sustain their relationship even with so many obstacles along the way. According to melodrama's rules, this feeling existent between these two characters is defined as a "good" or "ordered" love (Oroz 1999), which is different from passion, considered a "bad" or "disordered" love and reserved to the villains (Thomasseau 1984). The obsession Mustafa has for Fatmagul, for example, could be interpreted as a "bad" love.

"Good" love is usually something the viewers aim to experience in their lives (Guimarães and França 2007). This could explain why there was such identification from the questionnaire respondents and interviewees with the romance between Fatmagul and Kerim. Ana commented about this interest for the aspects that compound the idea of a "good" love:

What delighted me the most was the story, because it conveyed a pure love. There was no making out, kissing, grabbing, no, he won her with patience, romanticism, affection. He had everything to leave and live his life away from her. But love found its way. (Ana, personal communication, October 18, 2017)

Luiza was also fascinated by Kerim's redemption. In her opinion, he expressed deep regret:

The way Kerim fought to show Fatmagul he truly loved her. The way he showed that, even though she forgave him, he didn't forgive himself for what he did to the woman he found himself in love with. It really, how can I say it, caught my attention, the way he... Of course, it's a telenovela, but the way he

tried to show her "look, you hate me, you despise me, but I love you". He didn't give up on showing this to her. Even though he didn't forgive himself, and besides everything he went through, all the humiliations she made him go through – which I think he deserved – he didn't give up, you know? He fought for the love he was feeling for her [...] (Luiza, personal communication, October 28, 2017)

These perceptions reinforce the idea the participants are conservative. They prefer traditional narratives and reject recent changes in the approach to romantic relationships, sexuality, gender relations, and family structure in Brazilian telenovelas. Their perceptions also suggest that the Turkish television industry's strategy of employing melodrama's classical structure to reach other cultural-linguistic markets is being successful. Viewers seem to be mostly relating to universal themes instead of particularities of Turkey.

However, the inclination for melodrama does not mean *Fatmagul's* audience is outdated. Thanks to *Fatmagul* and other Turkish TV dramas, they are adopting new consumption habits that impact their daily lives.

10. CHANGES IN MEDIA CONSUMPTION HABITS

Although the majority of questionnaire respondents were above 45 years old, almost 74% of all participants claimed to watch *Fatmagul's* episodes on the internet. This information shows that online watching, often associated with younger audiences (Matrix 2007), is not restricted to these viewers, and reinforces what was pointed out as a trend in television fiction in the past decade: the consumption of television fiction on the internet (Lopes and Orozco-Gómez 2017).

In the in-depth interviews, all interviewees claimed to have adopted the habit of watching Turkish TV dramas online, and this practice turned into a part of their daily lives. They also mentioned binge-watching *Fatmagul* and other Turkish TV dramas, which was another trend in television fiction in the 2010s (Lopes and Orozco-Gómez 2017), even though also generally linked with the generations that were already born digital. Regina, who belonged to the eldest age group – above 60 years old –, said she first watched *Fatmagul* on television and re-watched it a few times on YouTube. She described her routine with Turkish TV dramas and justified her marathon-viewing:

I make my crafts, my stuff, and the television is always on, so sometimes I watch 8, 10 episodes in a day, you know? This is how I do it. Nowadays, there's no way you can watch Globo News, or Band News, our television is a police and political duty. All the time it shows politicians in prison, or thugs in prison, or leaving prison... So I'm done with it. I don't have the patience for it anymore. (Regina, personal communication, October 31, 2017)

After *Fatmagul's* broadcast on Band, Regina, as well as the other women interviewed, deepened their interest in Turkish TV dramas through online fan groups. All of them mentioned watching *Eternal* (Ölene Kadar) – originally aired by Turkish television network ATV in 2017 and not aired in Brazil – thanks to these virtual communities, since there was an effort to translate it to Portuguese as soon as English translations were available. However, some of them – such as Maria, Ana, and Luiza – got so anxious that they did not care to wait for subtitles and watched *Eternal* live through ATV's app. Needless to say, none of them understood the Turkish language, but maybe because of melodrama's predictable structure this did not matter:

It was very nice, we had a very nice group on the internet, on Facebook. Every Thursday [...] we watched it in Turkish. We didn't understand a thing, but we watched it anyway. And it was very nice because when the episode ended, we tried to guess what happened together in our group. Then, on Sunday, or Saturday, I think she [the woman who added subtitles] received English subtitles and translated it, and then on Saturday, she posted Thursday's episode translated. So we watched it on Thursday in Turkish and on Sunday we watched it with Portuguese subtitles. But there are many things that you can understand since it's a story you are following. You can sort of guess what's happening. We got wrong about one thing or another, but we could understand almost everything intuitively. (Maria, personal communication, October 26, 2017)

Maria and Luiza explained that the bonds between group members became so strong that they started to organize charitable actions, such as donating blood and joining the

bone marrow registry, in a way to homage Engin Akyürek, the actor who played Kerim in *Fatmagul* and starred *Eternal*. Fans who lived in São Paulo met offline for these activities, and also to eat Turkish dishes at a restaurant owned by a family of Turkish immigrants. Maria said it reminds her of *Gül Mutfağı*, *Fatmagul's* restaurant in the TV drama. The women became friends with the owners, who now allow their Engin Akyürek-themed parties at the place. At these meetings, some of the fans wear personalized T-shirts printed with a photo of the actor.

These viewers' obsession with Turkish "telenovelas" is often compared to adolescents' behavior by their acquaintances, who are not used to seeing people their age so involved with a TV drama. After these types of comments, Luiza, at the height of her 40s, answers: "so I'm 14 years old". Even though the participants are more conservative concerning the changes in television fiction themes and narratives, they seem open-minded when it comes to embracing digital trends. As a result, Turkish TV dramas are deeply entangled in their daily lives.

11. CONCLUSION

Based on our sample, *Fatmagul's* audience seems to be mainly made up of women who seek productions that reflect their conservative moral values through melodrama's classical structure. In *Fatmagul*, the participants were mostly interested in the protagonist overcoming obstacles, the fight for justice, and the romance – all elements of melodrama, a genre people can relate to despite their culture. Rede Globo's telenovelas, which tend to be more realistic and approach Brazilian social issues instead of following a traditional formula, are rejected by the participants.

Even though *Fatmagul's* viewers dislike narrative innovations and feel nostalgic toward classic telenovelas, they embrace technological innovations. Through the internet, they have adopted new media consumption habits and turned Turkish TV dramas into an important part of their daily lives. Their practices approximate the global and the local, the individual and the collective, and the online and the offline.

Furthermore, the analysis of the reception of *Fatmagul* in Brazil suggests that Turkish TV dramas are popular among a specific niche. These productions are not replacing national telenovelas nor threatening Globo's hegemony – Globo remains as the main TV network in Brazil, and Band is still behind its competitors. Based on the responses in the question-

naire and interviews, Turkish TV dramas seem to be gaining a small parcel of the audience unsatisfied with other options available in Brazilian television. It points to a fragmentation of audiences, a process that is likely related to the diversity of content currently available on television and the internet.

In 2019, Band stopped broadcasting Turkish TV dramas. Due to the lack of options, Brazilian fans developed communities that translate, subtitle, and distribute Turkish TV dramas online without any monetary profit. These communities attract not only viewers that already watched Turkish TV dramas on television but also new viewers. Additionally, Globoplay – Globo’s streaming service – added Fatmagul and other Turkish TV dramas to their catalog in July 2021. There are also Turkish TV dramas available on Netflix and HBO Max. These transformations contribute to the fast-growing popularity of Turkish TV dramas in Brazil: more titles are available, online groups have thousands of members, and audiences are likely getting more diverse. Therefore, to understand the perceptions and appropriations of Turkish narratives in Brazil and Latin America, this ongoing phenomenon requires further investigation.

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TV series

- Ambitious Women* (2015)
Beto Rockfeller (1968–1969)
Edge of Desire (2017)
King of Cattle (1996-1997)
Marimar (1994)
Ölene Kadar (2017)
One Thousand and One Nights (2006–2009)
Moses and the Ten Commandments (2015–2016)
What is Fatmagul's Fault? (2010–2012)
Silver (2005–2007)

