

## Universal Media Strategy: Us vs. Them

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### Abstract:

Alparslan Nas' *Media Representations of the Cultural Other in Turkey* offers up-to-date analysis of recent media content (advertisements, cartoons, films and TV shows) with the aim to answer whether a center-periphery binary is exploited in contemporary production. Despite some broad statements and weak ties with existing theoretical work, the author clearly demonstrates the interdependence of these two 'imaginative categories' through narrative analysis. By elucidating paradoxes of an incredibly turbulent period in Turkey, this short and comprehensible study brings a host of evidence that the center-periphery cultural dichotomy is a strategic instrument for different subjects to strengthen their position in media representations.

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Nas, Alparslan: *Media Representations of the Cultural Other in Turkey*. London: Palgrave Pivot, 2018. 110 pages, 54,99 USD. ISBN: 978-3-319-78345-1.

### Abstract:

Alparslan Nas' *Media Representations of the Cultural Other in Turkey* offers up-to-date analysis of recent media content (advertisements, cartoons, films and TV shows) with the aim to answer whether a center-periphery binary is exploited in contemporary production. Despite some broad statements and weak ties with existing theoretical work, the author clearly demonstrates the interdependence of these two 'imaginative categories' through narrative analysis. By elucidating paradoxes of an incredibly turbulent period in Turkey, this short and comprehensible study brings a host of evidence that the center-periphery cultural dichotomy is a strategic instrument for different subjects to strengthen their position in media representations.

The Turkish social landscape has always been fertile soil for research in the domain of the cultural Other. Considering the fact that the Justice and Development Party (JDP), which now strongly symbolizes the center and position of power, used to be representative of the periphery, the problematization of the Other in Turkey becomes even more stimulating for cultural research. In that regard, the validity of Alparslan Nas' intention to highlight how different agents use center/periphery division in order to strengthen their position becomes more than obvious. Through analyses of recent popular movies, cartoons, and TV shows in his book *Media Representations of the Cultural Other in Turkey*, he shows how media contemporaneity is shaped by continuous historical practices of 'Othering'. Fresh empirical material and up-to-date analysis of an incredibly complex period in Turkey not only elucidates the ongoing consequences of turbulent activities in the past, but also contributes to better understanding of previous events. Therefore, this book is significant not only for media scholars, but also those interested in Subaltern and Postcolonial Studies. In addition, plain language in the examination of popular works such as films, television series, advertisements, and cartoons produced between 2013 and 2018 makes it appealing for a wide audience. The communicative capacity of the study is also ensured through the clever introductions that the author makes at the beginning of each (sub)chapter.

For instance, the production and ownership details of the different media outlets are succinctly included before the very description of the film/advertisement/show without presumption of prior knowledge, which makes it relevant and understandable even for readers outside this research field.

As a rationale and foundation of the study, Chapter I discusses the sociopolitical circumstances throughout the centuries which led to the strengthening of the center/periphery conflict in Turkey. The author emphasizes a summary of the last two decades when this imaginary relation influenced all spheres of social life. In the introductory chapter he also clearly demonstrates, although too extensive in comparison with other parts, how different media absorbed this stereotypical narrative. In the following three chapters, it is proven with concrete examples that identification with the center or periphery in media „becomes a strategic instrument for a variety of agents to discursively establish themselves“ (p. 92). The second chapter is dedicated to films and the narrative analysis of remarkable recent works, while the third part covers some of the most popular TV shows in Turkey. Particularly refreshing insight are brought to bear in Chapter IV, where the author dissects advertising campaigns and cartoons in humor magazines. Although often neglected in this type of study, they turn out to be a „crucial field dominated by totalizing discourses on the self and the other“ (p. 14).

Nas shows he is aware of ‚varieties of Other‘ in Turkish cultural milieu, but the structure, in which each chapter has a leitmotif (Kurds, gender issue, rural periphery, etc.) limits the comprehensiveness of the study. Less than a hundred pages do not provide enough depth to familiarize readers with the peculiarities of the different media and the space they make for peripheral subjectivities to be reflected, as he claims in the conclusion. Likewise, the finiteness of the approach is noticeable in crude connections with theoretical frameworks, since the study is not attentive to heterogenous body of literature in fields of identity or discourse. Instead, Nas ties his analyses to existing theory sporadically, relying on ‚authorities‘ in Cultural studies like Spivak (p. 36), Baudrillard (p. 77), or Bourdieu (p. 82). Thanks to his empirical research, however, the author still manages to follow clearly his initial premises and research questions and show how the center and periphery are entangled in a “dynamic interplay of power relations, rather than as fixed positions occupied by certain social class” (p. 91). Proving to be important for researchers and awakening for a public audience, the study demonstrates how useful and vivid this dichotomy still is for comprehension of Turkish cultural production.

*Media Representation of the Cultural Other in Turkey* teems with indicators that the center/periphery binary is still exploited by film and television directors, marketing and branding experts as well as caricaturists and journalists. Its most important value may be the same one Nas sees in one of the movies in his corpus – this book draws attention to the possibilities of empowerment that the periphery can offer (p. 46).

**German Abstract:**

**Wir gegen sie: Eine universelle Medienstrategie**

Mit *Media Representations of the Cultural Other in Turkey* bietet Alparslan Nas eine Analyse neuester Medieninhalte (Werbung, Zeichentrickfilme, Filme und Fernsehserien) und versucht herauszuarbeiten, inwiefern das Verhältnis zwischen Zentrum und Peripherie in diesen zeitgenössischen Inhalten ausgenutzt wird. Trotz einiger grober Aussagen und schwachen Verbindungen zu vorhandenen Theorien beweist der Autor anhand narrativer Analyse deutlich die Interdependenz dieser zwei Kategorien. Diese kurze und überschaubare Studie enthüllt die Paradoxe einer turbulenten Zeit in der Türkei und beweist vielfach, dass die kulturelle Dichotomie zwischen Zentrum und Peripherie vielen Akteuren als strategisches Instrument dient, ihre Position in Medienrepräsentationen zu verstärken.

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