

ACTING ACROSS BORDERS

TELEVISUAL MOBILITY OF TURKISH ACTORS

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Abstract: The worldwide popularity of Turkish TV series has enabled Turkish actors to gain global celebrity status. The launch of Turkish original productions on global streaming platforms such as Netflix has further increased the visibility of these actors, who have since begun to be cast in global productions, performing a wider range of roles. This article is primarily concerned with this televisual mobility of Turkish actors. By adopting a multidimensional approach which acknowledges that performance is shaped by multiple determinants, it focuses on the analysis of Öykü Karayel's performance in the Irish crime drama, *Kin* (2021-2023) and Haluk Bilginer's performance in the American, British, Turkish coproduction *The Turkish Detective* (2023). Through these case studies, the article examines how national identity continues to shape actors' performances and character construction in transnational production contexts.

Keywords: national identity, performance analysis, streaming platforms, Turkish actors, televisual mobility

1 Introduction

Over the past decade, Turkey has emerged as a major exporter of domestically produced television dramas, attracting audiences from regions ranging from the Middle East to Latin America.¹ This international success has been supported by sustained investments in the sector, which have significantly improved production values and overall quality. At the same time, the growing visibility of Turkish distributors within international television markets and trade events has strengthened the country's position in the global television industry.² Turkish actors have become global celebrities parallel to this worldwide popularity, 'admired by millions on many continents'.³

Alongside this rise in celebrity status, Turkish actors have also increasingly appeared in transnational television productions, often performing in languages other than Turkish and working across stylistically distinct industrial contexts.⁴ In these cases, the movement of Turkish actors into nationally diverse television industries can be understood as 'televisual mobility', a term that Pawan Singh developed in his analysis of how Priyanka Chopra expands her career across transnational television contexts. Singh argues that the entry of established Bollywood stars such as Priyanka Chopra into Hollywood complicates the familiar narrative of minority actors overcoming

stereotypes and achieving representation. Before becoming visible in Hollywood productions, Priyanka Chopra already possessed an established star persona, international recognition, and the agency to choose her roles. Therefore, her entry in Hollywood can be perceived as a form of professional diversification by choice to expand her stardom ‘on television screens in a transnational context’.⁵ Although the degree of Chopra’s fame is different compared to Turkish actors, their decision to take on roles in television productions outside Turkey indicates a strategic move to diversify their professional portfolios and expand their careers across national borders, exemplifying a form of ‘televisual mobility.’

Within this context, this article examines the televisual mobility of Turkish actors across national borders, focusing on how national identity shapes their performances and character construction within transnational production contexts. It mainly concentrates on the performance of two actors, Öykü Karayel in the Irish crime drama, *Kin* (2021-2023) and Haluk Bilginer in the American, British, Turkish co-production *The Turkish Detective* (2023). Karayel and Bilginer serve as suitable examples for this purpose, as both had already established successful professional careers and achieved international recognition at different levels before performing in these internationally circulated crime dramas. Moreover, both actors are frequently discussed in relation to their acting performances and craft rather than their celebrity personas, which makes them particularly relevant for an analysis centred on performance. However, they also function as useful comparative cases due to their differing degrees of transnational visibility. While *Kin* can be seen as one of the first instances of Karayel’s transnational work, Bilginer is a senior actor whose career in television began in the United Kingdom in the 1980s. This allows for an examination of how national identity continues to shape actors’ performances and character construction in transnational production contexts, despite these differences.

Since John Caughie’s seminal work, which conceptualises acting as the construction of meaning through recognizable gestures and expressions alongside their affective enactment,⁶ acting has been studied through diverse methodological approaches.⁷ This article takes inspiration from Roberta Pearson’s multidimensional approach which acknowledges that performance is shaped by multiple determinants. In her analysis of acting practices in *Star Trek* franchise, Pearson identifies a range of interrelated determinants shaping performance, including the high-pressure working environment of the industry, which allows minimal time for rehearsal; the increasing collaboration between actors and craftworkers as episodes accumulate; the growing creative agency actors exercise in constructing characters, particularly as their status within the cast rises; and genre-specific circumstances such as performing in heavy makeup and costumes in science fiction dramas.⁸ Following Pearson’s multidimensional approach, the article examines the impact of cultural and industrial determinants on performance in transnational productions, while developing its own framework relevant to the subject matter. It focuses on factors such as actors’ national identity, professional background, acting techniques and preparatory processes, their positioning in relation to other cast members, local industrial dynamics, and the linguistic demands of the role.

In order to examine the impact of these dimensions on acting, the analysis conducts close readings of actors’ performances in transnational productions. Similarly, beyond the contextual determinants like time, genre and status, Pearson also identifies television’s medium-specific visuality as a significant factor shaping performances.⁹ Expanding on this, Lucy Fife Donaldson and James Walters consider ‘the work of the television actor as a method of precise interaction and integration with aesthetic elements such as properties, set, costume, location, lighting, camera and other actors’.¹⁰ In their analysis of television acting, Donaldson and Walters focus on television’s role in creating space for performance and question ‘how the performer’s interaction with their surroundings brings them into a meaningful relationship with other aspects of televisual style’.¹¹ Following the textual approach of Lucy Fife Donaldson and James Walters, the study analyses Öykü Karayel and Haluk Bilginer’s performances in selected scenes from *Kin* and *The Turkish Detective*, focusing on stylistic elements such as interaction with the camera, engagement with setting and other actors, framing, and the role of costume design in character construction. In this way, the article seeks to understand how acting is shaped in transnational production contexts under the influence of various factors related to national identity and local television industry practices.

2 Turkish Actors Across Borders

Contemporary Turkish television dramas broadcast on mainstream television channels are known for their distinctive stylistic features, shaped by specific national production and distribution practices. The rapid pace of the industry, which limits the time allocated to pre-production and shooting, as well as the exceptionally long duration of episodes, often extending up to 150 minutes, significantly influence actors' performances, which are shaped in close interaction with the industrial conditions of production. Echoing Roberta Pearson's observations on working under pressure in the fast-paced environment of television production, Arzu Öztürkmen, in her extensive fieldwork on the Turkish television industry, notes that many actors in Turkish TV series describe their experience as 'acting within the unknown'.¹² In the Turkish context, this challenge sometimes extends beyond not knowing where the story will go. Actors must remain flexible in responding to new material from writers, who themselves work under constant pressure from producers and television channels. Depending on ratings, directors and writers may even be replaced in the middle of production. Under these circumstances, the actors Öztürkmen interviewed describe their situation as 'portraying a character-in-progress' or 'performing a character without a story', acknowledging that their characters may take an entirely new direction at any moment in an attempt to increase ratings.¹³ This ratings-driven pace of the industry generates additional challenges for actors, including job insecurity and a persistent sense of uncertainty since a TV series can be cancelled after only a few episodes if it fails to get good ratings.

Therefore, Öztürkmen observes that many actors believe that they cannot improve their acting skills by performing in Turkish TV series because the high pace of production, the repetitive nature of the roles and the extended duration of the series do not give them enough room to advance. Typecasting appears to be another persistent issue that prevents TV actors from advancing in their career. Many of the actors interviewed by Yasemin Girgin and Tuna Kuyucu express frustration at being stuck with specific characters such as 'the mafia guy' or 'the villainous rich girl'. This situation prevents them from demonstrating their performing skills in a wider range of roles.¹⁴ Consequently, actors develop 'a romantic idea that theatre experience is a continuous spiritual journey, while dizis [Turkish TV series] are temporary even if they last a few seasons'.¹⁵

With the emergence of video-on-demand platforms such as Netflix in Turkey in 2016, the streaming era marked a significant transformation in Turkish television series production.¹⁶ In contrast with the week-by-week pace of Turkish TV series on broadcast TV channels, streaming content is often produced in advance, with the entire season completed before being released. VoD platforms also enable content creators to be more eager to experiment with genres, styles, and stories.¹⁷ Accordingly, streaming platforms offer the actors in Turkey different working conditions which provide greater certainty, planned schedules, and more preparation time. In an interview conducted in 2021, Erdal Beşikçioğlu, a devoted actor who worked on long term mainstream television series such as *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* (2010-2013) states digital platforms are more open to visionary projects. They offer the opportunity to work with a much stronger sense of motivation. From the very beginning, the project has clear boundaries – you know where it starts, where it ends, what you are going to shoot, and how the character is structured within that narrative. Mainstream television, on the other hand, often feels like playing endless sets with no real conclusion, constructed around filling time.¹⁸ Similarly, Ebru Özkan Saban who also worked in mainstream TV dramas such as *Paramparça* (2014-2017) and *Hekimoğlu* (2019-2021) explains that one of the greatest advantages of working on digital platform productions is being able to work within reasonable hours and schedules, which naturally improves performance as well. Another major benefit is having access to the whole story much earlier on, allowing the process to unfold with the coherence and depth of a feature film.¹⁹

Furthermore, by being available in more than 100 countries, streaming platforms like Netflix or Disney+ give the actors the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in a new generation of locally produced content beyond the familiar domain of Turkish TV series, which may serve as an opportunity for career advancement. As Delphine Naudier explains, actors strategically move between different television networks and roles to increase their visibility, gain cultural legitimacy and advance their careers. In this context, internationalising one's career can be considered as a form of actor mobility. Taking roles in TV dramas that have great potential to be exported can work as a catalyst for

the actor to acquire 'work in the English-speaking world or as part of programmes co-produced with other countries'.²⁰ Taking on roles in digital contents can function in a similar manner for Turkish actors who seek to position themselves as suitable candidates for global productions outside Turkey which in turn opens up new career trajectories.

The experiences of Turkish actors who felt typecast in Turkish TV dramas resonate with those of British actors who experienced similar constraints in their national context and moved overseas in search of greater career opportunities. In her study on British and Irish actors working in the U.S., Simone Knox explains that several British actors who worked in British soap operas struggled to find diverse roles in their later works because they have been typecast and they move abroad 'to try and affect some kind of change in their career, to take control back'.²¹ However, Hollywood had long been stereotyping British identities in roles such as 'the suave gentlemen, the interfering manservant, the bumbling fool and the well-spoken villain'.²² This tendency served a challenge for actors who have been willing to find roles beyond their national typecasting. As this tendency changed, British actors started to find more diverse roles. Especially in the post-2000s period, a significant number of British and Irish actors started to be 'cast in high profile roles in major US productions'.²³

On the other hand, language appears to function as a significant factor in enabling British actors' televisual mobility. Knox emphasises that British and Irish actors have been exploiting their linguistic advantage compared to other European actors to be employed in Hollywood.²⁴ However, switching to an American accent has different consequences for British and Irish actors. As Christine Becker underlines, although British actors are admired for their skills to impersonate American accent this praise is not primarily associated with learning to reproduce an American accent 'but more so of hiding or cloaking a native one, as if such performance is more about suppression than either impersonation or personification'.²⁵ However, this suppression can be conceived as an advantageous factor for granting British and Irish actors a 'blank slate status' overseas, allowing them to be stripped of local associations of class, regional identity or genre and be cast in more diverse roles in the U.S.²⁶

More comprehensive research needs to be conducted to evaluate the opportunities that televisual mobility provides to Turkish actors and to understand the conditions shaping their participation in transnational productions. However, based on the prior remarks regarding the working conditions in the Turkish TV series industry, it can be inferred that in productions outside Turkey, Turkish actors may encounter a more varied professional landscape that enables them to advance their careers. They may find the chance to further develop their acting skills by performing in languages other than their primary language and taking on roles that extend beyond familiar patterns of typecasting. Turkish actors may benefit from the 'blank slate status' they gain when performing outside Turkey which may enable them to access more diverse and challenging roles by escaping local associations of gender, class, or genre. However, in certain cases, 'national typecasting' continues to construct the characters they perform in transnational television dramas and to anchor actors' performances to their national identity. With this framework in mind, the following sections analyse Öykü Karayel's performance in *Kin* and Haluk Bilginer's performance in *The Turkish Detective* in order to examine how acting is shaped when actors move across different national contexts.

3 Öykü Karayel in *Kin*

Kin is an Irish crime drama created by Peter McKenna and Ciarán Donnelly. The series was broadcast on RTÉ One in Ireland, later aired on BBC One in the UK, and became available in the U.S. on AMC+. The first season introduces the Kinsella family as a criminal organization controlling drug trafficking within their territory in Dublin, united under the leadership of Frank (Aidan Gillen) whose nephews, Jimmy (Emmett J. Scanlan), Eric (Sam Keeley), and Michael (Charlie Cox) assist him in running the business. The season's narrative arc focuses on the rise to power of Jimmy's wife, Amanda (Clare Dunne), as a grieving and vengeful mother, depicting her empowerment. In the second season, '[i]n keeping with the strong women theme',²⁷ Kinsella's find themselves in a new conflict with the Batuk family, a

Turkish criminal organization, introducing Nuray Batuk played by Öykü Karayel as the daughter of a Turkish drug kingpin who runs the business on behalf of her gravely ill father.



Video 1. *Kin* (2023) - Season 2 Official Trailer from YouTube.

Öykü Karayel was born in Istanbul in 1990. She received training at the Kenter Theatre, one of the most established theatre institutions in Turkey, and later studied at Istanbul University State Conservatory. She rose to prominence with her performance in the stage play *Güzel Şeyler Bizim Tarafıta* (Good Things are on our side, 2010) and attracted the attention of the established television producer Kerem Çatay. This led to her breakthrough role as Cemre in the popular Turkish TV series, *Kuzey Güney* (2011-2013). She has since performed in numerous television series on both mainstream TV channels and digital streaming platforms, as well as in independent films. Her performance in Netflix's *Ethos* (2020) significantly increased her international visibility and critical acclaim. Regarding her career goals, Karayel stated in a 2017 interview that she aims to take part in independent films and portray a wide range of roles, particularly those involving unusual and challenging characters. However, mainstream television in Turkey does not appear to offer suitable conditions for achieving those goals. When asked about the limitations of Turkish television, she notes that the industry is shaped by political and economic pressures and by the decisive influence of weekly audience reactions and ratings on narrative development, which leads producers to avoid innovation due to the challenges of creating new material under these conditions.²⁸ Based on these comments, *Kin* appears to have offered Karayel a creatively challenging experience not typically found in mainstream Turkish television. The project can be considered particularly different for her, as she performs in a role that requires speaking a language other than Turkish. Apart from Gözde Kural's independent film *Toz* (2016), which was shot in Afghanistan, *Kin* appears to be among the few productions in which Karayel performs in both English and Turkish. In the series, transitions between languages shape the stylistic dimensions of Karayel's performance and the construction of Nuray as a character.

In the first episode of the second season, Nuray Batuk, is introduced as she steps off from a private airplane with a distant, reserved, and controlled expression on her face, followed by her cousin Hamza (Kenan Ece).²⁹ Filled with anger and grief to Kinsella's who murdered her brother, she appears as the mirror image of Amanda who lost her teenage son, Jamie, in a gang related revenge attack in the first season which resulted in Amanda being more involved in the family business. Nuray embodies a similar narrative arc in the second season, seeking revenge against the Kinsella's while proving to her family that she can emerge as a powerful leader after her father.

Kin is associated with a particular stylistic trait which 'is its use of carefully-composed portrait shots of the major players, as if inviting the viewer to read their minds'.³⁰ This stylistic choice interacts greatly with the actors' performances which are shaped through a dynamic exchange of emotions as well as power positions. For instance, in the first episode where Nuray meets the Kinsella's in an office to talk about reparations, she is made visibly distinctive

through her positioning within the frame and her costume: she is depicted as the only figure seated on the table, wearing red clothing. As Nuray's gaze moves between different members of the Kinsella family, she speaks in English in a resentful tone about her brother's murder. In contrast to the other figures in the room, who are dressed in black and standing, Nuray appears more emotionally exposed and less powerful. Acknowledging this positioning, Amanda responds to Nuray in a demeaning manner, almost with a half-smile, as she states that killing her brother was an accident. However, the tables are turned when Nuray reveals that the man the Kinsella's targeted alongside her brother owed them 70 million dollars, a debt that is now theirs. From this point onward, Amanda and Nuray exchange emotional positions, consolidating their roles in the narrative as mirror images of one another. Whereas Nuray finishes the conversation with a half-smile on her face Amanda appears burning with anger.

An interesting aspect of Karayel's performance as Nuray can be observed in the way her bodily movements shift depending on whom she faces within the scene. When Nuray is positioned in a power play with Amanda, discussing the terms of their agreement, her body remains still, conveying firmness, determination, and emotional control, while also mirroring Amanda's restrained body language which turns into her signature performance when she engages in business matters. In most of these scenes, Karayel performs in English. However, her performance undergoes a notable shift when she is concerned with private family affairs. More specifically, mentions of her father act as a trigger for Nuray, evoking a strong sense of internalised anger. For instance, when Nuray's father dies from his illness in the beginning of episode 7, Karayel performs the anger and grief of her character by embodying all these emotions in a much more expressive way. After her father dies suddenly in Hamza's company, Nuray arrives at the scene a bit later. Church bells are heard in the background to highlight the tragedy of the father's death which also enhances the ambiguity regarding the location of the Batuk residence. While the Muslim ghusl ceremony³¹ goes on Nuray rushes into her father's room, gazing at his body in shock, her eyes full with unshed tears. She is hurried out of the room by Hamza, as only those involved in the ritual are expected to remain during the washing of the deceased. Outside the room, Nuray shouts at Hamza in Turkish for not calling her when her father's condition worsened. The camera captures Karayel in a close-up as she conveys Nuray's anger and sorrow through raised vocal intensity, shaking body movements, and fully expressive facial gestures. While Nuray silently cries in agony, the camera affords her privacy by showing her from behind and at a distance.

Based on the analysis of these scenes, it can be claimed that Karayel's performance in *Kin* balances her character's controlled, performative persona in business dealings with her more emotionally expressive private self. The narrative, which constructs these two interrelated dimensions of the character—public and private, business and personal, local and foreign—mirrors Karayel's own position within the global context of the production. In the business deals with the Kinsella's, Karayel acts in English with a restrained body language and minimal emotional expression, mirroring Amanda's distant, impassive performative professionalism. This stylistic choice contributes to the harmonious interplay of actors from different backgrounds, which seems to align with Karayel's preparatory process as an actor. Karayel explains that she does not use techniques like method acting.³² Instead, she remains to be 'Öykü' even on the set and during rehearsals but concentrates fully on her role in the moment of performance. She states that she aims to approach every role with 'authenticity', seeking to internalize, understand and 'be' the character. However, she does not like working on the characters independent of the director and other actors, rather preferring the things that emerge organically during the rehearsals.³³ Based on these comments, Karayel's highly collaborative approach to acting can be understood as a key factor shaping her harmonious performances with other cast members in scenes of a transnational encounter. In these moments, performers cooperate closely, particularly in business settings, responding to one another's body language and facial expressions.

On the other hand, as the analysed scenes demonstrate, Karayel's framing and the contrasting colour palette of her costume distinguish her from the rest of the cast, reinforcing the foreignness of her character. Besides, Karayel's performative harmony in the business meeting scenes gives way to heightened emotional expressiveness in Nuray's private moments, where she speaks Turkish, in a manner that recalls the conventions of Turkish TV dramas. This stylistic transition not only signals the influence of the actor's national identity on character construction but also partly anchors Karayel's performance in established acting styles associated with the Turkish television industry. Taken together, Karayel's performance in *Kin* demonstrates an interplay between the collaborative harmony required in

transnational production and the emergence of nationally specific acting conventions in moments of emotional intensity.

4 Haluk Bilginer in The Turkish Detective

The Turkish Detective is a procedural crime drama adapted from British author Barbara Nadel's well-known Inspector Çetin İkmén novels. It premiered in the United States on Paramount+ in September 2023 and in Turkey on the OTT platform TV+ in December 2023. In July 2024, the series was broadcast on BBC Two in consecutive episodes scheduled for Sunday and Monday evenings. The first season of the series comprised eight episodes, featuring 4 different murder investigations, each being solved over two episodes. The cases range from the murder of the daughter of a conservative Muslim family to the serial killings of paper collectors, most of whom are Middle Eastern refugees. To remain focused and concise, the analysis draws on examples from the first episode.



Video 2. *The Turkish Detective* (2023) - Official Trailer from YouTube.

Filmed on location in Istanbul with a Turkish crew and written by Neil Biswas, Caroline Henry and Ben Schiffer, the first season of the series begins with Mehmet Süleyman (Ethan Kai), a Turkish-born, British-raised police officer, transferring from London to Istanbul to join Çetin İkmén's investigative team, which includes the tough and emotionally distant detective Ayşe Farsakoğlu (Yasemin Kay Allen)³⁴ and tech specialist Tarık Sanver (Erol Afşin). In the series, almost the entire cast consists of actors who maintain dual careers, working both in Turkey and abroad. By being perceived as 'both familiar and delightfully other',³⁵ *The Turkish Detective* was described as being 'designed to appeal to a wide international audience, which results in some jarring linguistic choices'.³⁶ Since Süleyman does not speak Turkish fluently, the characters speak in English when he is around. However, the series includes implausible sequences for Turkish audiences in which Turkish characters speak English to one another. In this sense, as Andrew Anthony explains 'Istanbul provides a handsome backdrop but the whole thing could have been made anywhere'.³⁷

Most reviews of *The Turkish Detective* praise the performance of Haluk Bilginer, an internationally renowned Turkish actor and theatre director, who received the International Emmy Award for Best Performance by an Actor in 2019 for his role in the Turkish crime drama *Şahsiyet* (Persona, 2018). Bilginer was born in 1954 in İzmir, Turkey and studied theatre at the Ankara State Conservatory. Later he continued his training at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) and performed in numerous stage productions in the UK in the 1980s. During this period, he joined the cast of *EastEnders* (1985–), portraying a Turkish character named Mehmet Osman, and appeared in 109 episodes of the series until 1989. In an 'EastEnders exclusive' feature in *Sunday Magazine*, he was described as 'the

Sexy Turk', and his photograph appeared on the cover of the November 16, 1986 issue.³⁸ As a result of this media coverage, the Turkish press began to take notice of Bilginer's career.³⁹ In an interview, Bilginer explains that although he had been performing in the United Kingdom for nearly ten years, his success did not get any attention in Turkey. It was only after he was featured in *Sunday Magazine* as 'the Sexy Turk' that he was 'discovered' by the Turkish press and subsequently recognized as an actor as well.⁴⁰ He returned to Turkey in the late 1980s, established a theatre company, and has since performed in films, television series and theatre plays, while also continuing to work in the UK.

The Turkish Detective opens with a sequence that offers a tour of Istanbul's tourist destinations such as a picaresque scenery of Istanbul's historical peninsula and travels between random images from the crowded streets of Istanbul. In this way, the series adopts the conventional portrayal of Istanbul as a crowded, noisy and chaotic Eastern metropolis with historical landmarks, embracing the image of the multi-ethnic, multilingual city that strongly aligns with Barbara Nadel's authorial gaze. According to Hande Tekdemir, in Barbara Nadel's novels, 'Istanbul emerges as an exaggerated version of the multi-ethnic Ottoman capital', a deliberate choice 'to be appealing for a world-wide audience, which might be interpreted as a practical strategy to evoke an exotic locale that would make her books more marketable'.⁴¹ *The Turkish Detective* has the same approach when it comes to representing the city which strengthens Süleyman's portrayal as a 'fish out of water' figure.

By being placed in an exoticized version of Istanbul, Çetin İkmen's introduction to the audiences aligns with this image while he masquerades as the chatty, quirky, suspectable Middle Eastern figure. However, there is another layer hidden behind this image. When İkmen is in the car with Süleyman for the first time, he drives with little respect for traffic rules, which is later revealed to be a test to measure his reactions. Compared to Karayel in *Kin*, Bilginer is in a much more familiar territory in *The Turkish Detective*. On the one hand, he performs a streetwise character who knows the social and cultural codes of the settings. He builds his performance in accordance with these codes. For instance, in the first episode, when İkmen's team visits the family home of Gözde, the murdered victim, he greets the family with a demeanour that acknowledges and honours their grief. They are invited inside and sit in the living room quietly with the mourning family members. Süleyman, not knowing how to behave, casts an uncomfortable glance at Ayşe who dismisses him. Lacking the social skills to read the room, he impulsively initiates an interrogation in English, stating that they have a few questions to ask, which leads İkmen to dismiss him from the room in a gesture of disapproval. Whereas Ethan Kai's performance as Süleyman underlines his character's sense of misplacement Bilginer's use of his facial expressions, voice and body language signals a profound familiarity with local customs and traditions, as well as wisdom that comes with age and experience. On the other hand, Bilginer also operates within familiar territory at another level, performing in a production which is described as 'classically cosy British detective fare'⁴² despite being set in Istanbul. In this sense, he performs with ease in a television production that aligns closely with his international background.

Bilginer emphasises how he privileges theatre over film and television on many occasions. He argues that while formal education is important, acting is ultimately learned through performing in front of a live audience by paying attention to spectators' reactions.⁴³ In such a way to reflect this approach, Bilginer's acting in *The Turkish Detective* acknowledges the presence of a global audience in a multilayered performance. For instance, in the first episode, İkmen asks the permission of the family to look at Gözde's room. When he glances at the items in the room, he occasionally lets out a thoughtful 'hmm' to underline significant details and attract the audience's attention. But his investigation is interrupted by Gözde's father who is suspected of beating the young woman with his belt. When the father urges him in grief to find those responsible for his daughter's death, İkmen assures the father that the perpetrators will be found, while subtly complementing his belt and states that they have to take it for forensic analysis. In the same episode, when he speaks to Gözde's Canadian neighbour who might have some insights about her life outside the family home, İkmen uses his sarcasm in a more eccentric way. Together with Süleyman, he catches up with the neighbour as she is about to drive off, he suddenly jumps into the car, sits in the front passenger seat, and fixes his gaze on her with a smile on his face as if he is measuring her. Although he appears to be casually chatting with the neighbour in a calm tone, he ensures that the audience senses an ulterior motive, constantly implying that he knows more than the neighbour expects.

Based on these examples, Bilginer's acting in *The Turkish Detective* can be defined as a layered performance that responds to the unfolding narrative events while also engaging with the audience on an extra-diegetic level. In both scenes, Bilginer's performance is shaped to imply meanings that exceed what is immediately visible on the surface of the conversation. While he appears to be engaged in casual conversation with the other character, he reveals İkmën's ulterior motives to the audience through his careful use of gaze and subtle shifts in his intonations. In this way, Bilginer not only acknowledges the presence of the global audience watching his performance but also communicates with them responding to their possible reactions and expectations. In this way, on the one hand, Bilginer's performance aligns with local modes of managing social relations, initiating conversations in a casual, allusive manner and gradually guiding the addressee toward the central issue. His approach contrasts with Süleyman's unpolished directedness and enhances the 'local feel' of his performance. On the other hand, by being engaged with the global audience, his performance embodies the enigmatic deduction skills, authority and moral judgment that are conventional traits of classical detective figures, central to the police procedural genre on a global scale.

5 Conclusion

The analysis of Öykü Karayel's and Haluk Bilginer's televisual mobility indicates that national identity plays a significant role in shaping their performances in transnational productions on different levels, as evidenced in *Kin* and *The Turkish Detective*. In the case of Öykü Karayel, her acting displays a harmonious balance with the performances of other cast members in scenes of transnational encounters when she speaks English. Her performance transitions to a more emotionally expressive mode, closer to her acting in Turkish TV dramas, in the character's Turkish-speaking private moments. Beyond her portrayal of a character of Turkish origin, this transition partly anchors her performance in her national identity. Compared to Karayel, Haluk Bilginer's acting in *The Turkish Detective* can be considered more multilayered, partly due to his position as one of the main characters within the familiar setting of Istanbul and his greater familiarity with the television industry dynamics in Britain. In his performance, the local and global aspects of his character intersect as English and Turkish are no longer clearly compartmentalised along public and private dimensions. He responds to local emotions and customs while simultaneously addressing global audiences, revealing the methodological detective figure hidden within the character. As a result, although they differ in certain respects, both Karayel and Bilginer's performances are constructed as a careful balance: they reflect the characters' national positioning within the narrative, draw on gestural and emotional repertoires associated with their cultural background, and at the same time align with the stylistic conventions of the television dramas designed with a specific intended audience in mind. Future research can focus on examples beyond the case studies discussed in this article, such as İliker Kaleli's performance in the Spanish TV series *La Pasión Turca* (2024) and Can Yaman's role in Ay Yapım's global content *El Turco* (2025), and examine how these examples extend the scope of this study.

6 Acknowledgement

AI-assisted tools were used for language translation purposes. All analytical and argumentative content is the responsibility of the authors.

Notes

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Biography

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