Chapter 6

Sensing authenticity, seeing aura
Turkish audiences' reception of Danish drama

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Abstract

This chapter reconsiders Walter Benjamin's conceptualisation of "aura" while applying his concept to the viewing experience of Turkish audiences watching Danish television drama. Based on qualitative audience research, I show the significance of the concepts of "aura" and "authenticity" for the Turkish viewers' engagement with the Danish television series *Forbrydelsen* [*The Killing*] as an auratic object. The audiences did not see or find authenticity or aura in remakes of the drama series originating elsewhere, including the US or Turkey. The aura was considered entirely irreplaceable and impossible to reproduce in Danish series' various international remakes, of which the Turkish remake of *The Killing*, *Cinayet*, was naturally an important point of reference. I thus show the continued significance of artistic aura and authenticity, even in the age of digital reproduction.

Keywords: aura, authenticity, Danish TV drama series, reception studies, Turkey

Introduction

The desire for "authenticity" has emerged as a modern phenomenon (Smelik, 2011) as well as a problem of modernity (Hardt, 1993). As a significant and complex concept, authenticity has been extensively discussed in the media and communication scholarship from various critical and analytical perspectives (Coupland, 2001; Fuqua, 2012; Godfrey, 2018; Hall, 2009; McDermott, 2018; Rose & Wood, 2005; Scannell, 2001; Van Leeuwen, 2001). In order to better understand the theorisation of authenticity, some scholars engage with the concept in terms of its relationship to "aura" in the media (Bolter et al., 2006; Choo & Currid-Halkett, 2018; Hardt, 1993; Sterne 2007). However, little attention has been given to the connection between aura and authenticity in the context of reception studies.

In this chapter, I reconsider Walter Benjamin's (1935/1968) conceptualisation of aura and its relationship to authenticity in the context of Turkish audiences' experience

of watching the Danish television series *Borgen* (DR1, 2010–2013)[1], *Bron/Broen* [*The Bridge*] (SVT1/DR1, 2011–2018), *Forbrydelsen* [*The Killing*] (DR1, 2007–2012) and the Turkish remake of *The Killing*, *Cinayet* (Kanal D, 2014). While examining Benjamin's polyvalent conceptualisation of aura and its relationship to the notion of authenticity, I specifically scrutinise the discursive constructions of these concepts for a niche Turkish audience who passionately watches and tremendously values the Danish television drama circulating globally. In the age of new media, digital reproduction and dissemination of these Danish television drama series add another layer of complexity to the analysis. The research questions guiding this chapter are the following: How do Turkish audience members construct the concepts of authenticity and aura? What rhetorical resources generate aura and authenticity for Turkish audiences? To answer the questions, I analyse the sentiments and ideas associated with these concepts in interviews and the hypertext online forum and a user-generated content website.

According to Benjamin, aura, as a hallmark of traditional art and as an aesthetic category, has disappeared from reproductive media such as photography and film. Considering Benjamin's "lifelong endeavor [is] to theorize the conditions of the possibility for experience in modernity" (Hansen, 2012: 105), Benjamin also defines aura as an experience, an engagement, and as a peculiar web of space and time – the unique manifestation of a distance, however near it may be (1935/1968). As the result of individual and focus group interviews conducted from 2016–2018 with audiences of Danish television drama in Turkey and analysis of online discussions and digital entries in a popular Turkish online media platform Ekşi Sözlük[2], I argue that based upon their Danish television drama watching experience, Turkish audiences appear to attribute aura to these series. In doing so, Turkish audiences can perceive Danish drama series as high-quality television products and strive to transform them from mundane products of popular culture to auratic and authentic works. In addition, by comparing the original Danish series *The Killing* with its local remake *Cinayet*, I also demonstrate that Turkish audiences seem to simultaneously assign aura to Danish dramas and demand the maintenance of aura in local remakes. Based upon these audience expectations, Benjamin's notion of aura presents a structure for discourse analyses regarding negative audience response to *The Killing*'s Turkish counterpart, *Cinayet*.

The first section of this chapter examines Benjamin's conceptualisation of aura and the concept of authenticity. After developing this theoretical perspective, I describe the study methodology with details of focus group and individual interviews conducted with Turkish audiences in Turkey and, in particular, of the textual analysis of Ekşi Sözlük. The third section of this chapter explores the Turkish audiences' formation and experience of aura and authenticity in the Danish drama series. I investigate how Turkish audiences construct these notions when viewing Danish television dramas by scrutinising their ideas and sentiments on 1) uniqueness and originality regarding aura and authenticity; 2) ambiance and distance in relation to aura; and 3) ordinariness with respect to authenticity. The final section poses some difficulties with Benjamin's presumption that digital reproduction has caused the disappearance of aura. The

experiences of Turkish audiences imply that audiences can indeed feel a sense of aura and foreground authenticity in their reception of Danish television products.

A Benjaminian approach to aura and authenticity in the media

In his seminal work, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin (1935/1968) examines transformations of audience relationships with art with respect to technological developments in art production. By focusing on the relationship between the work of art (including film and photography), the art object, and the experience of its audiences, Benjamin discusses "outmoded concepts" including creativity, eternal value, and aura that are brushed aside by the transformation by media technologies.

Benjamin analyses and assigns meanings to modern media through a complex and sometimes ambiguous lens. He describes the history of art in three historical stages. The first stage, what Benjamin calls the auratic stage, revolves around limited availability of art objects used in rituals and ceremonies. A ritual-bounded presence of an object creates an "auratic distance" of social dependency (Benjamin, 1935/1968; Sherratt, 1998: 26; 2007:157). The second stage is the autonomy stage, when an art object is no longer bound to ritual (Sherratt, 2007). Instead, the object is on exhibition due to its uniqueness and status as a relic from the past (Benjamin 1935/1968). A painting or a sculpture, for example, is perceived as a unique artwork surrounded with a mystical aura. In the third stage, which is the present time, any art object can be mechanically reproduced in the perfect form, yet the reproduction always lacks "its presence in time and space" when compared to the original (Benjamin, 1935/1968: 220). The loss of tangible "presence" in mechanical reproductions banishes all contemporary media from the realm of auratic distance. According to Benjamin, it is the collapse of distance that is key to understanding the decay of aura in modernity. More specifically, Benjamin argues that art works in the modern era have lost the essential quality of distance generated by social dependency, ritual use, and uniqueness. The desire to engage more closely with aura and to get in touch with its uniqueness catalyses the quest for modern media products. Ironically, from a Benjaminian perspective, in the age of mechanical reproduction the newfound closeness, familiarity, and loss of distance has resulted in deterioration of aura.

As a Marxist scholar and critic who attempts to map out the impact of modernity on artwork, Benjamin thinks that the loss of the aura in relation to art, even "its active demolition" (Hansen, 2008: 355) was a positive advancement in the modern age. For Benjamin, more than anything else aura is a political issue offering great possibilities but also some risks:

> The loss of the aura has the potential to open up the politicization of art, whether or not that opening is detrimental or beneficial is yet to be determined. However, it

allows for us to raise political questions in regard to the reproducible image which can be used in one way or another. (IFS, 2008)

Concurrently, Benjamin problematises fascism's appropriation of aura and the Hollywood film industry for creating aura around artwork or Hollywood stars (Hansen, 2008). Mufti also claims that Benjamin maintains the following:

> The exploration of authenticity and aura is animated by a concern with the rise of fascism, which Benjamin describes as the constellation that responds to the decline of aura by an aestheticization of politics. […] In thus situating fascism within capitalist modernity, Benjamin brings together, on the one hand, the history of class relations and, on the other, the history of the artwork and the loss of aura. (2000: 89)

Therefore, Benjamin underlines the fatal resurrection of aura through the Hollywood star cult and the fascist mass spectacle in the negative sense (Hansen, 2008). Aura, therefore, must be demolished in the era of national-populist and fascist politics. Consequently, in Benjaminian theory, the revival or the loss of aura remains a central political issue.

For Benjamin, irreparable loss means that aura cannot be attributed to or revived in any form of media, including a television production. The loss of distance facilitates the decline of aura, and nowhere does this lack of distance seem more evident than in digitally reproduced modern media products. Now, more than ever before, television productions are readily available to audiences. In Turkey, viewers can buy or download (legally or illegally) media products including films and foreign television dramas. In the virtual age, where instant accessibility is the norm, there is no such thing as spatial distance between audiences and artwork. Mechanical reproducibility, dissemination, and availability of digital media products create a sense of immediacy for audiences who have ubiquitous access to multiple digital copies of films and television series. There is no such thing as being physically distanced from the object anymore – the question is, however, whether this elimination of distance really eradicates aura.

The answer to this question lies in Benjamin's definitions of authenticity and aura. Benjamin contextualises the aura of artworks with their ritual use, social dependence upon said ritual, reverence for the uniqueness of ritual objects, and the perceived distance between these unique objects and the ordinary. According to Benjamin, the perceived distance between the unique and the ordinary generates a sense of aura and gives rise to the assumed authenticity of the object.

Derived from Greek word *authentikos*, authenticity means "origin", "the first source", "real", "valid", "faithful", and "genuine" (Smelik, 2011: 77). Therefore, similar to aura, authenticity pertains to "original", "genuine", "accurate", and sometimes "creative". Benjamin (1935/1968) states that the presence of the original is a prerequisite to the concept of authenticity. That is, authenticity signifies "a narrative of origins or a sense of original" (Umbach & Humphrey, 2018: 1). However, Benjamin also suggests a more complex understanding of authenticity as tied to tradition and ritual: "The

authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced" (1935/1968: 221). Umbach and Humphrey note that objects, too, can be authentic, because they can enable and facilitate access to authentic experience in particular moments or in shared social imaginaries across long periods of time (2018).

In Benjamin's work, the relationship between aura and authenticity is a fuzzy and complicated issue; this relationship is fundamentally ambivalent, yet the meanings of these two concepts are relational. Benjamin argues that aura is "the unique value of the authentic work of art" (1935/1968: 224). The authenticity appears in defining aura as described by Hansen in her article, "Benjamin's Aura":

> Benjamin's aura as a primarily aesthetic category—as shorthand for the particular qualities of traditional art that he observed waning in modernity, associated with the singular status of the artwork, its authority, *authenticity*, and unattainability, epitomized by the idea of beautiful semblance [emphasis added]. (2008: 336)

Put differently, to Benjamin aura implies singularity, authority, originality, distance, and authenticity. Hansen unravels authenticity as a "particular quality" of the auratic objects. Thus, as a broader concept, aura may enclose and presuppose authenticity.

Rickly-Boyd (2012) approaches the issue of authenticity from the perspective of tourism studies. She observes that Benjamin's theorisations of authenticity and aura are primarily object-oriented and reimagines the concept as it relates to experience. Rickly-Boyd further states the implications of Benjamin's concept of aura as "an engagement with uniqueness and authenticity in the context of ritual, extend[ing] beyond the objective to the experiential as authenticity is connected to aura" (Rickly-Boyd, 2012: 271). In other words, by emphasising the connection between object and experience, Rickly-Boyd argues that "authenticity of the experience is a part of an engagement with aura" (2012: 271), and as a consequence, underlines the notions of aura and authenticity as performative and communicative devices. Choo and Currid-Halkett also discuss the two concepts:

> Using film and photography as the prime examples, Benjamin expounded that even if an artistic product loses its originality and authenticity in the process of reproduction—its 'aura'—the viewer is able to have aesthetic interpretations of the reproduced image. […] The value is now created and placed on the experience it brings to the everyday life, the message it delivers and the imagination it evokes. (Choo & Currid-Halkett, 2018: 120)

Therefore, the experience of the viewers and their engagement with the artwork play a significant role in generating aura.

Benjamin defines aura as "an attitude of reverence towards art on the part of the viewer" in his essay "The Short History of Photography" (quoted in Bolter et al., 2006: 24). In this study, relying on the experience of Turkish audiences who watch Danish television drama series such as *Borgen*, *The Bridge*, and *The Killing*, I assert that aura

evokes a sense of admiration and astonishment by means of its attributes of distance, uniqueness, originality, ambiance, and authenticity. The qualitative data gathered from Turkish audiences indicate that Turkish viewers attribute authenticity to Danish television series, resulting in the perception of aura. Although aura and authenticity are closely related – and aura is indubitably associated with authenticity – authenticity does not necessarily imply aura. As will be evident from the individual and focus group interviews in this chapter, authenticity can be generated by ordinariness, a *possibility* of approachability, despite a sense of unfamiliarity and strangeness to an extent. Yet, aura imposes distance, unavailability, and unapproachability. The fascination of Turkish audiences with Danish television series relies on a combination of the extraordinary and the mundane. In other words, as well as uniqueness, distance, ambiguity, and distinctiveness, audiences' sentiments correlate aura with authenticity; however, they associate authenticity with genuine, real, faithful, and the original. Therefore, they attribute authenticity to the ordinariness of the characters and closeness in terms of feeling affinity and familiarity with them. Through active dialogue in online forums such as Forumgercek[3] and Turkcealtyazi[4], fans in Turkey actively and intersubjectively construct[5] the aura attributed to Danish television drama series.

For the purpose of analysing audience reception, I rely on a concept of reproduction that is considerably broader than Benjamin's. Benjamin considers reproduction as a mechanical process not involving creative sensibility. In this sense, multiple prints of a photographic negative are reproductions. I define reproduction as a media product that bears the likeness of previously existing media in regard to visual and aesthetic qualities but does not follow the model so closely that the remake might constitute copyright infringement. I particularly emphasise reproduction of media forms like television series as aesthetic, rather than mechanical, forms of expressions.

Method of the study

To analyse data from various perspectives, this study employs two different qualitative methods: in-depth interviews and textual analysis. Drawing upon a previous project about audience reception, I interviewed thirteen people from March 2016–August 2018 who reside in Turkey and who regularly watch Danish drama series via cryptic file sharing on torrent sites. In addition to one-to-one interviews, I conducted four focus groups ranging between three and five participants in Istanbul and Izmir. Twenty-six participants in total were interviewed face-to-face in individual and focus group meetings. Semi-structured interviews lasted from one to three hours. All interviews conducted in Turkish were recorded, and a professional translator transcribed all Turkish texts and translated interviews into English. Based on snowball sampling (Marcus et al., 2017), participants were chosen among diverse audience members whose ages range from 24–57 years. The occupations of the participants were lawyers, journalists, architects, graduate students, civil servants, professors, engineers, advertising practitioners, bank

managers, and photographers. To respect their privacy and to guarantee anonymity, all participants were assigned numbers; only the age, gender, and occupation of the participants are clearly stated in the study.

I also employed textual analysis to examine audiences' online discussions on a Turkish-language collaborative hypertext dictionary, Ekşi Sözlük, one of the most popular and lively interactive online platforms with more than 700,000 contributors (Yıldırım & Yurtdas, 2016). The contributors of Ekşi Sözlük, who write online comments called "entries", are identified as *yazar* [the author]. Danish drama series have been extensively discussed in multiple entries between January 2011 and December 2018. All entries are marked by the pseudonym of the author, by date, or by date and time of entry. Ekşi Sözlük conceals the author's personal information, such as gender, age, and occupation (Kaptan, 2018). All entries and interviews were analysed using critical discourse analysis (CDA), which is a widely used method beneficial for exploring socially constructed meanings in discourse. Fairclough (1995) recommends CDA as a means of prospecting for linguistic evidence within the text. CDA points to both explicit and implicit meanings in the text; therefore, I carried out CDA of Ekşi Sözlük entries related to Danish drama series to better understand Turkish audiences' invocation of concepts of authenticity and aura.

Turkish audiences' experience of aura and authenticity in the age of digital media

In the age of mechanical reproduction, Benjamin suggested that media technologies "put [the audience] in the position of the critic" (Benjamin, 1935/1968: 240). In the digital age, I witness that Turkish audiences voluntarily occupy this position, harshly criticising readily available Turkish and transnationally distributed American television drama series including *CSI* (CBS, 2000–2015)*, NCIS* (CBS, 2003–present) and *Homeland* (Showtime, 2011–present), along with Turkish remakes of Danish drama. As a consequence of digital reproduction and globalised distribution practices, audiences may access international drama, remakes produced in different countries, as well as national television series from their country of origin. Hence, audiences situate themselves in a position of authority. In doing so, viewers located in a specific geographic and cultural context claim power and occupy positions as arbiters of aesthetic and cultural values in the global media landscape. Additionally, audiences voice and share their newfound authority easily through new, online media platforms. This new mode of viewing experience and critical response allow – and even encourage – the same viewer to watch transnational television series and multiple remakes of the original. Multiple viewings may also solidify the viewer's position as an authoritative critic.

The positionality of Turkish audiences in the online space is crucial to the conceptualisation of authenticity and the discursive construction of aura around Danish television drama series. As self-identifying, authoritative media critics, audiences

in the age of digital media reinterpret these concepts in the context of effortlessly reproduced media products. The following exchange in one of the focus groups (FG) between a 30-year-old male electrical engineer and a 39-year-old female mechanical engineer depicts how audiences construe authenticity in relation to the originality and uniqueness of a media product:

Researcher: Well, how would you define [Danish dramas]?

Male subject #1:   [4 second pause] Original!

Researcher: Could you elaborate original please? What do you mean by original?

Female subject #1: Authentic. [giggles] Sorry [for the interruption]. I couldn't stop myself.

Male subject #1:   Unique, I can say. Unusual.

                                                            (FG 4, 2018)

In the interviews, the audiences define authenticity by employing various lexicons such as "original," "unusual", and "unique." By these word choices, they designate formulations of authenticity, making distinctions between national and transnational television drama series they consume. Particularly, comments on the "uniqueness" of Danish drama series appeared in many interviews, and this aspect has become the epitome of experiencing the Danish drama as original television series like no other. The audiences do not spontaneously use the notion of aura (with two exceptions) and they rarely use the concept of authenticity. Baecker scrutinises Benjamin's suspicion about the loss of aura:

We accept the thesis that uniqueness of "here and now" of the artwork has been lost [... Benjamin] did not mean by uniqueness that there is nothing in the world comparable. Rather, uniqueness is the condition of the possibility of a work's "here and now". [...] Only by being compared to something similar does the uniqueness of a thing become evident. A work of art becomes incomparable by being compared, and it is unique because something comparable also exists. (2003: 12)

In this context, the uniqueness of Danish drama attributed to them by Turkish audiences, stems from comparison of these drama series with several Western and Turkish television series and movies. These audiences are extremely familiar with and conscious of aesthetic codes of the global culture industry which elevate them into the position of critics. In this context, along with uniqueness, audiences often use the term "atmosphere" (the ambience) when referring to the aura of television dramas. The focus group discussion below between two participants, a 40-year-old male bank manager and a 38-year-old female teacher, shows that Danish dramas create a "unique" feel and fall into a distinctive category comparable to certain film genres:

Female subject #2: [Danish dramas are] like indie movies.

Male subject #2:   Yes, there's an atmosphere like in indie films.

Female subject #2: There's an atmosphere like in indie movies. And we're crazy about indie films – I mean we always go to watch, follow them. That's another reason why they picked up my interest.

(FG 3, 2017)

To the respondents, the "unique" feel of Danish television series differentiates them from other transnational series. The uniqueness and the atmosphere, or ambiance, of Danish drama series creates a distinction between the "Other" series and the Danish ones. Uniqueness, and all it infers, becomes the source of aura for Danish television drama series and raises them to the status of independent films. This view of uniqueness supports Turkish audiences' attribution of authenticity and aura to Danish television series when compared with series originating elsewhere. Atmosphere is considered something positive – it is the unique and awe-inspiring quality that earns Danish drama series a place alongside highly regarded indie movies in the minds of many Turkish viewers. Similarly, my 2016 interview with female subject #3, a 52-year-old civil servant, echoes female subject #2 and male subject #2 above, regarding "the atmosphere" of Danish drama series:

Atmosphere is really influential in the Danish series. But I think, uhm, most of those which I like amongst American series are atmosphere series, like *In Treatment*, *Mad Men*. Uhm, series which have a unique aura. I guess it's kind of related with preference – choices. I mean, of course Turkish series and American series are oriented toward popular culture more. I mean, they both have more popular culture elements in them.

Here, female subject #3 emphasises the "unique aura" of Danish drama series and defines it as an atmosphere, a sense of feeling characteristic of some television series. According to Ahmed (2019), aura has an uncommunicative dimension that cannot be fully grasped or explicitly defined. Ahmed argues "aura resists conceptualization because it is something to be felt before it can be understood or theorized" (2019: 101). Hence, it implies sentiments of audiences similar to those stated by male subject #2 and female subjects #2 and #3. Female subject #3 also mentions the interplay between popular culture, aura, and authenticity by suggesting that many Turkish and American television series sacrifice aura and authenticity to gain popularity. These compromising series incorporate elements of popular culture such as featuring worldwide famous actors and providing fast-paced, crazy drama; the Turkish and American series strive to produce popular products rather than authentic and unique content. Therefore, for female subject #3, with few exceptions, neither Turkish nor American television drama series have aura.

It is important to note that the uniqueness of Danish television drama series also alienates some Turkish audiences. One distinctive aspect of Danish drama series is

slowly developing plot lines. Some audiences accept the plodding pace of dramatic development and resolution as a sign of authenticity in Turkish remakes of Danish television drama. Turkish fans of Danish drama have come to expect slowly gathering momentum extending across a complete season. Regarding their uninitiated or unappreciative peers, Turkish fans of Danish television series position themselves as experts – or even connoisseurs – and they use the online forum Ekşi Sözlük to air their critique. Ekşi Sözlük user Selcouth declares that an upcoming Turkish remake of the Danish original version of *The Killing* is destined to fail because "regular" Turkish audiences will not tolerate waiting an entire season for one murder to be solved. Selcouth predicts Turkish viewers will become impatient and bored with *Cinayet* and the television channel will cancel the series despite the small group of loyal viewers (6 January 2014, 16:21). Mockingbird21 reiterates Selcouth's comments and raises additional issues regarding the expectations of Turkish audiences:

> Those who know the original [*Forbrydelsen*] will probably watch [*Cinayet*] for a few episodes. Those who do not may get bored thinking "when will the murderer be exposed?" In our nice country, people only love crime fiction series that expose the murderer in just one episode. Well, maybe not. We'll see when [*Cinayet*] is broadcast. But I think it's so amateurish that it couldn't even be compared to the original. Even the trailer shows this. (29 December 2013, 00:03)

Selcouth and Mockingbird21 presume that most Turkish audiences will not relish the distinctive characteristics they expect in the ideal Danish television series. Considering themselves enlightened viewers, Selcouth and Mockingbird21 uphold these unique qualities as signs of authenticity, and admit these qualities require patience from, and elicit wonder in, select audiences. In their opinion, the controversial qualities of *Cinayet* that make it authentic, despite its sophomoric failings, will lead the majority of Turkish audiences to confusion and will doom the remake to failure. Selcouth and Mockingbird21clearly identify distinctiveness in *Cinayet* from the qualities of authenticity in Danish television drama series and directly indicate the role of these qualities in establishing aura.

Authenticity and aura – ordinary and peculiar

Danish drama series require an investment from the audience. The slow pace and pedestrian nature of the characters may be interpreted by some audiences as dull, but fanciers count the dreary ambiance and ordinary characters among the sources of authenticity in the series. According to Turkish audiences who are favourable toward Danish television drama series, the characters and their mundane representations generate authenticity. The informants in focus groups and individual interviews implicitly or explicitly attribute authenticity and aura to the compelling fictional characters on the screen. In a focus group interview, the following exchange between a 40-year-old

male financial advisor and a 38-year-old female university lecturer exemplifies the aura of protagonists in Danish, Turkish, and American drama series:

Male subject #3:   [In the Danish dramas] the heroes are somewhere between hero and anti-hero, actually.

Female subject #4: Yes. They have a dark side, right.

Male subject #3:   Well, I mean. Yes, not one of them has that superhero aura. They have weaknesses – we know their weaknesses. They have problems, in their work – they have problems with their work.

Female subject #4: Yes. The guy in *The Bridge* had an injured leg I guess, yes.

Researcher: Uh-huh.

Male subject #3:   That's why they're not superheroes who everybody would identify themselves with. In Hollywood series you always want to identify yourself with those superheroes. These series make me adopt an external perspective.

Researcher: An external perspective to what?

Male subject #3:   To the story and the characters. I mean, it's uh, it's harder to feel inside I think, in these series. Or identifying yourself with a character is very hard. Maybe this may be stemming from the cultural difference. At the end of day our culture is different than American [culture] too. But America [Hollywood] makes these more suitable to the whole world.

(FG 1, 2016)

Turkish audiences who appreciate Danish drama series evaluate the approachability and unapproachability of the characters as signs of their authenticity that generate aura. Male subject #3 states that unrealistic or superhuman American protagonists have an "aura" about them; however, this aura of *character* doesn't extend to aura in the series as a *whole*. Interestingly, male subject #3 implies that the ordinariness and banality of Danish characters "lacking aura" appear more authentic, which resulted in aura of the drama. Approving Turkish audiences deem Danish characters to be simultaneously more relatable and less susceptible to popular appeal.

According to my informants, building and sustaining a sense of the ordinary constitutes a major part of what makes the Danish television drama authentic. In television, authenticity sometimes actualises through the representation of the ordinary and the banal. In the context of reality TV and lifestyle series, Jensen (2009) emphasises that one of the distinctive features of Danish television series and adaptations is *ordinariness*. Apart from series in the reality and lifestyle genres, Danish series in general tap into ordinary life, ordinary visual images, and ordinary stories on screen

(Jensen, 2009). However, building and sustaining a sense of the ordinary, which is so commonly expected by Danish viewers, constitutes a major part of what makes Danish drama series "astonishing", "unique", and at the same time "authentic" for Turkish audiences. In order words, ordinariness of Danish life is a key source for creating authenticity in the media products. Yet, ordinary or banal Danish way of life (which signifies authenticity) is "extraordinary" for Turkish audiences. For example, Ekşi Sözlük users Laertes and dystrophin comment on how something as mundane as grey weather creates an ambience for aura (Laertes, 14 February 2014, 23:42; dystrophin, 8 January 2014, 19:40). For these users, "gloomy", "dark", and "thriller" atmosphere is what makes the Danish drama series what they are (Kaptan, 2018). Ordinary weather, a constituent of authenticity, is a source of aura for Turkish audiences. Ordinariness has, as a result, become a key source of aura in Danish television series.

In the case of *Cinayet*, the audience reception indicates that Turkish audiences attribute authenticity and aura to the original Danish crime drama *The Killing*. The audience's sentiments towards these notions in the television series are also central to the Turkish remake's success or failure. Unmet expectations prompt a comparison between the Danish and Turkish versions and dissatisfaction of the audience as stated by Ekşi Sözlük author Sonam:

> When it comes to the acting, Ahmet Mümtaz Taylan and Goncagül Sunar [parents of the victim] really fit and they effectively portray grief over losing their child. But Nurgül Yeşilçay (Inspector Sarah Lund's Turkish equivalent) is a no-no. She doesn't fit the character Sarah Lund who is quite maternal, and she couldn't really convey the same feeling; it is not enough just to stand by chewing gum. Düzyatan [as Jan Meyer] doesn't really fit there. He feels like more of an American police wannabe rather than a rough policeman. Another point that caught my attention is a little detail. In the second episode when Nurgül Yeşilçay is calling the driver in the old woman's house she steps on the scale unwittingly. The scale shows that she's 52 or 54 kilos. I can't remember exactly. When I saw this, I was shocked, apparently this chubby, double-chinned, woman who has huge melons is 52 kilos. Was she weighed on the moon? Then, I paid attention to the same scene in the original. Sarah Lund is a petite woman. No tits, no ass. I was expecting something like 45 kilos, but I was shocked she weighed 57,2. So what I'm saying is, what a complex Nurgül Yeşilçay has! You're not that petite. (18 January 2014, 12:18)

Sonam raises several concerns about the authenticity of the Turkish remake of the crime drama and critiques how it is skewed to meet the sensibilities of the Turkish audience. Sonam's entry is also a good example of the Turkish audience's deliberate point-by-point comparison between the original Danish crime drama (*Forbrydelsen*) and its remake (*Cinayet*), and audience demands for transference of the sense of real and genuine, and of the authenticity of the original drama to the local remake. In addition, in his later works, Benjamin defines aura as "the experience of an expectation or a possibility" (quoted in Rickly-Boyd, 2012: 279). This perspective elucidates

Sonam's reaction to *Cinayet*. The remake frustrates the audience's expectations, jeopardising its authenticity and stripping the media product of aura. Sonam goes so far as to re-watch *The Killing* and *Cinayet* to gather details supporting the sense of disappointment in the remake. Doing so expresses the demand for a high degree of authenticity (genuineness) in *Cinayet's* representation of *The Killing*, in general, and of the character played by Yeşilçay, specifically.

These demands are discussed by scholar Sue Turnbull, who has explored value criteria in crime drama and rightly states:

> The desire for "mimesis" is associated with a more sombre, social realist, documentary approach. […] "A gritty, realist crime drama" adapting a quasi-documentary approach in its bid for *authenticity* may be rated more highly than a crime drama that opts for stylistic excess and/or the reassurance of the formulaic [emphasis added] (2014: 9)

In this vein, I observed that Turkish audiences, including Sonam and face-to-face interview participants, aspire to and claim authenticity. In other words, Ekşi Sözlük authors and study informants severely criticise the drama series and their remakes if they appear incongruous with everyday life and are not conducive to common reality; likewise, they condemn weak reproductions that don't measure up to the ordinariness of the original Danish drama.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I analysed Turkish viewers' engagement with several Danish television series as authentic and auratic objects and aimed to show the significance of authenticity and aura in the age of digital reproduction. I have shown that Turkish audience members who participate in interviews and online discussions attribute aura to Danish drama series and consider them to be authentic and original art forms circulating in popular culture. The techniques emblematic in Danish drama destabilise audiences' experiences by revealing the comparatively dull characters and slow-building plots that typically cannot be found in American and Turkish drama. In this manner, a television drama series, as a historical and cultural phenomenon, can gain privileged status that cannot be replaced or reproduced in the eyes of its audiences. In other words, Danish television drama series have been ascribed aura not attributed to local (Turkish) or transnational television series, particularly American drama or the remakes of Danish television series. According to Turkish viewers, Danish drama elicit authenticity and aura by setting a high bar for audience expectations.

Benjamin (1935/1968) proposed that through mechanical reproduction in the age of modern media, aura – as a peculiar web of space and time and the unique manifestation of a distance – has disappeared. The experience of Turkish viewers opposes Benjamin's view that aura cannot exude from any mechanically or digitally reproduced

object. Turkish audiences, who are familiar with global forms of aesthetic appeal and a variety of media techniques, and who have cultural and aesthetic knowledge leading to understanding of and appreciation for these unique television series, do in fact experience a complex feeling of aura while viewing the Danish drama series. Turkish audiences unaccustomed to slow-building plots, unpredictable story lines, shocking conclusions, and images of a distant cultural milieu attribute a mystical and almost sacred ambiance to Danish drama series. Therefore, aura is created by the audiences' feelings of ambivalence through a dialectic between the familiar and unfamiliar, the approachable and unapproachable, and the extraordinary and banal that fortify distance between the content and the audience during the watching experience. This evidence sustains the position of Gumbrecht and Marrinan (2003) who argue that Benjamin's prognosis for the disappearance of aura has not materialised. They add that "on the contrary, if [mechanical reproduction and aura] don't find themselves in a relationship of mutual enhancement, mechanical reproduction and aura can exist side by side quite happily" (Gumbrecht & Marinnan, 2003: 84).

To sum up, authenticity and aura surround Danish drama, and are created in the eyes of the Turkish audiences through interplay between the uniqueness and ordinariness of Danish drama. While audiences accept representations of the everyday lives of characters on screen as a sign of authenticity, other aspects of Danish drama (uniqueness, distance, ambiance) are counted as distinct and transcendent qualities evoking aura. As manifested in the focus groups, in one-to-one interviews, and through the Ekşi Sözlük discussion platform, with each viewing experience Turkish audiences find authenticity with the mundane in the lives of the characters; yet, they construct and amplify their experience of aura through the unfamiliar atmosphere, a distanced culture, and uniqueness such as the unexpected and unpredictable plot twists and slowly unravelling plot lines. As a result, with the effort of Turkish audiences, aura and authenticity (which is attached to aura) are constructed and re-emerge in the reproducible work of media in the age of digital reproductions.

Notes

1. The channel and years of broadcasting for the series in question are referenced at the first mention of a television series.
2. Comments on Ekşi Sözlük, in the forum "Cinayet" (2017), were retrieved March 14–20, 2018, from https://Ekşi Sözlük .com/cinayet--55882?p=7
3. Comments on Forumgercek, in the forum "The Killing Uyarlamasi 'Cinayet' Ocak Ayinda Basliyor [The Killing's adaptation 'Cinayet' begins in January]" (2017), were retrieved March 13, 2018, from http://www.forumgercek.com/tv-showlari-tv-yarismalari-tv-dizileri-haberleri/105290-killing-uyarlamasi-cinayet-ocak-ayinda-basliyor.html

4. Comments on Turkcealtyazi, in the forum "Yeni yerli dizi 'Cinayet' [New domestic series 'Murder']" (2017), were retrieved March 13, 2018, from http://www.turkcealtyazi.org/viewtopic.php?t=27716

5. My conceptualisation of aura aligns with Adorno's Marxist and materialist interpretation of aura which "stems from the trace of human labor in the Object" (Sherratt, 2007: 174) rather than Benjamin's view which claims aura "stems from other sources" or "may be an internal property of the image" (Sherratt, 2007: 159).

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