Investigating Kuwaiti Television Serial Dramas of Ramadan: Social Issues and Narrative Forms Across Three Transformative Production Eras

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Contents

Abstract

Produced for the holy month of Ramadan to accommodate society's religious rituals, Kuwaiti television serial dramas are designed to address culturally specific social issues and pervade television during Ramadan. This research identifies the development of Kuwaiti television serials and establishes a framework for distinguishing television productions in the Middle East. While researchers have prioritized the political economy and journalistic reception studies of Arab television, the state of Kuwaiti television serials that has influenced the formation of other regional Ramadanian serial programmes has thus far been neglected. Kuwaiti serials present a limited amount of episodes condensed over thirty days of airing during Ramadan that require intense audience engagement, consistent recollection of information, and narrative closure. Through close textual analyses of representative case studies and interviews with programme writers, this research highlights the rationale prompting specific depictions of social issues and the utilization of narrative elements in Kuwaiti serials across three different production periods to contextualize them within the broader field of television programming. Because this format has undergone modifications for over four decades due to the changes occurring in the television landscape, the investigation focuses on three main periods in the development of Kuwaiti television: the pre-satellite era (1961-1990), consisting of state-owned networks and local accessibility, the satellite era (1990-2000), which expanded accessibility due to satellite technologies and introduced private-owned networks, and the network proliferation era (2000 onward), which witnessed the rapid increase in networks and demand for productions. The exploration

reveals how and why specific thematic meanings and narrative forms developed during each era and demonstrates how social changes and production contexts inform serial programming in Kuwait. In the process, a historical overview of the development of Kuwaiti television serial dramas and the impact of the production context and societal changes on the narrative forms and content is provided.

Introduction

This thesis examines changes in production context, narrative form, and representations of social issues over three distinct eras of the Kuwaiti Ramadan television serial. Formed to fill the broadcast schedule during the holy month of Ramadan and address social concerns, the Kuwaiti television serial drama of Ramadan is a culturally specific format that first evolved in the 1970s and has continued to the present day. This distinct Kuwaiti television format was formed to correspond to society's religious habits during the holy month of Ramadan. During this month, all social activities are altered around specific daily hours because people fast from sunrise to sunset. To accommodate these norms, television producers and writers in Kuwait generated a distinct serial format that consists of a particular narrative form that begins on the first day of the month and achieves closure before the month's end. This form continues to engage audiences despite the various alterations occurring due to the transformative television landscape.

For more than four decades, television in the Middle East experienced technological and commercial changes that shaped and reshaped programming, censorship, and control. This is reflected in the development of Middle Eastern programming and because Kuwait is located within this region, Kuwaiti serial dramas encountered drastic alterations over the years. However, unlike other countries in the Middle East, the cultural particularities of Kuwaiti serials reflect not only the change in its programming form but also the change in the social structure and concerns of society. Although these alterations persisted, the format continued to evolve and survived uncertain industrial practices: the pre-satellite era (1961-1990), the satellite era (1990-

2000), and the network proliferation era (2000 onward). Because this format is constructed specifically for the holy month of Ramadan, seasons are structured around thirty days of broadcasting. Therefore, depending on the production era, serials are either eleven episodes, fifteen episodes, or thirty episodes per Ramadan. Evolving over these eras, certain narrative and formal attributes developed and reshaped the Ramadanian model. As a result of its broadcast and social particularity, the format is made to address culturally specific social issues and values. However, social and cultural changes influence the values portrayed and the dominant assumptions of society. With technological advancements expanding audience reach and creating a competitive television environment throughout the Middle East, and with Kuwait undergoing social developments influenced by economics and politics, society's dominant assumptions and values have changed accordingly. Hence, this study is an investigation of the narrative form and production context of Kuwaiti television serial dramas of Ramadan, the reflection of Kuwaiti society and values in these serial dramas, and the development of these reflections over time.

Middle Eastern countries vary in their social, economic, and political developments. Every country experienced various historical changes at different stages due to its unique political, geographical, and economic status. Kuwait underwent social and cultural changes during each era that are significantly specific to the country's development and historical origin. Social issues and values concerning prewar society where modernization due to the oil boom was taking place differ from postwar society where economic and political distress prevailed due to the aftermath of the war. These eras also differ from contemporary society where women have gained more political

rights, economic involvement, and as a result reshaped gender relations and social structures. This particular television serial form which was generated for a religious month and conveyed traditional social issues and concerns is an insight into Kuwaiti society, what constitutes the values of this society, and how traditional values and norms altered over time. Investigating this serial drama's overall development permits the identification of these changes. Therefore, this project's objective is to define the format by investigating the narrative form and the formal properties, identify the social issues addressed during and across three television eras to uncover the sociocultural context of each era, the production rationale prompting such representations, and highlight the changes occurring over time to situate the significance of this cultural form within the broad range of television programming in the Middle East and the world.

The cultural values of Kuwaiti society differ from other societies in the Middle East. Although some of these values are shared between Kuwaiti and neighboring GCC societies, economic and political developments influenced these societies and informed their social formations, gender relations, and familial structures. For instance, women in Kuwait gained their political rights before neighboring Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and Oman. Moreover, significant events like the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait influenced perceptions about women in the workplace due to their role in the Kuwaiti resistance. In this way, while GCC countries share basic tribal values that support the patriarchal structure of families, each country's economic and political situation differs and informs its social developments distinctively. This is also different from other Arab countries in the region where issues of modernization, women rights, and various political conflicts shaped their social perspectives and cultural values. For instance, in Egypt, women

rights activism is ongoing for nearly a century. In Syria, women were participants in the government for nearly ten years before Kuwait granted Kuwaiti women their political rights. These differences highlight the varying social statuses of men and women within Middle Eastern countries.

In Kuwait, the tribal origins of society developed to inform the political structure of the nation. This structure is governed by a ruling family with a male leader at the helm, the prince. This patriarchal structure created a hierarchy that not only subordinates women within the familial structure, but ensures that men are to lead their families and resemble the royal family. Thus, gender relations are informed by these tribal values. However, as will be shown in the analyses, sociocultural developments informed social perspectives. As a result, representations in this distinct serial format gradually changed.

Also, content regulation and censorship differ between Middle Eastern countries. The censorship department at The Ministry of Information in Kuwait oversees television content and must approve scripts before any network can proceed with making the programme. Thus, writers in Kuwait practice an extensive amount of self-regulation and self-censoring to ensure that their scripts obtain approval to proceed. Without the censorship department's approval, producers and networks are prohibited from financing and producing the script. Therefore, networks require that writers obtain script approval before proposing their scripts to the network. Without such approval, production in Kuwait is prohibited. Although production may take place in other Middle Eastern countries, moving Kuwaiti talent elsewhere drastically increases the cost of the programme and as a result, networks refrain from this approach. Despite the change in

the television landscape between eras, this practice continues to exist. For Kuwaiti writers, addressing issues of representation and meaning is significant before submitting to the censorship department and for obtaining script approval. The control practiced by the censorship department ensures that meanings and representations adhere to the values of Kuwaiti society. Although technological advancements expanded accessibility and content reach, the gradual change in representation became available for as long as programmes offered thematic variations to refrain from offending society or the status quo. In this way, Kuwaiti serials are able to accommodate the expanding pan-Arab audience, address Kuwaiti social concerns, and preserve the tribal patriarchal values that reflect the country's political structure.

Due to the gap in the literature regarding this distinct television format and its impact on Kuwaiti society, this research illuminates the status of this specific programming form and its function in presenting Kuwaiti sociocultural history. While western scholars have concentrated on programme forms, narrative structures, and social issues (Ang, 1985; Feuer, 1986; Geraghty, 1981, 1995; Henderson, 2007; Mittell, 2006; Nelson, 1997; Newman, 2006; Nichols-Pethick, 2011; Smith, 2011, 2013; Thompson, 2003), little academic attention has been given to the form and content of Kuwaiti television programmes. The vast majority of scholars investigating television in the Middle East concentrate on the political economy and the technological developments of media systems in the region (Amin, 2001; Dajani, 2005; Khalil, 2013; M. Kraidy & Khalil, 2009; Sakr, 1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2007) and although some scholars investigate Egyptian and Syrian television series programmes, their approaches are rooted in anthropological and ethnographic disciplines (Abu-Lughod, 1993, 2004;

Joubin, 2014; Salamandra, 1998, 2010, 2011). Scholars interested in Kuwaiti television have focused their attention on media effects and viewing patterns, reception and journalism, and media law (Al-Menayes, 1996; Alkazemi, Dashti, Kaposi, & Duffy, 2018; Jamal & Melkote, 2008; Shehab, 2008). Although these various approaches provide insightful knowledge about the status of television and media in the Middle East, they fail to illustrate the particularities of different programming forms, the production practices that inform specific depictions, and the influence of societal changes and industrial demands on form and content. As a result, the literature lacks a thorough inquiry that demonstrates a proper understanding of the development and the significance of a programming form that was, and still is made for the primetime season of the year in the Middle East, Ramadan.

Existing academic inquires on serial and series television indicate that the conveyed social issues have either represented society's dominant assumptions and perceptions, or challenged such assumptions and perceptions in response to cultural changes, social developments, and industrial demands. Studies concerning South American telenovelas foreground how different countries developed specific depictions that are culturally specific for their local audiences which marks the individuality and distinctiveness of programmes from different countries and address the politics or economics of their times (Brennan, 2015; Martín-Barbero, 1995; Matelski, 2010). In this way, each country's utilization of the telenovela differs drastically. However, different historical periods inform such utilizations. Christine Geraghty reveals the gradual development of social issues in British soap operas to mark their distinctiveness and address diverse audiences (1995), Lesley Henderson explains the commercial and

social factors influencing the process of social issue selection and preference when writing storylines for soap operas (2007), and Lynn Spigel explains how significant social events inform the way American producers decide on developing shows, and how these reflections inform public perceptions about certain issues (2004). What is notable in these inquiries is that programme makers from different media systems and television landscapes are influenced by various factors that are specific to the culture and the industry that they operate within. These cultural and commercial differences shape the way society is reflected and presented. As a result, studies focusing on the societal status of male and female characters in television programmes have garnered different results based on the context in which they were produced (Freedman, 2015; Gokulsing, 2004). Although these approaches provide a framework for investigating social issue development in television programmes, television in the Middle East developed under specific sociocultural circumstances and programmes, as mentioned earlier, vary from one country to another. Studying Kuwaiti television serials during Ramadan provides an understanding of Kuwaiti society, the change in society, and the state of serial production in Kuwait.

Although this study builds upon the work established by scholars interested in social issues and narrative forms of television programmes, the development of Kuwaiti television serial dramas requires a methodological approach that examines representative cases and interview writers from three production eras to investigate how and why reflections and representations have changed over time. Because television in the Middle East has undergone different stages of transformation that are distinct from other areas around the world, investigating a representative case from each era permits

a proper evaluation of the production practices, the content, and the development of narrative elements for specific technological and commercial imperatives. In this way, this television programming form can be observed as a cultural product that reveals the change and development of society. This form of examination provides insights into the production practices, details the impact of television environments on content and form, and recognizes the format's function in portraying and operating as a lens to perceive Kuwaiti society. Kuwaiti serials are one of few locally produced television productions that convey culturally significant social issues to a range of pan-Arab audiences and have established the country's reputation for quality programming and informed other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries' serial formats. This thesis therefore investigates the thematic meanings from representative case studies produced during each era, the rationale prompting the development of social issues and social construction of society, and to what extent have these constructions and narrative forms been influenced by the evolving television landscape and social developments.

As highlighted, for a proper investigation of the evolution of Kuwaiti serials, considering each television production era because of societal changes and institutional norms that informed creative practices and representations facilitates the overall aim of this research. The pre-satellite era (1961-1990) presented serials strictly produced by state-owned networks, limited accessibility, a scarce amount of programming, and a heavy reliance on syndication for revenue (Dajani, 2005; Schleifer, 1998). Serials during this era were eleven episodes in length and aired approximately three times a week for the entire month of Ramadan and are made specifically for local Kuwaiti audiences. For this era, *Al-Aqdar* (1977) will be the representative case study under investigation.

During the satellite era (1990-2000) the launch of satellite technologies and the initiation of privately-owned networks expanded programme menus and intensified competition during Ramadan (Alterman, 1998; M. M. Kraidy, 2002; Sakr, 1999, 2002b; Schleifer, 1998). These developments created a pan-Arab audience across the Middle East, and Kuwaiti productions needed to respond to the changing competitive landscape. As a result, episodes increased to fifteen per season and were broadcast every other day. These serials competed with regional (Middle East region) serials and were made to address the issues of postwar Kuwaiti and other pan-Arab societies. To properly examine this era, *Bo Marzouq* (1992) is the representative case study selected for interpretation.

The network proliferation era, which began in the 2000s, witnessed further developments to satellite technologies which permitted more capacity for channel absorption. This resulted in the proliferation of channels, an increased demand for programming and an increase in advertisers, and the initiation of media cities across the Middle East (Chahine, El Sharkawy, & Mahmoud, 2007; Khalil, 2013; M. Kraidy & Khalil, 2009; Sakr, 2007). Serials increased the number of episodes to thirty per month and due to the industrial demands that require addressing the high end GCC audiences; Kuwaiti serials select social issues that address both Kuwaiti and GCC societies. *Zawarat Al Khamis* (2010) is the case study that will represent this era.

To clarify the conceptual frameworks that address this area of enquiry, the first chapter of this thesis, the literature review, will review critical theories and concepts. The significant studies that concentrate on television narrative forms, format conventions and formal properties, the history of serial and series forms, and social

issues in television programmes are reviewed to establish a theoretical underpinning and guide the research. This is then followed by the methodology chapter, which outlines the range of methods employed in the research. This chapter will first foreground the concepts that determine case study selections. After identifying the cases for investigation, the focus turns to the extraction of units of data collection and analysis utilized by other scholars to form a methodological approach that answers the questions posed by this research. These methods are then applied in each one of the case study chapters: *Al Aqdar* (1977), *Bo Marzouq* (1992), and *Zawarat Al Khamis* (2010).

Each case study chapter will first provide a brief introduction for each production era, followed by a list of characters to note their relationships and occupations. Following this section is the synopsis and theme analysis section. With each storyline marked with a letter for distinguishing purposes, the section provides brief storyline synopses and thematic analyses to illuminate the values being proposed by the storylines. Also, in cases where there is a main storyline, it will be examined first. This is then followed by a sociocultural context section where a thorough examination of the social statuses of male and female characters, the rationale for the selection and depiction of social issues, and the cultural context in which the serial is developed. The narrative form section provides analyses for the character arcs and the interweaving of storylines throughout the season to exhibit the elements designed to construct the narrative and the factors influencing these decisions. Although each chapter provides a brief conclusion to list the findings of each era, the final case study, *Zawarat Al Khamis*, also provides comparative analyses in the sociocultural, narrative form, and conclusion

sections with the first two case studies to mark the changes occurring from one era to the next. The final chapter, the conclusion, will detail the findings from each era and highlight the changes across three transformative production eras.

This study establishes an understanding of the historical development of a cultural form that is distinct in its reflection of the culture, society, and production of a Middle Eastern country and continues to address the social concerns of Kuwaiti society. It reveals how a television serial form that developed to accommodate the religious, traditional, and ritual beliefs of society transformed in accordance with the changing cultural dynamics and production industry. Therefore, the social values that were considered traditional and reflective of society's beliefs gradually transformed. Thus, through this serial form, this transformation is identified, the development of Kuwaiti society and culture is understood, and the state of television programme production in Kuwait during Ramadan and more broadly, the Middle East, is demonstrated.

Literature Review

Writing and producing television programmes varies between countries, regions, and television institutions. However, distinguishing between certain practices that take place during the production process differs between countries and regional media systems. This is reflected in the formal properties, thematic meanings, and narrative structures and forms that programmes convey to their audiences, and the working dynamics of the region or country's television landscape. These features form the basis for our definition of a programme format. Therefore, this chapter examines existing academic writing on narrative television.

The chapter will first introduce television periodization to chart the relationship between technology, economy, and audience behavior and programming production practices. Rationales for dividing television programming procedures into distinct transformative eras will be clarified to establish a framework for investigating Kuwaiti television programming. The chapter will then chart debates regarding Arab television drama production to highlight the working dynamics of creative personnel from a Middle Eastern context. These debates foreground the impact that technological developments, censorship, and policies in the Middle East have on programme production processes, and emphasize the constraints that creative personnel must work under. However, to define the characteristics that distinguish Kuwaiti serial formats from other regional and international formats, the chapter will then discuss the formal properties and social issues that constitute formats worldwide. Because narrative forms distinguish programmes and their production contexts, critical conceptions of the construction of narrative structures in television serials will be reviewed. This will acknowledge the

extent to which episode and season structures permit storyline organization and storytelling strategies that identify various formats.

Production Eras and Periodization

Before concentrating on the academic debates relating to Arab television industries, exploring western academic perspectives of the significance of television worldwide permits the identification of television periods for the purpose of understanding how the modification of economy, technology, and society inform television institutions. This will chart critical conceptions of the relationship between these factors and explore the significance of industrial eras upon production practices. Television institutions have undergone various periods of production that generated alterations to existing programmes and encouraged the further development of formats. However, because industrial practices impact programme evolution differently in different countries, the developments of television eras vary from one region to another. Therefore, it is critical to foreground the broader television landscape and production periods for investigating format conventions, narrative forms, and social issues that define these programmes.

John Ellis (2000) argues that the television industry in the west encountered three eras of technological change affecting distribution and production practices. These are scarcity (limited number of networks, programmes, and airtime), availability (the rise of cable/satellite technologies allowing continuous broadcasting, competition, and an increasing amount of programmes), and plenty (television programmes offered through various broadcasting technologies and models). Each era is significant to the

development of the television industry and formed numerous network strategies that disrupted production and viewing norms.

The first era is scarcity. According to Ellis, scarcity was an era where television was inserted into society and became a consumer object making it a crucial function of society's daily life (2000, p. 40). Broadcasting during the era of scarcity was in its development stages and a limited amount of networks were broadcasting for only part of the day. Because scarcity was an era of initiation, television institutions were limited and the industry was confronting difficulties in the process of developing programmes. This lack of networks was significant to the popularity of certain programmes because viewers had few choices to select from. Thus, programmes during the era of scarcity attracted mass audiences. Ellis explains that during this era "television's basic pattern of genres was developed, along with its significant regional variants" (2000, p. 57). However, due to developing markets and the introduction of satellite/cable broadcasting, existing television institutions were pressured and new possibilities emerged for networks causing a broadcasting expansion that led to the era of availability.

Availability, according to Ellis, is the era highlighted by emerging technologies that altered broadcasting procedures and initiated network competition. The era of availability lasted until permitted access to various channels for mass audiences across nations. Ellis explains that availability is an era "where a choice of pre-scheduled services existed at every moment of the day and night" (2000, p. 61). This is due to the emergence of satellite and cable broadcasting. Such innovations paved the way for new and upcoming networks to enter the business of television broadcasting. The higher

number of networks caused a recognizable level of competition between networks to entice audiences, thus, broadcasting hours expanded for longer periods of the day. Not only did networks during this era produce programmes that are designed to attract mass audiences, they also provided programme variations for different segments of the audience. Some networks were created specifically for certain segments targeting particular social groups, age, or class. Ellis insists that “the audience has fragmented, and television programmes can no longer claim, as they could in the era of scarcity, that they were definitive, that their necessary role was to lay out all the facts of the case, or, if fiction, to consist of one complete story in every episode” (2000, p. 72). Although availability is an era where television witnessed a drastic change in terms of competition and alterations to its broadcasting hours, the network broadcasting models remained steady, further innovative technologies and broadcasting models emerged and defined the next era of plenty.

Ellis’ final era is the era of plenty. This era provides audiences with a sizeable number of networks and programme choices across various technologies. These technologies influenced the initiation of creative business models. Ellis illustrates the services offered in this era and the creative strategies used by contemporary television networks. For instance, Britain experienced the introduction of subscription-based channels due to the transition to digital television services. Ellis asserts that these channels “take two forms: premium services and genre-defined branded services” (2000, p. 163). Premium services are subscription based channels where viewers pay certain fees to view events, films, or shows. On the other hand, genre-defined branded channels offer specific genres of programming that are associated with their brands.

Both models are a product of the technological advanced and creative broadcast models that television institutions adapted during the era of plenty. This era of plenty has departed from television's status quo which was established and developed during earlier eras. The innovative technologies in this era offer viewers methods for programme selection. Ellis notes that "electronic programme guides will enable viewers to ignore channel schedules and seek the particular kinds of programming that they crave from a menu of several hundred channels" (2000, p. 169). Thus, television in the era of plenty offers viewers more options and services but some of these breakthrough developments require subscriptions for access. In this way, the era of plenty reshaped the ways in which viewers access and view television programmes. While Ellis' assertions detail the modifications that western television industries have encountered during each era, television in the Middle East is distinct with regards to its development phases. These distinctions will be discussed below, but first a narrow exploration of the relationship between commercialization and television development in America will be considered.

By examining the economic situation of American television to understand the factors influencing the rise of various network models, Rogers, Epstein, and Reeves (2002) apply the concept of periodization to explore American television development and transformation. According to Rogers, Epstein, and Reeves, the first era (TV I) is characterized by its lack of programmes and the promotion of the ideology of consumption (2002, p. 43). This is due to a firm economy that "drove the general prosperity of the great postwar boom through an expansive manufacturing economy of assembly-line production and mass consumption" (Rogers et al., 2002, p. 43). The

limited number of television institutions advocated the consumption ideology to reach and engage the casual viewing habits of audiences. Therefore, networks were determined to mass market their content regardless of the audience segment because higher ratings were a determinant of success.

The second era (TV II) was characterized by an increase in networks, niche target audience, and a departure from television's earlier economic state. Rogers, Epstein, & Reeves explain that "TV II was a period of steep decline for the three-network oligopoly that had commanded over 90 per cent of the prime-time audience during TV I" (2002, p. 44). An increase in the number of networks created a competitive environment for both producers and advertisers. As a result, television networks began to produce programmes for various segments of the audience to attract advertisers. This attempt to create with the intention of attracting certain demographics to please their advertisers became a crucial strategy for television networks. However, their main target audience segment was the sophisticated "urban dwellers" because of their stable economic situation. This provided networks an increase in revenue that would be used by producers for further narrative innovations (Rogers et al., 2002, p. 44). In this way, TV II was an era that provided the television landscape a significant development in innovative storytelling techniques and initiated a distinct economic situation compared to the previous era. As a result, viewing habits began to alter as audiences distinctively engaged with their preferred programs by "taping and archiving episodes, purchasing ancillary merchandise, and interacting with other fans in online discussion groups" (Rogers et al., 2002, p. 45).

TV III is a product of the innovative economic model of premium subscription-based networks like Home Box Office (HBO). The initiation of premium services offered an alternate form of television programming that departed the advertisement driven network model which had invaded the industry for decades. Rogers, Epstein, and Reeves emphasize that “Because audiences pay directly for programming, either via a monthly subscription fee or on a pay-per-view basis, content producers and packagers are shielded from the fear of offending nervous advertisers” (2002, p. 47). This model permitted producers to explore unprecedented themes, narratives, and episodic structures. Unlike advertisement-supported networks where producers are creating for the purpose of pleasing advertisers, premium service networks rely on satisfying viewers as a determinant of success due to the subscription fee and pay-per-view structure. Thus, the rise of premium services encouraged the branding of networks because premium service networks require the direct attraction of new customers.

Ellis’ theoretical concept of examining television by dividing its broadcasting and production operations into periods is useful because it considers the influence of technology when addressing television institutions and viewing habits. Rather than broadly exploring the television landscape without detailing the working processes of specific institutions and their response to the changing landscape, Ellis’s model magnifies the significance of technological innovations and business decisions with regard to the evolution of the television industry. This is crucial because television broadcasting decisions, production practices, and programmes are intertwined. Therefore, considering television eras when critically investigating certain aspects of production will assist the process of understanding how formats and narratives evolve.

Also, as highlighted by Rogers, Epstein, and Reeves, the economic status of the television landscape informs various programme and network approaches with regard to audience engagement. Despite their primary focus on premium services, Rogers, Epstein, and Reeves examined the processes that led to the initiation of such network models through the lens of periodization. Although Ellis (2000) and Rogers, Epstein, and Reeves (2002) disregard the type of storytelling strategies adapted during each era due to a comprehensive emphasis on technology, distribution, and consumption, other scholars have addressed the significance of periodization for investigating the influence such innovations have on creative personnel and programme development. Amanda Lotz (2014) demonstrates the use of periodization in the investigation of storytelling strategies and the role of network competition in the evolution of storytelling innovations.

Lotz (2014) investigates the impact of technology, programme production, distribution, financing and audience measurement upon industrial practices in U.S. television. She emphasizes that “rather than enhancing existing business models, industrial practices, and viewing norms, recent technological innovations have revolutionized the television industry” (Lotz, 2014, p. 4), along with different financing procedures and the audience’s ability to view at specific times through diverse methods. These developments have continuously affected viewers and creative personnel alike. In her attempt to examine these changes and shifts, Lotz considers periodization as a lens to explore these developments and determine how and why the alteration of storytelling practices occurred. By doing so, Lotz divides her eras as follows: the network era (1952-1980s), the multi-channel transition era (1980-mid 2000s), and the

post-network era (Mid 2000s onward). However, she devotes the majority of her arguments to analyze the distinct landscape of the post-network era.

Lotz specifies certain components of each era to distinguish the working dynamics and enhance her argument about transitions occurring from one era to the other. According to Lotz, the network era “maintained modes of production, a standard picture quality, and conventions of genre and schedule, all of which led to a common and regular experience for audiences and lulled those who think about television into certain assumptions” (2014, p. 7). This era was disrupted by the launch of different services and technologies.

The occurrence of various cable services, VCRs, and remote controls were primary indicators of the emergence of the multi-channel transition era. These developments gradually changed the audience’s experience of television viewing and altered production norms but hardly impacted the working conditions of the industry (2014, p. 8). Thus, the transition from the network era to the multi-channel transition era was smooth because of the few technological shifts.

Finally, the post-network era which Lotz addresses as a focal point of her study is an era where transition was a disruption to both consumers and industrial practices on many levels. This era is distinguishable because “the changes in competitive norms and operation of the industry become too pronounced for many of the old practices to be preserved; different industrial practices are becoming dominant and replacing those of the previous eras” (Lotz, 2014, p. 8). Because of these transitions, an abundant variation of programming emerged and Lotz specifically observes the developing

storytelling strategies of the post-network era to recognize its influence upon industrial programming, which will now briefly be outlined.

For many networks, the post-network era offered an eruption of creative opportunities. Lotz uses specific cases as examples to illustrate how individual networks capitalized on the changing environment. *Sex and the City* (1998) was a series created by HBO (subscription-based network) that offered unconventional themes that were distinctive to television programming. This was demonstrated through the show's explicit sexual content, unusual sexual humor, and sex related conversations. These features, coupled with the show's unconventional episodic and seasonal lengths that were determined by story rather than advertisement funding, provided an unprecedented narrative structure and viewing experience. For HBO, this opportunity was provided by their subscription-based business model, because advertisement supported networks are hesitant to produce extreme content and aim to satisfy their funders by targeting larger audience segments and adhere to FCC censorships. Thus, *Sex and the City* departed from the conventions of traditional network television programming and offered viewers an alternative form of serial programming.

Because the majority of networks were advertisement funded, they pursued alternative approaches for producing competitive programming models than that of HBO. In 2000, CBS produced a reality series called *Survivor* (2000). This unscripted reality format formed out of the necessity of networks to produce low-cost programming (Lotz, 2014, p. 240). The success of *Survivor* in a competitive era was highlighted by the show's format allowing it to implement product placement or integration. Thus, producers would market such opportunities for advertisers to receive funding. Also,

unscripted reality programming offered the opportunity to sell them as franchises to other countries. According to Lotz, “this means that templates of these relatively cheap to produce contests are sold in markets around the world, rather than episodes of U.S. contestants competing; thus, each country can reproduce the show with local contestants and in response to cultural particularities” (2014, p. 243). Although unscripted reality shows offered creative funding opportunities and unprecedented formats for viewers, other networks offered shows that altered production practices as well. FX produced *The Shield* (2002), which provided unconventional graphic violence and vulgar language. In an attempt to save time and money for production purposes, *The Shield* was shot with Steadicam, thus altering production and viewing norms. FOX introduced *Arrested Development* (2003) as a breakthrough comedy. The show adopted an unusual visual style for comedies by departing the conventions of multi-camera shooting, fixed sets, studio audience and laugh tracks. Instead, shooting took place on locations with voice-over narrations and a similar shooting style to unscripted programmes. Finally, *Off to War* (2004) was a documentary introduced by the Discovery Times channel that highlighted significant social issues in a meaningful story about part-time U.S. troops in Iraq. The show presented stories about individual troops and their struggles with family and military deployment overseas. The producers showed behind the scenes footage of the troops’ personal perspectives in a documentary style. These examples foreground the influence of the post-network era upon production and distribution of television programming. In addition to the conditions of decision making, storytelling strategies and financing operations impact programming format structures. Lotz’s analysis foregrounds how various innovative television programmes formed from

the modifications of technology and the increase in network competition during an uncertain television environment. Although her case studies are explicit examples of innovative formats, detailed critical analyses would provide a nuanced understanding of how these cases differed from narrative, episodic, and seasonal perspectives. Focusing on the influences of the competitive environment in the television landscape on programming formats, Robin Nelson clarifies the distinctiveness of the cultural particularity of local programmes and the shifts that occur in both American and British television during the era of TV3 (2007). The examples he provides demonstrate the cultural particularities and traditions of both production industries and the characteristics adopted to address the global and national market conditions.

The models discussed above clarify the significance of the development of technology, economics, and viewing habits upon the working dynamics of the television industry. Although scholars use the theoretical concept of eras to explore specific aspects of television, the purpose of dividing television studies into eras recognizes the critical link between industrial innovations and creative operations. Such examinations assist the investigator in the process of understanding how and why certain programme formats change, evolve, and emerge. The emphasis of Ellis (2000) on the role of technology and audiences upon creative decisions during each era, the clarification of Rogers, Epstein, and Reeves (2002) of the factors that impacted the transformation and development of American television networks, and the examination of Lotz (2014) regarding innovative storytelling decisions feature considerations that require awareness of the impact of industrial practices upon programme construction to investigate a consistently developing area of study. Therefore, critically investigating the

development of Kuwaiti television programme formats requires distinguishing aspects of separate television eras and selecting representative case studies from different television periods in order to examine the evolution of narrative forms that have pervaded primetime Middle Eastern television for decades. However, the television industry in the Middle East encountered different television eras than the ones illustrated above. These differences are related to the late adoption of technologies, regulations and control, and a distinct process of programme production and scheduling. Middle Eastern scholars address the evolution of such aspects of television broadcasting in the region by concentrating on broadcasting developments, but fail to acknowledge their impact upon format construction and storytelling.

Arab Television Eras

Scholars investigating Middle Eastern television studies have focused on the political economy, historical development of broadcasting institutions and technologies, and the relationship between state and creative working labor of certain countries in the Middle East. While Kuwait has been situated as a case within the larger context of regional divisions, the country's historical television industry initiation and broadcasting development have been addressed without a comprehensive investigation of programme development and evolution. The discussions below will note the institutional development of the television industry in the Middle East and highlight the transformations that formulated the pre-satellite era (1961-1990), the satellite era (1990-2000), and the network proliferation era (2000 onward).

In his article about the formation of broadcasting institutions, Nabil Dajani foregrounds the different evolution of television institutions in the Middle East by dividing

the region based upon the political and administrative procedures inherited by occupiers of different countries.

Dajani divides the Middle East into two large regions, the Arab East and the Arab West, but concentrates his discussion on the Arab East by further dividing it into three discrete regions. His attempt is to explain how television institutions developed in each region and why the administrative control differs from one region to another. Dajani clarifies that until 1990, television stations in the Arab East were under governmental control. Thus, networks were owned, managed, and controlled by the state.

These discrete regions of the Arab East are divided as follows: the Egyptian region, Bilad ash-Sham region, and the Arabian Peninsula region. Each of these areas represents various countries that have undergone different political periods and use their television stations differently. The objective behind this division is to highlight the various ways in which different political regimes use television as either an instrument for political issues, social change, or entertainment. With regard to the operative structure of television in Kuwait, Dajani explains that “broadcasting in Kuwait falls under the authority of the Ministry of Information with broadcasting stations being owned, managed, and financed by the government” (2005, p. 593). The status of television broadcasting in Kuwait evolved over the next two eras with the emergence of satellite technologies and privately-owned networks.

The details provided by Dajani entail the limited amount of networks operating in each country and the continued development until the emergence of satellite television and the introduction of privately-owned networks. However, Dajani pays less attention to the extent of administrative control that governments, Kuwait specifically, have upon

programme production or the process of writing and producing programmes. Also, the study disregards the changes occurring after the emergence of satellite technologies and the impact that these developments had upon economic, commercial, and creative aspects of production. The study is more concerned about negotiating the status of television institutions with regard to their political history in the Arab East rather than the working dynamics within each television institution.

A more comprehensive explanation of the production environment in the early satellite era was developed by Naomi Sakr (1999, 2002). Her assessments of the role that privately-owned networks had in the region illuminate the changing competitive landscape in post-1990 Middle Eastern television. While Dajani (2005) was concerned with the use of television in each country, Sakr details the disruption caused by the rise of satellite technologies to network ownership, accessibility, and competition.

The launch of satellite technologies and privately-owned networks and the role of advertisers caused an increase demand for programming, which according to Sakr has "Stimulated the growth of production centers in those cities where technical expertise is concentrated, notably Cairo, Beirut, Damascus and Amman" (1999, p. 6). This caused a shift in the creative work environment. Creative personnel were being sought to create programmes for the extensive amount of airtime each station must fill. Also, viewer accessibility created a competitive environment because audiences have the choice to select their preferred network.

Although Sakr details the limited freedom given by commercial networks, governmental control continued to exist and influence the media landscape because media centers and cities are funded by governments or are built in Middle Eastern cities

with strict governmental control. As a result, it allows the government to have censorship and editorial power upon television content. Thus, governmental control continued to exist in post 1990 Middle Eastern television but the competitive environment and social developments informed narrative forms and the content in terms of the social issues addressed. She exemplifies the initiatives of Egyptian programme makers in addressing Islamist characters by detailing the flaws of their values after the country experienced multiple terrorist attacks during the 1990s (Sakr, 2002). In this way, programme depictions of different societies were influenced by the changes and occurrences specific to that country.

However, her assessment of the post-1990 media environment in the Middle East focuses on a single era. This era included the introduction of satellite technologies, the increase in advertisers, and an unsettling time for networks that were attempting to establish their audience and decide on programming direction. Every network was examining its status in a pan-Arab market that shared the same language, and where competition was optimum. Despite these changes, syndication prevailed as the primary form of revenue generation, similar to that of the pre-satellite era. Advertising companies were still experimenting and hesitant due to their unfamiliarity with satellite technologies and the lack of sophisticated rating systems. Sakr explains that “Not only are ratings in most countries complied by unsophisticated methods, leaving analysts skeptical about their accuracy, but potential advertisers are increasingly unsure how best to target viewers because of the effects of the digital revolution” (1999, p. 7). Therefore, the satellite era disrupted the television production landscape throughout the Middle East and created a transitional atmosphere to which networks were struggling to

adapt. Sakr's constructive article emphasizes the critical role of the satellite era upon the industry's established norms, but disregards the various forms of programming during the satellite era and post 2000 television landscape.

In her book, *Arab Television Today* (2007), Sakr notes the condition of format trade that occurs within television institutions in the Middle East. The idea of this strategy is to "reduce the risk inherent in offering programmes to a wayward public whose remote controls enable them to zap through dozens of channels" (2007, p. 111). Sakr's attempt was to evaluate the response between competitive Arab television networks and the methods they adapted to fill airtime. She emphasizes that this response was a result of the proliferation of networks in the early 2000s. This era, according to Sakr, is termed the second expansion era (The first being 1990-2000).

Sakr's analysis accounts for the financial costs of programme production and its influence upon the decision making process by programmers in television networks. This economic situation and competitive environment was created by the launch of Nilesat 101 in 1998 and Arabsat 3A in 1999 as they increased the capacity for more than 300 television channels (Sakr, 2002) and the "expansion of capacity, driven in part by the launch of Nilesat 102, which was a key factor in the proliferation of channels after 2000" (2007, p. 12). These three satellites increased broadcasting capacity for more networks to enter the television landscape. However, the impact of the emergence of media cities is also a key factor that assisted the proliferation of networks in the early 2000s. While Sakr's assertions make clear the changes of the broadcasting situation in a specific era, she offers little insight into the production industry of domestic programmes and the impact of the holy month of Ramadan where religious social

behaviors influence viewing and industrial practices because people fast from sunrise to sunset, thus altering daily social activities.

These considerations would help the investigation of a specific format and the impact they have had upon its development. Also, Sakr's classification of television serials under one broad Middle Eastern umbrella disregards the theme meanings, narrative structures, and formal properties that distinguish serials across various Arab countries. This could be problematic because the development of television institutions differs from one country to another and various forms of administrative control inform the country's production industry.

To clarify the development of the television industry in post 1999 Middle East, Joe Khalil (2013) considers the contribution of media cities to privately-owned networks and programme production. Khalil notes that media cities are "designated economic free zones dedicated to financing, developing, producing and distributing media" (2013, p. 188). These cities created specified destinations for networks to launch and operate. In the process, they supported network owners through certain policies that simplify the working dynamics of production. They developed regulations to promote media production, facilitated working spaces for potential network owners, and managed the immigration procedures for creative personnel. Among these cities were: Egyptian Media Production City, Jordan Media City, and Dubai Media City.

Before establishing these three cities, privately-owned networks started to broadcast from Europe. Britain, Italy, France, and Greece were among the countries that allowed privately-owned Arab networks to produce and broadcast. However, Khalil emphasizes that challenges such as financial cost and political events restricted the

ongoing production of programmes and creative workers' immigration procedures. Also, there was growing interest in local programming from viewers in the Middle East. Therefore, privately-owned networks were willing to move to the region to attract Arab talent and lower the cost of production. The initiation of media cities in the region provided production centers for established overseas privately-owned networks and created an opportunity for potential networks. Thus, media cities were critical and contributed to the proliferation of networks that Sakr mentions.

One of the most influential media cities is Dubai Media City (DMC). Launching in 2001, Dubai Media City (DMC) provides exceptional packages to support networks with equipment at decent costs and according to Khalil, "Facilitates all aspects of government relations with its tenants, from immigration to tax brackets, and regulated tenants' labour issues. So successful is the Dubai model, that the UAE has five media free zones — the most so far in any country" (2013, p. 199). Dubai Media City became an attraction for not only European based privately-owned Arab networks but also regional privately-owned networks. By supporting the city's media investment planning, which makes it stand out and attract media personnel from the entire region, DMC gradually became a hub for television stations and production houses. Private production houses that were once located in many countries around the region were encouraged to move to Dubai Media City due to lower operation costs and tax exemption for an extended amount of years. These policies endorsed the proliferation of privately-owned networks and programme production initiatives, causing direct competition between networks around the region. Khalil's perspective details the significance of media cities, and specifically Dubai Media City, upon the television

industry in the Middle East. Tawil-Souri distinguishes this proliferation of Arab networks from earlier eras by clarifying that “The ownership structure of Arab television has expanded well beyond the national state-channels of 10 or 15 years ago, and certainly beyond the early independence years when media were handed over by colonial powers to the newly established state governments” (2008, p. 1401). As a result of this expansion, Tawil-Souri emphasizes that “Arab audience members are finding themselves increasingly in control over their media diets, no longer beholden to their national (didactic) TV channels” (2008, p. 1402).

The aforementioned scholars offer critical explanations of the state of Arab television during each production era. While Sakr mentions the impact of Ramadan upon television production, she examines Ramadan from the perspectives of programmers and their opinions of various program formats during this month. However, the significance of Ramadan as a primetime season, and the impact of television drama serials that pervade the broadcasting schedule of most networks were not the subject of her discussions. This critical season and its status amongst television networks and viewers alike was closely investigated by Kraidy and Khalil (2009).

In *Arab Television Industries* (2009), Kraidy and Khalil devote an entire chapter to the differences between Ramadan and other television seasons, in order to highlight the reasons behind its success and the factors that permit audience engagement for an entire calendar month. They also describe the different programmes that permeate airtime with dramatic serials being amongst the foremost watched shows during the season. They assert that “drama permeates programme grids because it combines themes of family relations, cultural identity, national pride and social messages” (2009,

p. 52). Thus, Ramadan's status, a peak programming season, is essential to both the industry and the public.

The holy month of Ramadan is a religious month derived from Islamic tradition and teachings that requires individuals to fast from sunrise to sunset. Thus, societies in the Middle East alter their daily activities and television institutions attempt to schedule programming in relation to such alterations. Because food and beverage fasting impacts upon the daily schedules of individuals, primetime television hours start shortly before the fast is broken. Although different production eras encountered challenges and changes to the television landscape, Kraidy and Khalil emphasize that Ramadan remained "The most important season for Arab television when the industry shows its very best productions, viewership soars, advertising rates peak and television programmes become topics of daily conversation" (2009, p. 99). Therefore, creative personnel and television networks keep their prime shows for Ramadan broadcasts. Likewise, star actors, networks, and production houses prepare their productions in advance for the aim of gaining primetime slots during Ramadan.

Because of the religious habits and the lifestyle that societies adapt during Ramadan, television viewing has become a central leisure activity. The industry has experienced a considerable rise in commercial spots and product placement packages. Kraidy and Khalil note that serial dramas became even more prominent during the satellite era and are the most popular shows during Ramadan (2009, p. 114). They specify that advertising spots double during Ramadan in Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC), Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, UAE. Thus, not only is

Ramadan the most important season of the year for television producers and creative personnel but for advertising companies as well.

Ramadan's significance to producers and advertisers raises questions regarding the narrative forms and social issues of serials that are explicitly created for this season. Although Kraidy and Khalil (2009) contextualize the significance of Ramadan and the status of serial dramas, analysis of narratives and conventions of this essential format to the television industry is not a component of their investigation. Also, the serial format which is categorized under the term *musalsalat,* an Arabic translation of 'series', by Sakr (2007) and Kraidy and Khalil (2009) is problematic because different Arabic countries develop and convey different narrative forms and social issues with certain thematic meanings to their audiences. Relying on this term without investigating the format limits the understanding of what constitutes an Arabic television serial drama. To provide a broad terminology for Arab television serials disregards the cultural particularity of each country and society in the Middle East. As a result, the significance and impact of each country's production context in the development of programme formats is unaccounted for.

Arab Television Programming

In a series of researches, scholar Christa Salamandra concentrates on Syrian television dramas as case studies to explore the cultural politics of production in Syria and the evolution of the Syrian television serial in depicting social identities and ideologies. Salamandara (2008, 2011a) explores how producers and writers criticize policies, culture, and ideologies through serial depictions under social and governmental

constraints. While such constraints limit their creative freedom, writers find ways to implement messages in their serials to avoid censorship and network interference.

There are many factors that Syrian writers struggle with when constructing a Syrian television serial. Because of various Islamic forms practiced in the Middle East, networks have different views on and expectations of the acceptability of specific depictions. Salamandara (2008) argues that networks target GCC audiences and expect social issues to relate to these audiences. This is inconvenient for many writers because this divergence in expectations from various networks obstructs a clear criterion for permitted depictions. Thus, writers are hesitant to discuss certain issues, portray specific depictions, and avoid explicit social criticism that influences their creative freedom. However, through historical settings and implicitly conveying specific messages, Salamandra explains that “Ambiguous references to contemporary politics and society encoded in these distant historical narratives can be ignored by censors and denied by producers. These series avoid the social complexities of the contemporary world, gliding past conservative GCC censors, and appealing to GCC buyers” (2008, p. 186). However, constructing a Syrian serial remains a daunting exercise because writers must account for censorships, script rejection, and reputation risk during the pre-production process.

Salamandra (2011a) also addresses the political influence upon networks and governments alike. The influences of different political Islamic movements have been essential in the progressiveness of television serial depictions in Syria. The rise of different influential Islamic political movements places governments under pressure, and these groups campaign against networks and shows when disagreements with

depictions or messages occur. This causes an “Islamization” of serials where scenes and characters are used as enhancement tools for religious purposes. It also causes an expectancy of Syrian writers from network executives to avoid controversial issues in order to enhance first-run syndication and purchasing chances. Salamandra explains that while creative personnel seek to implicitly criticize certain ideologies, “Critical treatment of politics, society and religiosity continue to surface through layers of interference” (2011a, p. 288). Therefore, writers attempt to “Contrast a degraded present with a magnificent past” through historical settings and storytelling techniques to communicate their messages (Salamandra, 2011a, p. 287).

Although different creative techniques have been used by writers to create critical depictions of society and politics, Salamandra insisted that Syrian dramas are “Increasingly difficult to finance” (2011a, p. 283). Her assessment of Syrian writing does not reflect the production industry in different countries in the region; however, it illustrates the issues that writers go through during the production process in Syria in particular. This could limit the understanding of the production industry in other countries and their different sociocultural developments. However, Salamandra explored this issue in two other studies she conducted by critically investigating the role of the Syrian production industry and the impact of the Syrian government upon it.

To examine the impact of the Syrian government upon Syria’s television production industry and how drama creators must accommodate certain governmental rules and restrictions to obtain time slots, Salamandra (2011b) divides Syria’s television history into industrial eras based on the ruling regimes, and analyzes case studies to highlight the differences between them. She highlights the changes that have occurred

during Bashar Al-Assad's regime and the significance of the president's vision in claiming to provide more freedom for television productions. Drama creators were optimistic but experienced inconsistent reactions from the state. The complications they encounter are politically tied and the case study examples Salamandra selected illustrate the difficulties of conveying specific messages within dramas.

Salamandra (2011b) highlights the way in which the Syrian government politically announced more freedom to drama creators without a list or specific criteria of what is or is not acceptable to portray. Therefore, many drama creators relied on their interpretations of the government's message and were unfortunately fired for certain depictions in serials. This issue occurred when the director of Syrian state television decided to air *Spotlight* (2001). After airing the show, the director was fired for the show's political and state criticism. Such political interference blurred the boundaries that writers can work within as Salamandra explains, "Drama makers strive to maintain artistic integrity and promote social and political transformation, but they must do so through the very institutions and structures they seek to reform" (2011b, p. 166). The promises of the Syrian government to allow writers more freedom and social criticism did not meet drama creators' expectations. For political reasons, drama creators in Syria struggle with government restrictions but continue to explore strategies to negotiate critical social issues.

According to Salamandra (2013), the Syrian production industry is unsupported by the government, and GCC owned networks have risen in number as the funding resource for many Syrian drama creators. These reasons have positioned Syrian drama creators between the regulations and political governance of state control, and the

ideologies of GCC network owners. Because of the complex boundaries that Syrian drama creators must work within, they “Do not perceive themselves as state-mouth pieces. But they concede that all they can do is expose problems, suggest causes and provoke discussion” (Salamandra, 2013, p. 91). Accommodating GCC network owners and their vision of social issues form a daunting exercise for artistic input. Therefore, Syrian drama creators experience the dilemma of cultural politics within the Arab television industry. In both studies (Salamandra, 2011b, 2013) a discussion of different attempts by Syrian drama creators to discuss specific issues is notable, but Salamandra’s methods use serials without acknowledging the purpose of individual storylines or the underlying values they wish to convey within the Syrian format. The objective is to use serials as examples to illustrate the complications and constraints that writers experience. Also, the criteria for selection depends on the controversial significance of serials that were being viewed as problematic by either the Syrian government or GCC networks to foreground the reasons behind censorships and the considerations that drama creators account for. Although there are drama creators in Syria that covertly challenge such limitations and provide innovative critiques through political satire (Joubin, 2014), such efforts and attempts are scarce and risky.

Other scholars have examined the conditions of production in television institutions from alternative Arab countries. Lila Abu-Lughod (1993) investigates the influential role of the media by considering Egyptian television serials and responses from various social identities within Egypt as the centerpiece of her analysis. Abu-Lughod aims at understanding the political messages being transferred through serials and the agents controlling them. By doing so, Abu-Lughod bases her investigation on

the representation of nationhood and citizenship through religion, the role of Islam, and the exclusion of extremism and Islamic movements from serials. She then questions participants from various regions and social identities in Egypt to explore their perceptions of Egyptian serials.

Abu-Lughod argues that although television programming in Egypt must accommodate the restrictions of the state because of the influential control of the government, there is still limited freedom for producers to creatively express their messages through serials (1993, p. 510). Thus, producers find creative ways to implement their messages and criticize certain issues but consider the changing political atmosphere within the country. In her book, *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt* (2004), Abu-Lughod expands her argument to detail the historical utilization of Egyptian serials to inform national progress and the crisis that this approach encountered as it attempted to direct and reflect national ideologies (2004). Thus, the change in the political environment informed the ways in which Egyptian serials addressed the country's national values. These studies engage the debate about the relationship between television programmes, their audiences, and the political life of the country under investigation. The objective is to consider other factors influencing television shows from an anthropological perspective. Her interviews clarify that the social identities of viewers impact their understanding of the Egyptian serial under investigation. This is critical for a sizeable country such as Egypt, which constitutes a vast number of geographic areas and social identities. Therefore, the anthropological efforts of Abu-Lughod recognize the case of Egyptian television serials as a distinct production form that must be considered within a historical context. While Egyptian

serials must account for various identities to accommodate viewers, they must also respond to the changing political environment.

Abu-Lughod and Salamandra's focus on the Egyptian television industry and its relationship with viewers' social identities, and of the challenges that drama creators in Syria's television industry encounter, provide critical perspectives on the impact that regimes, audiences, politics and culture have on television institutions and programming in the Middle East. The studies clarify the differences between television institutions within every individual country in the Middle East. As a result, it is critical for the investigator to consider the television landscape within the country under investigation, rather than classifying Middle Eastern countries together as a whole. Although their approaches vary, they illustrate the difference between productions from two distinct countries and highlight how different social and cultural assumptions that are distinct to each country inform depictions. Moreover, the relationship between the national and the regional is at the forefront of their inquiries by illustrating the social changes and expectations from creative personnel. As this study will highlight, the sociocultural developments in Kuwait differ from other countries in the region and as a result, social issues and meanings differ across production eras. Although the aforementioned approaches emphasize the link between television, society, and governments, they lack a comprehensive observation of the narrative form, and a detailed examination of thematic meanings that storylines within serials convey. Without such concentration, these approaches fail to highlight the meanings that storylines convey and the sociocultural factors that contribute to their portrayals. Other international scholars have

also addressed social issues in television programming and highlighted the production practices informing specific social issue selections and depictions.

Social Issues in Television Programming

Understanding the selection and depiction of social issues within serial forms is critical for the investigator because television institutions produce cultural values that concern their viewers. Therefore, a television institution from one country will pursue social issues that impact and relate to their audiences for generating engagement. This is achieved when the cultural meaning of the issues portrayed tackles viewer concerns and meets their expectations. This section will survey critical conceptions from several international scholars to foreground the reasons, strategies, and the factors that impact the decisions of creative personnel in their construction of social issue storylines.

With the aim of investigating social issues in British television soap operas to determine the methods approached by creative personnel and how these methods inform specific portrayals within fictional programmes, a critical approach is provided by Lesley Henderson (2007) that recognizes the status of fictional dramas as communicators and circulators of cultural messages. Henderson emphasizes that “The television serial drama is a media product which has considerable public visibility and has proved to be an enduring popular format with significant economic importance” (2007, p. 7). She uses select issues from programmes as select case studies to reveal the process undertaken by creative personnel when addressing storylines. She explores the institutional and external forces that shape social issue related storylines. The case studies considered represent a variety of approaches that writers and producers utilized to discuss social issues within storylines.

Henderson (2007) considers the portrayal of three social issues within storylines of specific programmes: sexual violence, breast cancer, and mental distress. Each chapter focuses on a specific issue and Henderson uses the same method across her chapters by first identifying the plot construction of the social issue and then investigates how and why creative teams of different programmes approached these issues in various ways. Thus, she examines story formation, casting and characterization, the role of suspense and narrative pace, and the advice from external agencies as critical factors that both influence and distinguish the decision making process of creative personnel from various programmes in their address of social issue storylines. Through interviews with members of creative teams, Henderson finds that approaching the same social issue varies from one creative team to another. For instance, the issue of sexual violence was developed in *Emmerdale* to add a concurrent subject to the show's farming related narrative. On the other hand, the creative personnel for *Brookside* utilized sexual violence as an original tool to create controversy that both viewers and media outlets would engage and discuss. Casting and characterization then relied on decisions made for social issue development as Henderson explains "It is clear that drama writers theorize constantly about audiences, and production decisions such as skillful casting require close knowledge of audiences and their cultural references outside the programme, as well as detailed knowledge of character biography and history" (2007, p. 65). Henderson then details how suspense and narrative pace treat sexual violence storylines differently in each programme and what techniques are developed by creative personnel from both programmes. Also, creative teams from both shows pursued various entities such as friends, research

material, and media outlets for knowledge about facts concerning the issue to be portrayed. The examples provided by Henderson highlight that creative teams develop social issue storylines for various purposes. These purposes depend on the subject of the issue, the thinking process of the creative team, and the objective of the programme.

These findings foreground the various methods that creative personnel seek to formulate social issue related storylines as Henderson notes “Television fiction forms part of a wider approach to eliciting change in social attitudes and health behavior” (2007, p. 19). Also, the identification of categories that inform the ways social issues are presented enhances the understanding of the working dynamics of the production process. However, because Henderson’s emphasis is on certain health related social issues rather than a broad investigation into a programme’s storylines to reveal its themes and understand its sociocultural context, other storylines within the programme under scrutiny become less valuable to her process of analysis. Thus, certain preferred storylines within programmes are highlighted while others are neglected. While Henderson’s assessment identifies critical factors that inform storyline formation and production decision making, abandoning other storylines within the programmes under investigation is problematic for the researcher aiming to explore thematic meanings and situate the programme within the broader range of productions.

Even though production practices and programme rationales expand our understanding of the complicated process underlying the address of social issues in television serials, portrayal methods have been essential for programme distinction and subject awareness. Television programmes become notable by their treatment of

certain social issues and the methods of storyline development utilized that formulate particular notions about them. This is emphasized in Christine Geraghty's examination of social issues within British soap operas of the 1980s and 1990s (1995). Although Geraghty disregards the contribution of production periodization to serial construction with the aim of strictly exploring the textual integration of social issues in British soap operas, the assessments provided clarify how portrayals of social issues evolved. This evolution illuminates the change that programmes encounter and how these changes are driven by viewer preferences and cultural assumptions.

Geraghty notes that earlier British soap operas were concerned with illustrating social issues within the boundaries of character conflicts which restrained storylines from a direct manifestation of social issues. The address of relationship drama was prioritized in British soap operas like *Coronation Street*. However, later British soap operas such as *Brookside* and *EastEnders* approached social issues directly and focused on drawing attention to social issues rather than personal relationship problems. Because both shows preferred to reach a wider audience, "They had to demonstrate that they were breaking new boundaries, moving out of what was deemed to be the cosy world of women's problems" (Geraghty, 1995, p. 67). This shift in social issue prioritization also shifted the structure of the shows. For instance, the emphasis on relationships by *Coronation Street* required maintaining community members to continue generating conflicts, but soap operas like *Brookside* and *EastEnders* utilized the model of the imperfect family to create social problems that continuously disrupt the family. Therefore, "The audience was thus invited to identify with these families and to

see their struggles toward family unity as a realistic reflection of the difficulties which face families in the audience" (Geraghty, 1995, p. 70).

With the imperfect family model functioning at the centre of soap operas that emphasize social issue portrayals, critical problems and consequences occurred for certain representations. This is due to the model's function of generating social issues that revolve around a family, and thus, requires the identification with members of the family. Therefore, social issues addressed must accommodate the family. These problems were apparent when soap operas attempted to incorporate gay and black characters. Geraghty explains that "Lying behind the dilemma which gay and black characters pose for soaps is the demand that they be at the same time realistic, representative, and positive" (1995, p. 76). Because of the implemented family structured model, viewers regard the rare occurring marginal gay and black characters as exemplifiers of their communities.

Geraghty's essay emphasizes the evolution of social issue representations of British soap operas and details the consequences accompanying the address of social issues in specific narrative forms. Her perspective foregrounds the critical role of social issue storylines for the purpose of the construction of a programme and viewer engagement. The significance of this essay is stressed in its demonstration of the link between the methods that convey social issues, the significance of the social issue being represented, and the reactions generated from viewers in response to the positioning of a social issue within the soap opera structure. Thus, consideration of the consequences that specific representations, mode of representations, and placement of representations within the serial are necessary elements for determining the informing

reasons urging such representations. To further elaborate this assertion, a narrow examination of the employment of a specific social issue within a soap opera is conducted by Joy V. Fuqua (1995).

Controversial or unprecedented social issues are faced with difficult portrayal decisions by creative personnel. Speculating about the reactions of audiences to controversial or unprecedented social issues is a doubtful and a worrying exercise for producers and writers of soap operas. Therefore, soap operas, in Joy V. Fuqua's findings, employ marginal characters and provisional storylines for controversial or unprecedented social issue portrayals (1995, p. 200). When negative criticism is provided for certain representations or the show's creative team attempt to discuss a complicated issue, further alterations can be achieved through marginal characters because they can be withdrawn from the programme or their involvement in a storyline can be modified. This is demonstrated by Joy V. Fuqua when investigating the representation of homophobia in *One Life to Live.* When the marginal character was abandoned, the storyline became irrelevant to the soap opera community and modifications to the character's role within the community were accomplished.

However, television programmes are also used to inform public perception about social issues, reflect the society that these issues are addressed for, and accommodate viewer preferences. In fact, the decision to provide specific representations is derived from societal changes and events. Lynn Spigel (2004) explains that American producers encountered difficult decisions in regards to portrayals after the attacks of 9/11. Therefore, the event informed their decision making after finding that viewers pursued violent and terrorist related themes. This established the decision to provide certain

representations and inform public perceptions about Islam and Muslims through many television programmes. Thus, representations of Muslims changed after these attacks and the values that the programmes conveyed concerned national unity by highlighting the threat of Islamic values. As a result, this significant event changed the way industry leaders approached programming themes.

Moreover, Roberta Pearson (2013) argues that programmes not only reflect society's dominant assumptions but in some cases, they refract from these dominant assumptions. Her assessment concentrates on how characters are positioned to have different perspectives and disagree on certain issues. In the process, viewers are invited to consider different positions and perspectives. In her analysis, Pearson provides examples of various characters from *Star Trek* but fails to acknowledge the climax that these plots reach. Instead, she emphasizes their differences and addresses two episodes from two different periods that provide different views about the same social issue. The problem with this form of analysis is that it fails to acknowledge the sociocultural context of the period and the ways in which a storyline develops to provide thematic meanings about the negotiated issue. Although Pearson does highlight that both episodes are years apart, she fails to acknowledge the sociocultural change of the eras that her selected episodes are produced in. However, the utilization of storylines to direct social behavior and inform perceptions about social issues is the main concern of her article. In fact, as will be highlighted in this research and throughout the case studies, theme meanings encourage specific perceptions that either reflect the dominant assumptions of society or direct to establish alternative assumptions.

Although Spigel's discussion focuses on the change occurring in American television after a significant national event and Pearson highlights the ways in which fictional programmes are able to refract from certain perceptions, other scholars have highlighted how societal changes inform the social positions of male and female characters within television programmes. K. Moti Gokulsing provides a thorough demonstration of how portrayals of women characters in Indian soap operas have changed over time in response to the political and economic changes of the country (2004). More recently, Alisa Freedman (2015) examines the portrayals of women characters in Japanese television dramas. She focuses on the type of work a fictional Japanese woman can undertake and how this has evolved over the years on Japanese television.

Other scholars have also traced the development of female and male characters on American television. Amanda D. Lotz (2006) argues that an increase in dramatic series programmes that focus on female characters and issues to address female audiences occurred. Lotz explains that such an increase is a result of the change in the television landscape and the role of competition in reshaping the strategies utilized by networks and advertisers to attract their viewers. In this way, a significant segment of the audience is addressed because the multichannel transition era has made it possible for networks to focus on specific audience segments. In this assessment, Lotz acknowledges the significance of the television environment and the changes that inform network decisions and social representations. In fact, Joe Goodwill (2011) argues that the traits that were once only relevant to male characters are being attributed to female action heroes on American television programming. He explains

that male and female heroes have developed to feature both masculine and feminine attributes. These developments have also informed the representations of male characters and identities. Rebecca Feasey (2008) explores multiple genres and highlights that there are various models of acceptable masculinities in American and British television programming. She insists that such representations are informed by broader social debates and cultural developments. Lotz (2014) asserts that the preferred male attributes permeating male identity have changed drastically with the introduction of male-centered dramas. Therefore, further explorations into masculine identities and issues are addressed. These shows, according to Lotz, address men's professional and personal lives. Thus, a broader investigation into what constitutes a man's life is presented in a way that allows a negotiation of gender norms. By doing so, the shows depart the traditional representations of hegemonic patriarchal masculinities in consideration of audience preferences. Lotz explains that these preferences are motivated by the change in social perspectives and the vast change in women roles on television. These roles influenced the adjustments made for men characters. Moreover, Mario Michael Albrecht (2017) examines shows that are considered quality television and contends that recent economic changes occurring after the 2008 crisis informed specific masculine representations and gender norms. As a result, further restructuring of gender identities circulated and reestablished traditional norms.

The above inquiries not only highlight the significance of the change in the television production industry but clarify the impact that social developments have on representations in programming. However, these arguments magnify the distinct particularities of American and British television industries. Because technological and

social implications vary between countries and regions, representations and social issues develop differently. Thus, narratives are constructed to adhere to the social preferences of their viewers. This is also supported by the demands of the competitive landscape. In fact, this research contributes to this area of inquiry by exploring the narratives of Kuwaiti television serials. The case studies will clarify how issues of accessibility, competition, censorship, and sociocultural changes distinct to the Kuwaiti television industry informed representations in Kuwaiti serial programmes. Clearly, the findings provided by Lotz explain the role of the multichannel transition era and the strategies developed by networks to narrowcast and reach their desired viewers. However, other regions have also utilized television programming and developed strategies that are unique to their television environments.

A historical account of the telenovela is undertaken by Matelski (2010) to highlight the format's contribution to entertainment, information, and social change across Latin American nations. Originating in Cuba in 1952 as a radio serial, the telenovela developed to reach viewers across Latin America with the purpose of carrying specific themes and social messages. Later, due to regime demands in Cuba, creative personnel moved to other countries in Latin America such as Brazil, Venezuela, and Mexico to revive their writing skills and continue the development and production of telenovelas. This encouraged the development of telenovelas that tackle issues of specific countries and inspired the cultural specificity of the format. Matelski highlights that "in Cuba, telenovelas have always been rooted in social justice issues", with conveyance of issues varying across time, she insists that "depending on the decade, however, these have manifested themselves in different forms" (2010, p. 187).

However, while social messages of telenovelas of certain countries tackled issues relating to the country of production, the structural format of telenovela's form remained intact across Latin American production institutions (Matelski, 2010).

Matelski's article explains the origins and the significance of telenovelas as a programming form to Cuba's regime and social identities. She explains that the Cuban regime disregarded the form for a period of time before realizing its influence upon society and cultural issues. Because of the significance of the form, Matelski asserts that "telenovelas became inspirational to Cubans in many ways, as windows to an outside world as well as within its own social border" (2010, p. 189). As a result, the Cuban regime began to increase funding for production to convey desired social messages and raise awareness of specific issues.

While Matelski's concern is to demonstrate the status and significance of telenovelas to society and culture in Cuba, and the historical development of telenovelas in Cuba, her argument abandons the recognition of the development of various thematic alteration that distinguish telenovelas from various countries in Latin America. By critically examining the differences among country specific telenovela productions, Jesus Martin-Barbero explains that "the evolution and diversification of the genre has gradually introduced new themes and perspectives" (1995, p. 280). Martin-Barbero asserts that there are two models of telenovelas occupying airtime in Latin American television. By blurring references to places and times, the first model, originated in Cuban radio and is usually produced in Mexico and Venezuela, "depicts exclusively primordial feelings and passions, excluding all ambiguity and complexity from the dramatic space" (Martín-Barbero, 1995, p. 279). Another significant feature of

this model is that presented dilemmas usually address issues of kinship. The second model, which is usually produced in Brazil and Columbia, proposes references to various areas, locations, and depicts historical moments. In this model, Martin-Barbero notes “the rigidity of models and ritualizations is perforated by imaginaries of class and territory, of sex and age” (1995, p. 280).

These depictions categorize telenovelas from thematic perspectives and clarify how depictions develop in response to the production industry of a specific culture and society. Furthermore, Martin-Barbero’s perspective stresses the critical value of representations and social issues conveyed in telenovelas to the identification and distinguishing of a programming format.

The above discussions of social issue representations provide critical perspectives of the rationales informing the decision making process, the sociocultural considerations, and the differences between portrayals from various television industries. These perceptions illuminate the significance of social issues and sociocultural factors for programme distinction and as format identifiers. Although the assertions concentrate specifically on the address of social issues and portrayals, the arguments provided attach the specificity of a social issue to a distinct programme for examination. The interpretations illustrate the continuous format’s ability to address social issues in specific strategies because, unlike the predetermined narrative of Kuwaiti serials, future episodes of soap operas are undetermined. Moreover, they also illustrate how closed forms of programming address the cultural assumptions about gender and how these depictions evolved over time. Therefore, producers and writers of fictional programmes consider these social and cultural developments when deciding on

storyline construction. Similarly, Kuwaiti writers also consider such changes occurring within society and culture before deciding on portrayals. As the case studies will demonstrate, significant societal events that are specific to Kuwait informed these depictions over time.

However, as shown above, the narrative form impacts the methods utilized and permits the formation and organization of storylines, theme meanings, and strategies for representation. Since Kuwaiti serials are closed forms that achieve complete narrative closure by Ramadan's end, investigating the development of the narrative form requires a theoretical framework to guide the inquiry. The next section will review the critical concepts concerning the characteristics that shape narrative forms in fictional television programmes.

Narrative Forms and Formal Characteristics

Ritual and industrial demands customized the distinct episodic and seasonal form of Kuwaiti television serial formats. Seasons comprise either eleven episodes (in the pre-satellite era), fifteen episodes (the satellite era), or thirty episodes (in the network proliferation era), airing for an entire month (Ramadan) with absolute narrative closure. These forms distinguish the development of Kuwaiti television serials from US and other international formats. Therefore, it is crucial to clarify the characteristics of US and other international television formats to permit a comprehensive comparison and highlight the characteristic of the narrative form of the Kuwaiti serial.

Offering a distinct explanation of the operation of television programming, Sarah Kozloff emphasizes the significant role of commercial interruption in the structure of television broadcasting in various parts of the world because shows rely on advertising

money to pay for their costs. Producers and writers creatively acknowledge the need for commercial breaks during the production planning stages. John Ellis notes, “Broadcast TV has developed specific forms of narration, and specific forms of organization of its material” (1992, p. 115). This specificity is based on the contribution of commercial breaks to the form of television’s narration and organization. The continuous broadcasting of content on television influenced the forms of programme narratives, and commercial breaks within each individual show and between shows are part of the organizing structure of television broadcasting. To further elaborate on television’s distinct narrative forms, Sarah Kozloff (1992) details the relationship between television narrative and the medium’s complex form. Kozloff argues that there are three layers of narrative in television: story, or “What happens to whom”; discourse, or “How the story is told”; and schedule, or “How the story and the discourse are affected by the text’s placement within the larger discourse of the station’s schedule” (Kozloff, 1992, p. 69). By recognizing the schedule as an essential layer, Kozloff emphasizes the relationship between all three layers of narrative construction in television, and considers the adjustments needed for commercial interruption. Kozloff explains that television texts are positioned around commercial breaks, and build their stories in an attempt to enhance audience interest before each commercial break to ensure audience engagement. While such has been the case with most televisual programming, commercial breaks in Kuwait witnessed different imperatives and the production context of Kuwaiti serials requires the writing of entire episodes without the pre-determined account for such breaks. Writers in the Middle East are uninformed about commercial spot placement during the writing stages. This raises questions about the process of

creative writing and producing television serials in Kuwait. The case studies will illustrate the innovative strategies that are incorporated in response to the changing broadcasting schedule in Kuwait but first the following section will detail the development of characteristics and provide the defining features that distinguish the identification of formats.

With commercial breaks being essential components of narrative construction and form development, the following part of this chapter will consider the ways in which producers and writers account for commercial breaks for narrative organization, episodic structure, and innovations in different institutions, and develop particular characteristics in accordance with viewer accessibility and sophistication.

Jane Feuer (1986) demonstrates the contrary characteristics of American television's persistent formats (episodic and serial). Feuer defines the differences between the forms of television, film, and novels. She asserts that unlike film and novel forms, "The self-replication of the episodic series depends upon a continual re-integration of the family; that of the continuing serial depends upon a continual disintegration of the family" (1986, p. 614). The description provides a simplistic definition of the conventions of episodic and serial formats but because she emphasizes these conventions in comparison to films and novels, the examples provided in her study are less detailed and limited for the general clarification of how the series and the serial television forms function. Thus, a thorough examination of the variation of available serial programmes and the possibilities that a production environment provides for serial innovations is absent in her assessment. This is critical because while episodic series formats have been essential to the academic debate, this research

study is concerned with Kuwaiti television formats that share the characteristics of seriality due to their ongoing storylines, the chronological order of episodes, and the lack of self-contained conflict resolutions during episodes. However, because Kuwaiti serials feature multiple episodes that are constructed exclusively for the purpose of airing for an entire month (Ramadan), their serial characteristics must accommodate the particularities of their broadcasting schedule. Therefore, illuminating the characteristics of international serial formats found in academic debates permits the process of investigating Kuwaiti television serials. The critical analyses of various serials from different television institutions and nations by international scholars have provided a definition of what constitutes a serial form of programming. To simplify the difference between both forms, Sarah Kozloff explains,

> *Series* refers to those shows whose characters and settings are recycled, but the story concludes in each individual episode. By contrast, in a *serial* the story and discourse do not come to a conclusion during an episode, and the threads are picked up again after a given hiatus (1992, p. 5).

Although serial forms share specific conventions, they vary from one television industry to another. The soap opera and the telenovela are two well established forms of serial programming in the US, Britain, and Latin America. Despite sharing specific characteristics of seriality, there are also significant differences that foreground the ways in which serial forms from different institutions vary considerably. First, an explanation of the origins of soap operas which are studied by Robert C. Allen (1985) will be discussed. Subsequently, the formal properties of the continuous serial's format, demonstrated by Christine Geraghty (1981), will be discussed. In this way, the core elements of the form will be highlighted.

Sponsorship was critical to the formation of the soap opera format. Radio networks relied on advertising money, and soap companies became major sponsors of the form (though not the only ones). Therefore, the term ‘soap’ was attached to the title of the format when first mentioned in a magazine as a signifier of daytime serials. Opera, on the other hand, was a description of an elite narrative art form and the label ‘soap opera’ was ascribed to the format after its first appearance in the broadcasting trade press in the 1930s (Allen, 1985). Thus, the form was critical to manufacturers of products because it attracted large audiences during the day and enhanced their use of radio as an advertising medium. The form was later embraced to television broadcasting with further developments. This historical origin of the soap opera differs from the origins of the Latin telenovela, which will be discussed below. A thorough discussion of what distinguishes this continuous serial form from other serial forms is conveyed in Christine Geraghty’s (1981) analysis. By referring to the soap opera as a “Continuous serial” due to its daily appearance throughout the year and lack of narrative closure, Christine Geraghty clarifies the formal characteristics of the format to highlight the organization of time, narrative, and characters that shape the programme’s structure.

Due to production practices and industrial demands that require the production of multiple episodes per week, soap opera episodes are broadcast simultaneously alongside the production of future episodes. These demands restrict the disclosure of a specific number of episodes and establish an ongoing continuous broadcast that occurs for years. Geraghty explains that “The most important influence on how the audience perceives the continuous serial is its regular appearance, in the same slot every week of

the year" (1981, p. 9). This is significant because viewers build an attachment with the soap opera world and comprehend that they can tune in to follow that world during certain times of the day. In this way, the audience expects a sense of a future which is intensified through the soap opera's consistent deferral of a final resolution. Additionally, soap operas contain two to three interwoven stories that are given even time during episodes. When directly comparing between the presentation of storylines of closed serials and the continuous serial, Geraghty explains that unlike the closed serial where the focus of an episode is on a single storyline, "It is a characteristic of the continuous serial, however, that two or three stories dealt with are given approximately equal time in each episode and very often reflect on and play off each other" (1981, p. 12).

Geraghty emphasizes that narrative conventions of soap operas are activated through two distinct devices: the cliffhanger and the temporary resolution (1981, p. 13). The cliffhanger occurs when "The unfolding of the action is cut off at a crucial point so that the enigma is unresolved and the leading characters remain in danger" (Geraghty, 1981, p. 14). The cliffhanger invites viewers to watch future episodes by withholding information and creates new problems. This permits the creation of constant alterations to storylines, and thus, enhances audience engagement. The other device, the temporary resolution, offers viewers a sense of equilibrium but only temporarily until another episode begins or a disruption occurs. Thus, "The two alternatives, the temporary resolution and the cliffhanger, work together to provide variations within the established pattern of serials' organization" (Geraghty, 1981, p. 16). Although these devices are essential to soap opera narratives, soap operas' tendency to neglect the use of past information is also central to the organization of storylines and the format's

continuous structure. By enduring episodes for years, soap operas require viewers to recall narrative information without referencing to such information during episodes or through storyline events. This is emphasized through scarce references to the past so that certain events can occur without clarifications. Geraghty explains that “A rigid adherence to their own history is rejected in favor of a more flexible approach which allows serials to function in the present” (1981, p. 18). Such an approach permits creative personnel the freedom to twist plots, withdraw characters from the narrative, and move the narrative forward.

Characters are also an essential element of the conventions of the soap opera format. Because episodes appear regularly, a variation of character types are presented to keep viewers attached. Geraghty explains that there are three character types in serials: individuated character, serial types, and holders of a status position (1981). The individuated character holds traits that are specific and distinct from other characters. The serial types are characters that have definite traits that other characters lack. Finally, the holders of a status position are characters that are known by their position which could occur as specific ages, sex, class, or work. Although these types are distinguished, characters can be from one of the top three types or a combination of the types. These character types determine the availability of plots, distinguish their uses, and offer certain storyline possibilities.

These formal characteristics define the continuous nature of the form and separates continuous serial formats from other forms of programming. Geraghty’s analysis and conclusions provide a framework in order to understand the form of programming under scrutiny. However, consideration must also be given to storytelling

strategies because of various serial forms that share similarities and feature differences in conventions. Also, the placement of the text within the broadcasting schedule is critical and shapes the characteristics of the programme.

While Geraghty's focus is on the daytime soap opera, Ien Ang (1985) highlights how the change from daytime to primetime impacts these characteristics to attract wider audiences. She maintains that specific characteristics that are conventional to the daytime continuous serial are altered in her investigation of *Dallas* but certain characteristics remain and contribute to the continuous nature of the show. Therefore, despite its status as a primetime continuous serial, the show's utilization of storylines and characters resembles that of the daytime soap opera. What is distinct in Ang's assessments is the acknowledgement of the how a show's timeslot impacts its narrative elements. Although the thirty-episode Ramadanian serial is a closed format, some of these characteristics, as will be shown in the analysis of *Zawarat Al Khamis* (2010), are adapted to suit the conditions of the daily broadcast requirements of the network proliferation era (2000 onward).

However, the continuous form permits specific long term storytelling strategies that are unavailable to closed serial formats. By analyzing *One Life to Live* to identify the structural elements of the serial format, Abigail De Kosnik (2013) found significant characteristics provided by the structure of the soap opera. De Kosnik argues that the distinctive continuous duration of soap operas provides the audience an extensive attachment to the characters (2013). She uses the main character (Viki Lord) of *One Live to Live* as a focal point of her analysis to expose the elements of how the continuous duration of soap operas provides lifelong storytelling. Her analysis

illuminates three elements: deep seed and long reveal, continual reverberation, and real-life temporality.

The first of her elements are deep seed and long reveal, which presents lengthy story arcs by introducing a dilemma without revealing further information or a resolution for numerous years. This is exemplified by De Kosnik when she demonstrates how the psychological illness of Viki Lord is introduced in 1968 but the cause of her illness is revealed in 1995. Therefore, the openness of the soap opera format permits this form of revelations twenty-seven years later. De Kosnik argues that “Only long-running soaps can plant such a deep seed of plot, and then have it culminate in a satisfying reveal after such an attenuated length of time” (2013, p. 358).

The second element provided by the structure of soap operas is the continual reverberation. Continual reverberation is when a long-running conflict is resolved, a new conflict is presented. This is illustrated when Viki’s long-running mental illness is resolved; she discovers that her daughter has a twin that was separated in the hospital without her knowledge, and both her daughters embody the two sides of her personality. Thus, the outcomes of Viki’s long-running storyline with her illness generated other ongoing conflicts.

Finally, real-life temporality offers dedicated viewers a sense of living alongside soap lives. This is distinguished by De Kosnik, “Unlike the compressed temporalities of a two-hour film or a one-hour weekly series that runs for only a few years, soap opera events unfold in a timeline that mirrors viewers’ lived time quite closely” (2013, p. 361). This is due to soap opera’s daily broadcast throughout the year. For instance, Viki’s

discovery of her illness took twenty-seven years, which resembles the amount of time an individual could take before understanding their psychological issues.

De Kosnik's argument marks the distinct features that the open ended narrative of the soap opera provides. By detailing the significant elements of character formation across episodes and seasons, De Kosnik emphasizes the value of multi-year long seasons to narrative possibilities. Thus, the open ended narratives of soap operas that are determined by ratings for continuation offer creative personnel the opportunity to plan for long-term conflicts and characterization.

The arguments provided above describe the formal properties of soap operas' narrative structure and to what extent the open ended structure enables possibilities for storyline development. They illuminate the narrative elements that the open ended format offers for writers and viewers alike. Moreover, the discussions highlight that the conditions of production for this daytime format permits such implementation of elements that are less likely to be available for primetime formats. However, while soap operas are identified and shaped by the ability of continuation for seasons, the telenovela narrative reaches a complete resolution after a specific number of episodes. This alteration informs the conventions of the format and distinguishes the telenovela from the soap opera. Such a difference is informed by the production industry of South American countries and the requirements associated with their political, commercial, and television developments.

Ana. M Lopez (1995) argues that, unlike American soap operas where seasons last for years, the telenovela seasons are approximately six months long with pre-planned narrative conclusions. Therefore, the objective of the final episode of the

telenovela is to resolve narrative strands rather than develop future storylines. In terms of scene production, telenovelas implement a Hollywood method by using exterior scenes to enhance storylines, rather than the traditional soap opera interior low-cost sets. Also, telenovelas air during primetime slots, target male and female viewers, and feature star actors compared to the soap opera's daytime slot, female emphasized narratives, and actors that lack star status. Thus, telenovelas are an essential form to television programming in Latin America. Lopez highlights that "This constant production and increasing sophistication of telenovelas have generated a solid capital base as well as a sophisticated professional and technical television infrastructure in the larger nations" (1995, p. 259). The distinctiveness in this argument is highlighted in its acknowledgement of the production context of South America. The arguments presented by Matelski (2010), Martin-Barbero (1995), and Lopez (1995) illustrate how a form's development in a specific production context informs the construction and evolution of its characteristics, thus, marking it as distinct from other international forms.

Like telenovelas, the Kuwaiti serial form, although shorter and adheres to the thirty-day boundary set by the holy month of Ramadan, utilizes the final couple of episodes to resolve all narrative strands. Moreover, these serials are primetime specific and feature star actors in a production environment that is defined by stardom and address male and female viewers. Thus, Kuwaiti serials, as we shall see in the analysis of all three case studies, share some characteristics with both soap operas and telenovelas, but these characteristics developed in a television landscape that also requires narrative particularities that are distinct to its conditions. In their investigations, western academics have developed a language for examining narrative elements and

established frameworks that permit the understanding of the relationship between commercialization, viewership, and the development of storytelling forms and innovations.

Narratives, according to Jason Mittell, “Are the central form of all scripted television genres, from sitcoms to science fiction, cartoons to soap operas” (2010, p. 213). Because narrative organization is an essential part of the ways in which programme formats are designed and defined, clarifying the perimeters of how and why narratives are distinguished by programme form presents a framework to build from for the analysis and examination of Kuwaiti television formats. As argued above, the conventions and themes of serial programming are distinctive features of various format definitions, but narrative structure and organization also provide a vocabulary for investigative methods. Illuminating these approaches requires giving consideration for both series and serial programming and characteristics because the analytical methods surveyed tackle the development of serial, series, and emerging models of programming that have developed in western scholarship. By doing so, interpretive units of analysis for both episodic and seasonal narrative structures are highlighted.

Jason Mittell asserts that an innovative narrative form has emerged for the purpose of sustaining audiences and account for the broadcasting impact produced by syndication, which he terms “Narrative complexity” (2006, p. 29). Mittell argues that television’s industrial environment informed the rise of this unique form of narration and emphasizes the role of syndication in this distinct transformation in storytelling. He asserts that “Traditional industry logic dictated that audiences lacked the weekly consistency to allow for serialized narratives, and the pressures of syndication favored

interchangeable episodes of conventional sitcoms and procedural dramas" (Mittell, 2006, p. 31). Thus, because programmes were syndicated on various networks, producers planned to introduce a narrative strategy that could please viewers while sustaining the narrative logic of long-running seasons without disrupting the story world.

Mittell explains that narrative complexity shifts the balance of episodic and serial narration. Episodes, according to Mittell, can either be self-contained or focus on the long-term story arc that is to be resolved at season's end (2006). In this way, narrative complexity is not typically a combination of series and serial forms, but incorporates features from both models. Therefore, this mode of narration relies on viewer comprehension and expects the audience to adapt to the oscillation between episodic forms. For instance, narrative complexity offers certain episodes where characters are positioned in specific situations that are not mentioned again in later episodes. Also, storylines in narrative complex programmes tend to converge at season's end. Mittell insists that narrative complexity is "A reconceptualization of the boundary between episodic and serial forms, a heightened degree of self-consciousness in storytelling mechanics, and demands for intensified viewer engagement focused on both diegetic pleasures and formal awareness" (2006, p. 39). These components of narrative complexity foreground the impact that technological change and industrial practices have on the structure of narratives in television programmes. This emphasizes the fact that narrative complexity works to penetrate the boundaries between both series and serial forms and demand severe viewer engagement (Mittell, 2006). This penetration is significant because it allows the function of narrative complex programmes to reach its objective by making viewers "Desire to be both actively engaged in the story and

successfully surprised through storytelling manipulation" (Mittell, 2006, p. 38). According to Mittell, the shift in the television landscape and programme accessibility allowed networks to experiment and provide unconventional and innovative storytelling approaches (2015). These approaches shifted the formulaic conventions of series programs that were once considered the norm. Thus, the conditions of production and reception altered storytelling conventions and offered flexibility for more sophisticated characterization.

Although Mittell explains the impact of technological transformations and audience sophistication on creative decision making and narrative design, Trisha Dunleavy challenges this notion. She contends that this form of complexity has been available to high end drama serials and distinguishes them from soap operas (Dunleavy, 2017). She notes that contemporary American dramas employ complex characteristics and coins the term "complex seriality" to define them (Dunleavy, 2017, p. 104) and outlines six elements that classify this form of seriality. To further such arguments about the link between industrial norms and narrative designs, Anthony N. Smith (2019) contends that the economic particularities of television institutions impact the way series programme narratives are designed. Because of specific economic and audience dimensions, some series programmes employ elements of the daytime soap opera. Smith defines this form of series programming as a modified soap structure (MSS). The analyses foreground the complicated employment of the MSS design between broadcast networks, basic cable channels, and subscription services. This highlights the importance of an institution's economic model and how the uses of technology contribute to the decisions made about storytelling design. Although the

aforementioned arguments are strictly concerned with the American television industry, they provide critical considerations for programme analysis.

These debates acknowledge the different characteristics and the shifts informed by production contexts. Mittell (2006, 2015), Smith (2019), and Dunleavy (2017) exemplify the necessity of considering technological transformations, industrial practices, and audience sophistication when analyzing narrative conventions. Their critical perspectives foreground the importance of identifying industrial developments for format investigation. In the case of Kuwaiti television, where three television eras have featured three formats that incorporate various elements in response to changes in technology and accessibility, investigating narrative elements and the evolution of these elements necessitates the consideration of the production context from each era, the influence of creative decision making upon narrative designs, and the approaches undertaken by the writers to challenge and satisfy viewers. Mittell acknowledges the role of syndication in the development of this distinct form of storytelling. Despite Kuwaiti serials relying on syndication as a primary source of revenue, the development of their narratives enhanced the level of seriality and character complexity over time. As will be shown in each of the case studies, syndication's significance to the episodic and seasonal forms of Kuwaiti serials attributes to such innovations but the constraints of the holy month of Ramadan informs the limitations of these developments. Instead of incorporating elements from both series and serial forms, Kuwaiti serials manipulate episodes to organize storylines and emphasize serial aspects to continue developing them for the final episode of the season. In this way, episodes lack a self-contained dilemma and function to leave questions unresolved.

To further this argument with a detailed analysis of how networks intensively pursued viewer attention through narrative designs, Robin Nelson (1997) proposes the term “flexi-narrative” in his observation to dissect the modification of narrative components for sophisticated audiences. This flexi-narrative approach permits the alteration between storylines during an episode to provide a variety for viewers and reveal a multitude of topics without losing their attention.

Nelson contends that in response to sophisticated audiences, networks decided to design narratives by the use of “bytes” which are “Defined in terms of the time and space given to a particular narrative strand before cutting to a byte of another narrative strand” (1997, p. 34). Expressed through the technique of a rapid intercut between storylines, the byte conveys information of a specific storyline before transitioning to another byte that portrays another storyline. Thus, viewers who lack interest in a shown storyline resist the need to tune to other channels because of the variety of storylines that this flexi-narrative offers within an episode. This presentation of vast characters and issues aims to target a variety of viewer interests within a single programme. A thorough display of the flexi-narrative is presented through Nelson’s analysis of the series *Casualty* (1997, p. 38). The conclusion drawn from his analysis identifies the viability of identifying the function and organization of storylines within the structure of television programmes.

Confirming that audience viewing habits and attention span influenced the formation of the flexi-narrative mode of programming magnifies the underlying process and the methods utilized by creative decision makers. Nelson’s interpretation provides a thorough explanation of the reasons that impact the emergence of narrative forms and

the episodic and seasonal arrangement of storylines. The consideration of audience behavior is at the forefront of arguments concerning narrative conventions because producers seek various methods of capturing and retaining viewer attention. This consideration is notable for academics since programme success depends on viewer engagement, and therefore narrative construction becomes an instrument for creative personnel to acquire that engagement.

In Kuwait, narrative developments occurred in response to the distinct changes in the Middle Eastern television landscape. The case studies will demonstrate how Kuwaiti serials utilized episodes to arrange their storylines in response to the changing habits of Kuwaiti and pan-Arab audiences. Also, the opportunities for syndication and accessibility altered the way writers organized their storylines from one era to the next to accommodate these changes and the constraints of the season, Ramadan. Moreover, Nelson's flexi-narrative model provides a standalone episodic dilemma that is resolved during an episode with other serialized subplots. However, despite focusing on syndication for revenue, Kuwaiti television serials only offer serialized storylines without these standalone episodic dilemmas. This is due to the fact that the primary emphasis is on syndication during Ramadan rather than outside of the holy month. In this way, serials are designed to progress from the first day of the month until the last day and work to accustom these ritual conditions. This will be detailed in greater length in each case study.

Other scholars have also looked at television narrative with various methodological approaches. These approaches highlight the utilization of beats, episodes, and arcs in the construction of storylines.

Michael Z. Newman (2006) clarifies their usage in the analysis of American primetimes serials to illustrate how they construct the programmes. Although Newman's approach aims at examining scripted American primetime serials, his clarification of certain vocabularies apply to all forms of fictional programmes.

Newman's three levels of analysis for exploring PTS are as follows: the Micro Level (beats), the Middle Level (episodes), and the Macro Level (arcs). The beats, which Newman clarifies as a synonym for scenes, are described as "Television's most basic storytelling unit" (2006, p. 17) and in PTS, they are usually two minutes in length, function to provide new information, consist of actions or reactions, and review information (2006). This usage of the beat as a unit of analysis has been demonstrated by Jason Mittell in an effort to exemplify how meaning is formed beat by beat when analyzing the television serial *Lost* (2010, p. 259).

The second unit of analysis that Newman emphasizes is the episode. An episode of primetime serials, according to Newman, contains a central dilemma that reaches resolution. Newman notes,

> Most typically, certain questions go unanswered for episode after episode, but they are not the kind of questions that obstruct narrative clarity. However, there are major questions that are tackled every episode to please casual viewers. Therefore, the episode is organized into four acts with each act followed by a commercial break: the first act (setup), the second act (complication), the third act (development), and the fourth act (resolution). These acts are assembled to introduce problems in the first act and end it with a surprise. Characters respond to complications caused by this surprise in the second act, see the stakes raised in the third act, and resolve problems in the fourth act (Newman, 2006, p. 21).

Another detailed examination of episodic structure is provided by Anthony N. Smith (2011) in his investigation of HBO's *The Sopranos*. Smith explains that "Not only did *Sopranos* producers, both in the writing and editing process, have more time per

episode than writers of network drama with which to tell their stories, they were also freed from the requirement to unfold their story at a brisk pace" (A. N. Smith, 2011, p. 39). This is because the subscription-based model of HBO operates without commercial interruptions. Therefore, writers have an hour of screen time to convey stories compared to the forty minutes of screen time available for network writers. Thus, beats are lengthier and contain detailed story information. Smith explains that episodes consist "of turning points positioned at (fairly) regular intervals, and successions of beats that alternate between multiple-plots — a structuring device that, as witnessed, both permits contrast and resonance between distinct storylines, and has the potential to enrich character complexity" (2011, p. 46).

These attributes distinguish HBO episodes from network episodes. Smith provides a comparative model for understanding the function of an episode within a television form. His emphasis on an episode's architecture provides a template for observing episodes that lack commercial interruptions. By juxtaposing primetime serial episodes with episodes from *The Sopranos*, Smith demonstrates the remarkable influence that additional screen time has on beat length, act structure, and story details. In fact, Smith utilizes this form of analysis to demonstrate the structure of American Movie Classics' (AMC) episodes and foreground how a basic cable channel incorporates a storytelling mode that is characterized by premium networks (2013). By implementing this storytelling mode and emulating HBO, AMC dramas provide longer scenes and a slower pace to their narratives.

Smith's approach in considering the institutional model when analyzing episodic structure is informative in considering the episode as a unit of analysis that is critical to

the narrative form of a television programme. However, this form of episodic structural analysis is less suited for investigating programmes in a Middle Eastern context. This is because television in the Middle East lacks distinct institutional models like the subscription-based model of American television and Middle Eastern networks operate as free-to-air satellite channels under the guidelines of the broadcasting country's censorship department. Also, commercial spots are undetermined and writers are uninformed of their placement during pre-production. Thus, unlike western writers where despite working for HBO, their experience is developed from working in cable networks and adopted their writing styles to suit the subscription-based model, Middle Eastern writers developed their experiences while writing serials without determined commercial spots. This is a product of the distinct development of television institutions and programmes in the Middle East. Therefore, investigating how episodes and seasons present and organize storylines permits a thorough understanding of the historical evolution of the programme and the identification of the industrial factors informing such decisions. While the beat and the episode will be investigated thoroughly, the focus of the three case studies will be on the ways in which they organize storylines episodically and throughout the season.

Newman's description of the function of PTS episodes is distinct from the function of episodes within Kuwaiti serials but the episode remains a significant component for analyzing serial narrative programming. The episode as a container of information is essential to the structure of Kuwaiti television serials, where information is revealed episode by episode with each conveying bits of data that make up the narrative whole and conclude storylines by season's end. In this way, identifying the

organization of storylines within episodes and throughout the season permits the assessment of the particularities of a specific form and the evolution of this form in response to the changing television landscape in the Middle East.

Newman's final unit of analysis is significant for not only the construction of the season but also contributes to the thematic development of a storyline's conflict. In PTS programmes, character growth, change, and development are offered throughout episodes and possibly seasons to progress certain plots and connect episodes from storyline perspectives. Unlike dilemmas that pertain to a specific episode, the arc offers dilemmas that are introduced but remain unresolved for multiple episodes to please regular viewers by providing character depth and background. Although PTS arcs form season acts to build towards sweep seasons due to the scheduling nature of airing once a week for months, and to provide possibilities for future seasons, this is inapplicable to Kuwaiti serials, which constitute one season only and are strictly produced for a single month. However, the arc, as will be highlighted, permits the examination of the ways in which storylines are organized and how such organization contributes to characterization. This development of the arc is available for PTS programmes because of their utilization of series and serial characteristics. However, series and serial forms differ in terms of character development and growth.

Series programmes have been highlighted as forms that fail to provide character growth and development (Kozloff, 1992; Thompson, 2003). However, recent academic inquiries have addressed how there are complex strategies utilized to provide character depth in series programming. Roberta Pearson (2007) highlights a taxonomy comprising of six elements for examining character depth in series programmes.

Moreover, Amanda Lotz (2013) utilizes this taxonomy and provides a comprehensive analysis of how specific episodes of series programmes develop themes and provide narrative data that add depth for the rest of the season. Others have also examined how character change in series programmes can be identified and understood by explaining that “When character signs seem consistent, audiences might reasonably interpret character traits and behaviours: when character signs seem inconsistent, audiences might draw the conclusion that the character has changed” (O'Meara, 2015, p. 190). Although this assertion is specifically addressing series types of programmes, it also applies for understanding serial character development. However, some academics argue that characters of continuous serial programmes “Have very little narrative coherence in the sense that their characters do not alter and change with the narrative action” (Coward, 1986, p. 174). Such an explanation applies to Kuwaiti serials from the pre-satellite era and will be examined in greater detail in the *Zawarat Al Khamis* (2010) chapter.

Others insist that characters in closed serial programmes learn and grow (Dunleavy, 2009). This insistence on character development is derived from the notion that serials utilize the character’s movement through plot points and construct a character arc within the form’s closed boundaries. Through this movement, the consistency and inconsistency of character behavior is revealed and can be inferred. Newman describes this as a character’s journey from plot point to plot point (2006). For closed serial programmes to achieve closure and resolve storylines, serial characters must move through these plot points and reach a climax during the season. Therefore, understanding the storyline’s development and thematic proposition requires a thorough

analysis of the character arc. More precisely, Greg M. Smith explains the character arc as a movement from irreversible turning point to irreversible turning point (2006). Although Smith analyzes the aesthetics of arc distribution, his method permits the analyst to identify plot points and characters. Smith clarifies that “Character arcs in serial narratives arrange events, both crucial and less crucial ones, that eventually result in an *irrevocable turning point*, a plot event that fundamentally shifts the basis for all subsequent action by the character” (2006, p. 85). Whether these plot points shift the way characters behave becomes the primary focus of the interpreter. Examining the consistency of the character’s behavior through the development of the arc reveals both the theme meaning that the storyline conveys and character change. With Kuwaiti serials being closed forms, character complexity and change developed gradually over the years. The three case studies address and highlight such developments.

Conclusion

By outlining the critical concepts regarding television production practices, technological and economic impact, industrial constraints, and form characteristics, this chapter has clarified the procedures and considerations that inform the production of television programmes. As discussed above, defining a televisual format requires the consideration of various areas of production that exceed the limits of representation. The assessments presented illuminate the relevant perspectives that identify the relationship between form, content, and institutional constraints in the production of programmes. Thus, the construction and investigation of a televisual format necessitates the consideration of the aforementioned areas discussed. These perspectives will inform and guide the investigative process of this research which will

concentrate on examining Kuwaiti serial forms from three distinct television eras. The next chapter will provide the methodological approach that will guide the investigation.

Methodology

The objective of this chapter is to detail the analytical approaches that will guide the investigation of this research project. By providing an overview of the process of case study selection, the chapter will first foreground the necessary criteria for selecting and investigating case studies from three distinct television production periods. This will be followed by a thorough illustration of specific analytic methods and data collection units for the purpose of conducting a textual analysis of the selected case studies. This research is concerned with investigating the creative practices that inform the construction of these texts, and placing them in their historical and sociocultural context. Therefore, a demonstration of various interview processes will be addressed to highlight the interview methods that will supplement the textual analysis. The first section of this chapter, case study selection, will illustrate the methodological framework for identifying representative case studies. The second section, data collection units and analysis, will provide a detailed account of the methods that will guide this research's investigation. The final section, chapter design and approach, explains how each case study chapter will be formed.

As discussed in the literature review chapter, the television landscape in the Middle East has undergone various alterations to its broadcasting models due to economic, technological, and social and governmental developments. These changes have informed the production of programming and generated distinct narrative formats. Thus, investigating these forms of programming require considering television periodization to highlight representative cases from each transformative production era. In regards to Kuwaiti television, these eras are: the pre-satellite era (1961-1990), which

consisted of state-owned networks and productions (Dajani, 2005; M. M. Kraidy, 2002), the satellite era (1990-2000), which witnessed the rise of satellite technologies, the introduction of privately-owned networks, and an expansion of accessibility (Amin, 2001; Fakhreddine, 2001; Sakr, 1999a, 1999b), and the network proliferation era (2000 onward), which has seen further satellite technology advancements, media cities, and the rapid increase of television networks (Khalil, 2013; M. Kraidy & Khalil, 2009; Sakr, 2007). Due to these developments, Kuwaiti television institutions produced and continued to alter their Ramadanian programming forms to accommodate viewers and compete in an uncertain transformative environment. However, because of space limitations, only one representative case study from each production era is selected for examination.

With Ramadan being the primetime season for television institutions in the Middle East, and with serial dramas permeating the broadcast schedules of networks (M. Kraidy & Khalil, 2009), the objective of this chapter is to focus on select Ramadanian serial cases from Kuwait and distinguish how the format developed during different television periods and to what extent these developments informed the creative production process in Kuwait and reflected cultural change. Due to these transformative developments, Kuwait has produced a distinct narrative format to accommodate the religious behavior of viewers during Ramadan. This format has developed over the aforementioned three television periods. During the pre-satellite era (1961-1990), Kuwait introduced a serial television drama format that consisted of eleven episodes and aired throughout the month of Ramadan. This format introduces its characters and dilemmas in the first couple of episodes, and achieves definite narrative closure in the

final episode. During the satellite era (1990-2000), the format evolved to offer fifteen episodes because of the rise of satellite technologies that gave viewers access to regional networks forming a more competitive television environment. The fifteen-episode format introduces characters and dilemmas during the first episode and airs every other day to increase syndication opportunities and entice the scarce amount of advertisers of the time. Finally, the network proliferation era (2000 onward) introduced the thirty-episode format because of the proliferation of networks that caused an intense competitive environment. Therefore, networks expect serials to fill their daily broadcasting schedule throughout the entire month of Ramadan. However, to select case studies from each of the television eras requires a conceptual framework that distinguishes the representativeness of the case and its status within the abundance of available serials produced.

Case Study Selection

Selecting a television programme as an object for investigation requires the chosen text to be used outside its historical context. Television programmes are culturally significant to their historical broadcast period and interpretive methods must consider the historical placement of a television programme. John Ellis (2007) argues that two interpretive procedures can be considered for television programme selection. These are the textual-historical interpretive method and the immanent reading method. Ellis explains that scholars must consider the combination of both methods for programme selection due to the nature of the television medium and the time of the broadcast of its texts. According to Ellis, “Immanent reading privileges interpretation and the continuing vitality and relevance of the text”, on the other hand, “Textual-historicism

seeks to orient that process of interpretation by referring the text back to the context of its creation" (2007, p. 17). Therefore, combining these approaches when selecting a television programme not only highlights the significant meaning of the programme under investigation, but also relates that meaning to a specific period of time. Thus, studying a television text outside of its historical context becomes problematic because its production was intended for a specific period and neglecting its historical context could alter its intended meaning.

Television programmes are permanently meaningful because, regardless of form, they offer information for particular moments in history. Ellis explains this assertion by offering examples of how comedy shows utilize contemporary references to make meaning for a particular audience in a particular time, and drama programmes expect viewers to comprehend common knowledge relating to its time (broadcasting period). Thus, "The first moment of transmission, like the first release of a cinema film, remains the primary point of reference and the moment of definitive cultural impact" (Ellis, 2007, p. 18). Therefore, when interpreting historical television programmes, the analyst must consider the time and period in which these programmes were made, and the audiences they were made for. For instance, a social issue addressed in a specific form thirty years ago could be addressed in a different form in contemporary programmes. Similarly, a social issue that was considered controversial twenty years ago could be considered conventional in today's programming. Therefore, to prevent problems of misinterpretation, and to mark the significance of a programme for interpretation, "Television studies will need to combine a historical awareness with immanent reading

approaches because of the specific problems of the everydayness of broadcasting and the phenomenon of the temporarily meaningful" (Ellis, 2007, p. 26).

These assertions by Ellis explain a critical perspective on the merits of television programme selection for interpretation. By defining the two forms of interpretation and detailing the reasons for approaching both methods when investigating television programmes, Ellis clarifies the significance of programme meaning to audience comprehension, production context, and the production environment that the programme was formed in. However, other features of a text must also be considered in the process of selecting a television programme for academic interpretation.

Jonathan Bignell offers two insightful studies regarding the features that an investigator must consider before deciding on selecting a programme as a representative object for analysis. Bignell (2005) contends that in order for a programme to be a representative case for analysis, the programme must be both representative and exceptional. The programme must depict a larger history. Thus, the features of the selected programme must detail its prominence and influence upon subsequent texts and highlight its status within the institution it was produced in. Bignell explains that "Such a programme must therefore exceed the range it represents, and be regarded as more than typical as soon as that example is cited instead of the others which could have been chosen" (2005, p. 16).

These features must detail a significant function within the selected programme to justify its selection. Bignell exemplifies "Self-consciousness of medium and reflexivity in a programme's narration, lavish visual textures or uses of color, the remarkable appeal of some of its performers, or its lasting legacy as the inspiration for subsequent

programmes" (2005, p. 21) as features that could be considered for determining programme selection. However, the programme must have an influential status and cannot be easily replaced by another programme. It must function to answer a broader critical question that explicates the context in which it was produced. Thus, the quality of the programme, good or bad, should not function as a determinant for its selection. Rather, the conventions that a programme establishes which inform the construction and understanding of future programmes mark its significance as an object for analysis.

Bignell extends his argument in his article 'Citing the Classics: Constructing British Television Drama History in Publishing and Pedagogy', which concentrates on British television drama's programming canon construction (2007). The article explicates the significance of accessibility when considering a programme for analysis. As Bignell demonstrates, accessibility is an essential component in order for a programme to be an object for analysis. The investigator must both have access and ensure that the programme is available for those interested in his observations. Along with accessibility, Bignell emphasizes the challenges that television's structure and the amount of available programmes present to canon construction. He traces two historically established methods for canon construction in British television drama. Bignell finds that the first canon either continues or changes over the course of television writing and the second canon is highlighted by the published studies that are utilized as reference points or for teaching intentions. Bignell explains the interaction between both canons, "Publication on television drama implicitly select a canonised group of programmes, and those publications themselves become canonical partly because of the programmes they use to ground critical insight" (2007, p. 28). Thus,

there is an established latent canon of programmes that has developed through historical research studies based on various backgrounds such as authorship, quality, and programming form. For the investigator, Bignell notes that avoiding this established canon to focus on a specific programme could be achieved through addressing a form of programming that has been neglected in academic histories. Also, consideration of institutional forces and alterations to production practices can also be approached to highlight how these changes informed the chosen programme for investigation. Therefore, the researcher is able to address a programme of their choosing as long as it is a representative of a phenomenon that influenced the existing conditions of production.

The aforementioned concepts for canon construction and programme selection foreground the critical aspects that researchers must consider for observation purposes. Since this study is concerned with understanding the thematic meanings and narrative forms of serial programmes produced in three distinct eras of television production in Kuwait, setting a criterion for programme selection is necessary to justify the selection of the chosen programmes. Because this study is concerned with the development of a distinct format of television programming, the selected programme functions as representative of its form. Therefore, consideration is given to programmes that established and informed the formulation of subsequent programmes.

Additionally, considerations to accessibility and availability of historical programmes are also addressed. The selected programmes are accessible and available for observation and analytic purposes and are exceptional and representative of their respective eras. Inaccessible or unavailable programmes that complicate or

deter the process of textual analysis are excluded from consideration. Thus, recordings of programmes are available and collected from Kuwait's Ministry of Information. These recordings are also available on DVD and over the internet. Omission of unavailable or inaccessible programmes is based on the significance of the questions under investigation that require a substantial amount of textual analysis to examine and discover data. Because the observations relied on DVD recordings of the programmes, commercial breaks are not included. In this way, identifying where the placement of commercial pods occurred is problematic. However, writers in Kuwait are not informed of where such breaks are to be inserted during the writing stages, and different networks make their own decisions regarding placements. As a result, episodes are written without such knowledge and therefore this research excludes ad break analysis. The textual data is then supplemented by semi-structured interviews to understand both the structure and the construction of themes in the programmes, and the creative practices that informed this construction. Moreover, newspaper articles, academic articles, English accounts of Kuwait's history, and economic and political reports are relied on to provide historical contexts for the interviews and clarify assertions, depictions, and the social and cultural perceptions of the period. These materials are given emphasis because of the scarce amount of Arabic sources available and that many of significant books written about Kuwait's history are in English.

Although the selection of case studies is significant to this research's objectives and aims, acknowledging the conditions of production and the alterations over time will provide context and clarify the issues that informed programme development. As discussed in the literature review, television in Kuwait and the Middle East underwent

various technological transformations. These transformations altered production practices and reception behavior. Until 1990, networks in the Middle East were state-owned with limited accessibility. The lack of satellite technologies created a location-specific audience. Viewers only had access to their state-owned networks. As a result, there was a lack of competition as networks were only able to reach national specific audiences. In this way, a network that broadcasts from a country like Kuwait was only accessible for Kuwaiti viewers. The lack of technological advancements prohibited regional audiences from choosing between regional networks and these conditions influenced how networks targeted their audiences and constructed their programmes. Because of this production environment, this research identifies this era as the pre-satellite era (1961-1990). During this era, networks constructed television serials to provide representations that were specifically designed to address their national audiences.

However, the introduction of satellite technologies in the Middle East occurred in 1990. Although limited in capacity, this change resulted in a shift in the television landscape. Because of this broadcasting change, audiences were able to access other regional networks. This created a competitive environment and Middle Eastern networks began to account for a regional pan-Arab audience. Therefore, television serials were no longer created specifically for a national audience. Instead, the shows considered broader Middle Eastern segments. Because of this technological shift and the impact that this shift had on production conditions, this era is identified as the satellite era (1990-2000).

This change lasted for nearly ten years before the launch of more advanced satellites. These advanced satellites have the capacity to carry an enormous amount of channels in comparison with the limited amount provided during the 1990s. Therefore, many Middle Eastern countries acknowledged the significance that such developments provided. To utilize these technologies for business purposes, Dubai, Jordan, and Egypt started their own media cities to support the growth of privately-owned television networks. These developments encouraged an increase in privately-owned networks and television programming resulting in a proliferated environment. Because of the enormous rise in networks and programme menus, viewers are able to access a considerable amount of networks and programmes. This highly competitive era is referred to in this research as the network proliferation era (2000 onward).

Segmenting Middle Eastern television into these discrete eras permits the investigation of the development of the Kuwaiti Ramadanian serial. This segmentation accounts for the technological advancements that informed economic, production, and reception norms. Each of these technological developments created a shift that informed issues of censorship, accessibility, syndication and narrative design. In fact, these technological developments shifted the television environment and directly informed programme design and accessibility. Because the varying satellite technologies are significant to the development of programming and network decision-making, this segmentation acknowledges the production conditions and the rationale prompting the evolution of the form. Moreover, this periodization model positions each selected case study within its production and reception context. In the process, it notes the impact of network competition on the narrative particularities of programmes.

Although specific technological emergences informed this periodization model, the effects produced by these advancements characterize each production environment and the conventions of narratives.

To examine case studies for the purpose of identifying the representations and narrative conventions of each era, the selected programmes are exceptional and representative of their production environment. The research considers programmes that developed to inform subsequent texts from either a form or a content perspective. Thus, these programmes are exceptional because they are the first shows to address representations in this specific approach. Additionally, these programmes are representative of their narrative form. This approach conforms to the aforementioned critical perspectives provided by Bignell (2005, 2007) and Ellis (2007). These programmes inspired and standardized specific conventions for subsequent texts. This method of programme selection considers the production conditions and contextualizes each programme. In this way, it combines the immanent and textual-historicism approaches. Furthermore, this programme selection approach provides insights on the production practices of each television era and considers the programmes that established particular conventions and norms. Therefore, the selected programmes are chosen because they have generated a cultural and industrial impact.

Al-Aqdar (1977) is the first Ramadanian television programme providing eleven episodes during the pre-satellite era (1961-1990). Due to the television landscape where television networks were state-owned and operated, the Ramadanian model offered fewer episodes, fewer characters, and fewer storylines compared to programmes produced in the satellite and network proliferation eras. However, by being

the first of its form, *Al-Aqdar* informed the subsequent construction of eleven episode serials during Ramadan and initiated the Kuwaiti Ramadanian serial phenomenon. Additionally, the serial represents the social status of prewar society.

During the satellite era, state-owned networks began to experience competition from other regional networks due to access being available as a result of satellite technologies. This shift in the television landscape motivated Kuwaiti producers to further develop the Ramadanian model in an attempt to permeate primetime slots and enhance their chances for syndication. Therefore, the eleven-episode format developed into fifteen episodes. This development altered the form of the narrative and addressed issues that concern postwar society. The serial, *Bo Marzouq* (1992), introduced unprecedented social issues and a development in the social statuses of men and women.

Finally, the chosen case study from the network proliferation era (2000 onward) is *Zwarat Al Khamis* (2010). During this era, competition increased as advanced satellites provided more capacities for networks, the emergence of privately-owned networks, and the rise of media cities across the Middle East. Thus, to permeate and secure primetime slots throughout the month of Ramadan, networks demand serials to broadcast daily for thirty straight days and producers altered the fifteen-episode format by further expanding it to thirty episodes. The expansion offers more storylines and characters than the previous formats. *Zwarat Al Khamis* is a thirty-episode serial and represents social issues that concern contemporary Kuwaiti and GCC audiences. However, the serial also represents both the narrative form during this era and the changes occurring in the social statuses of Kuwaiti families. Since Kuwaiti women

obtained their political rights in 2005, changes to their representations gradually developed in the following years. *Zawarat Al Khamis* is therefore a representative case for both the thirty-episode form which developed in the year 2000, and the changes in the social statuses of men and women in Kuwait. Additionally, the serial exemplifies the contemporary era through addressing Kuwaiti and GCC audiences.

The three selected case studies will each represent their production eras and sociocultural context. The textual analysis concentrates on deconstructing every selected programme to extract their theme meanings, the narrative form and the storytelling strategies permitted by the format's constraints, and highlight the rationale prompting these depictions and decisions. As a result, I watched and noted eleven episodes from the pre-satellite era, fifteen episodes from the satellite era, and thirty episodes from the network proliferation era. In order to deconstruct these episodes, consideration and utilization of specific units for data collection and analysis are required. These units are derived from analytical methods used by television scholars for investigating various forms of programming.

Units of Data Collection and Analysis

The units of data collection and analysis are extracted from studies I have assessed in the literature review chapter. As a data collection unit, the beat is an essential unit that conveys narrative data in serial and series programmes. The narrative of a fictional television programme is constructed in beats that offer portions of data regarding narrative strands and the sum of all available beats formulate the narrative whole. Television writers construct their episodes in beats and viewers comprehend the sequence of events through the revelations that the beats portray. As a

result, the beat is considered and utilized by various academic scholars (Mittell, 2010; Newman, 2006) as the smallest unit of analysis for fictional television programmes. Although narrative beats have been identified differently by various scholars, Newman explains that “Viewers might call these scenes, but writers call them ‘beats’, and they are television’s most basic storytelling unit (2006, p. 17). In this way, the beat in Newman’s terms is synonymous to the traditional scene. This usage is also applied by Anthony N. Smith in his analysis of the episodic structure of *The Sopranos* (2011).

Furthermore, Michael Z. Newman (2006) offers a language for investigating television narrative programmes. Newman’s approach is to foreground how primetime series convey narrative information to viewers. Newman highlights three distinct units of analysis that are applicable to all forms of television series: the beat, the episode, and the arc. At the micro level, Newman details that the beat functions to either provide new story information or remind viewers of previously addressed information. By doing so, the beat only unfolds fractions of narrative information and withholds other fractions of narrative information for subsequent beats throughout the episode or the season. This organization of narrative data into fractions through beats marks the significance of the beat as a unit for data collection. For the purpose of understanding the plot of every storyline in a serial form that distributes storylines across episodes, a detailed deconstruction of narrative beats is required to collect data concerning each storyline, and to detect the construction of themes within storylines. Jason Mittell provides a comprehensive exercise in his analysis of the television programme *Lost* (ABC, 2004-2010) to reveal the construction of storylines through the unfolding of narrative data in beats (2010, p. 258). Mittell demonstrates how meaning is generated by deconstructing

beats from the first nine minutes of *Lost* (ABC, 2004-2010). This demonstration features the function and essentiality of television beats to the construction of a fictional narrative programme. Therefore, to extract and collect narrative data, this research documents every beat within an episode and throughout the season for the permission of storyline analysis. The information provided in every beat is noted to construct the synopses in the chapters and analyze the theme meanings.

Newman's second proposed unit for data collection and analysis is the episode. In Newman's definition, the episode functions to organize narrative data into four dramatic acts. Although Newman observes how the four-act structure operates in an episode, his assessments are strictly concerned with primetime series episodes that operate under the demands of American broadcast networks. However, by analyzing the episode, Newman is able to discover and demonstrate how the episode is organized to engage viewers and convey narrative data. Thus, as a unit of analysis, the episode permits the researcher to investigate its function in various serial or series formats. Where narrative strands occur and disappear can form the basis for analyzing how storylines are constructed in fictional serial programmes. By doing so, the form of the narrative and the progression of storylines can be determined.

The episode is also addressed in other studies as a significant unit of analysis to understand and exploit how different forms of television programmes utilize their episodes to convey narrative data. As highlighted in the literature review, Anthony N. Smith (2011) investigates the distinct episodic form of HBO's *The Sopranos*. Because of the length of the episode and the needless to incorporate commercials, the beats are constructed in unconventional forms. Whereas primetime serials usually construct their

beats in two-minute lengths, episodes from *The Sopranos* are lengthier, which allows detailed moments of emotion and dramatic emphasis. The episode, as a unit of analysis, is also utilized in the analysis of AMC's drama series to demonstrate how they resemble the HBO model despite operating as a basic cable network (Smith, 2013). Moreover, Robin Nelson (2007) examines episodes of the television series *Casualty* and finds that a rapid intercut between storylines is an approach undertaken in response to the shift in industrial demands and the increased level of audience sophistication.

These inquiries offer distinct observations of how to utilize the episode as a unit of analysis to understand the organization of narrative data. To a lesser extent, Geraghty (1981) and Thompson (2003) also consider the episode as a unit necessary to consider when analyzing serial programmes. By considering the creative constraints that these episodes are constructed within, scholars are able to highlight the procedures that inform narrative organization. Despite the different forms of television programmes they investigate, the episode is essential for narrative construction, viewer attention, and the organization of events throughout the entire season. This allows the identification of narrative elements and the overall form.

The final unit of textual analysis is the character arc. This unit is significant to all narrative forms because it concerns the development and growth of characters and is central to the development of thematic meaning. Newman explains that character arcs are overarching and can last for multiple episodes, an entire season, or multiple seasons. According to Newman, "An arc is a character's journey from A through B, C, and D to E" (2006, p. 25). To define this journey for analytic purposes, Greg M. Smith

explains that a character arc “Is a line of character action from irrevocable turning point to irrevocable turning point, extending through the serial narrative” (2006, p. 85). Thus, episodes function to unfold narrative data and orderly present the character’s path. This is applicable in primetime series because they offer serial elements for future sequels. The arc is also applicable to serial formats because character and plot development is essential to understanding narrative meaning. For the analyst to examine the character arc, a thorough interpretation of the character’s behavior in relation to the ongoing events is necessary to understand the meaning that the story conveys about the social issue is presents. If the character moves from one irrevocable plot point to the next, the movement will reach a climax to resolve the storyline and achieve narrative closure. Interpreting this progression conveys meaning about the social issue of the story. This meaning will permit the construction of specific values that the story aims to convey.

H. Porter Abbott explains that “Characters… have agency; they cause things to happen. Conversely, as these people drive the action, they necessary reveal who they are in terms of their motives, their strengths, weaknesses, trustworthiness, capacity to love, hate, cherish, adore deplore and so on. By their actions do we know them” (2002, p. 124). Mittell highlights that “A central element of character is agency, the ability to undertake actions and make choices with narrative consequences; watching characters react to ongoing narrative developments is a main way viewer engage with television stories” (2010, p. 214). Therefore, the character will be analyzed to display how themes are formulated through plot decisions. Also, events are significant for understanding characters. Mittell asserts, “An event must trigger some change in a character’s status to be dramatically significant” (2010, p. 216). Inferring the character’s behavior through

the arc's progression exposes the character's perspective and values. Through the climax, these values are proved and constructed to be dominant and demonstrate the story's thematic meaning. Therefore, consideration for the meaning of character actions and reactions to events are essential for understanding and examining the theme meanings that plots generate. In each chapter, the character's arc and progression through plot points will be analyzed in the theme meaning sections to demonstrate how meaning is constructed through this movement. The consideration will be given to actions, reactions, dialogue, and plot events.

In addition to the above units of data collection and analysis, this research also utilizes semi-structured interviews with programme writers from each television production era. Because the concentration is on different formats and production environments, case studies from the pre-satellite era (1961-1990), the satellite era (1990-2000), and the network proliferation era (2000 onward) require interviewing writers that have worked in these distinct television production periods. The interviews serve to supplement and embolden the textual analysis data in order to understand the reasons informing the construction of the narrative and the social issues conveyed. This approach reveals significant insights into the production practices of the time and further illuminates cultural development across eras.

Because Kuwaiti serials are single authored, the selection of writers is based on their contributions during Ramadan. Writers that have written drama serials for Ramadan are interviewed. To gain interview approval, anonymity of the writers is maintained for ethical and legal purposes and to ensure that their accounts are protected in an authoritarian state. Despite these considerations, some writers refused

to be interviewed. However, the researcher obtained as many interviews as possible from the scarce amount available in a single authored television environment to overcome this difficulty. In total, nine writers have been interviewed with only one working in more than one production era. Each writer is designated with a number and the production era that they have worked in. The interviews were conducted in Arabic and the researcher translated them into English. Through a semi-structured approached, the researcher guided the interview process and concentrated on questions that address the objectives of the research without restricting responses. These steps ensured that the provided responses are relevant for the study, the challenges of conducting interviews are addressed, and that the interviewees and the interview material are secure.

Such an approach has been effective in Lesley Henderson's research (2007). Henderson's attempt is to clarify the reasons influencing creative personnel's decisions about specific depictions concerning social issues in British television soap operas. Henderson emphasizes specific storylines within soap operas that have been continuously broadcasting for years. Her concentration is on social issue selection rather than thematic meaning of storylines. That is what the storyline is intended to convey about social issues. The objective of her research is to examine the process of decision making between creative personnel rather than the themes that different programmes from different eras convey and the significance of that conveyance to a specific culture.

However, Henderson's interview procedure is useful for investigating creative processes in the television production industry. This is highlighted in her research where

she finds that factors such as storyline generation, casting and characterization, suspense and narrative pace, the pursuit of outside agencies for advice, the significance of broadcasting timeslot, and production constraints inform the construction of social issue related storylines. The essentiality of her approach is the factors that require consideration for an analyst to construct interview questions. Despite her concentration on interviews as a primary method of data collection and analysis, combining this method with other interview methods for analysis supports the investigative procedure concerning this research.

Constructing interview questions for understanding the process of narrative construction is also essential for the investigative procedure. Other scholars have utilized interviews with creative personnel as a primary interpretive method. Joy V. Fuqua used interview material to supplement his textual analysis and demonstrate the rationale prompting the decision of producers and writers to suddenly suspend a soap opera storyline without providing a narrative explanation (1995). Christa Salamandra interviewed Syrian writers to unravel the industrial and political demands informing their decisions regarding storylines and representations (2008, 2010, 2011).

For the purpose of this research, interviews are conducted to investigate an era of production at the national level rather than a specific series or network. Only Salamandra from the aforementioned scholars has focused her interviews on a national production industry during a specific era. Henderson and Fuqua's interview methods are based on their selection of specific soap operas. However, Salamandra's selected interview method concerns Syrian dramas during the satellite and the network proliferation eras. This form of interview selection is beneficial for a production industry

where programmes require approval from the state's censorship department and are usually written and produced by a single writer. Unlike western programmes where there is a writing room that consists of multiple writers involved in a single programme, Middle Eastern programmes rely on a single writer for each programme. Therefore, to cover a representative amount of writers for a single era, consideration is given for their availability and eligibility. Because different eras vary in the amount of productions produced, the amount of writers working also varies. With these considerations, the researcher is able to obtain as many representative interviews as possible. Additionally, because Kuwait is an authoritarian state and anonymity is essential for interview approval, this research will mark each interviewee with a number. Interviewees will also be marked with the era that they have worked in. For instance, an interviewee from the pre-satellite era will be represented in the chapter as Writer #, pre-satellite era. This is applied to all interviewees from all eras.

This approach permits an examination of single eras and an overall comparison between eras in the limited time available for this study to be completed. In this way, only writers that have written Kuwaiti serial dramas for Ramadan are considered. Although some writers refused to be interviewed despite the ensured anonymity of the material, the study accumulates a sufficient representative amount. From the pre-satellite era, three writers have been interviewed, two writers from the satellite era, and four writers from the network proliferation era. In total, nine semi-structured interviews are conducted. Two writers have worked in more than one era. Therefore, their accounts are considered for the eras that they have worked in. Moreover, the interviews are conducted in Arabic and translated into English by the investigator.

The semi-structured interview questions aim to understand how and why specific social issues and thematic meanings are developed, and the factors and considerations that inform the construction of Kuwaiti serials from different eras. In this way, a section for questions regarding social issue construction is generated. Additionally, another section for questions regarding narrative forms and elements is also provided. However, the applicability of interview material is utilized as supplemental for the textual analysis in a similar form to the aforementioned scholars. This combination of interview material contributes to the collection and analysis process of every case study under investigation. The sections where the interview questions are utilized are the sociocultural context and narrative forms. The researcher generated interview questions during the initial stages of the textual analysis and continued to develop interview questions as the analysis proceeded. In this way, the researcher was able to thoroughly investigate each scrutinized case. Questions primarily focus on social issues, theme development, narrative construction and industrial constraints (see Appendices for interview questions).

Chapter Design and Approach

The various identified units of data collection and analysis along with interview materials form the foundation for observing the three case study chapters. Therefore, each chapter will be divided into five sections.

The first section is the introduction, which introduces the case study. The second section is the list of characters. This section provides a detailed account of the characters, their relationships, and their occupations. The third section consists of synopses and theme analyses. Each storyline is marked with a letter for distinguishing

purposes only. Every storyline synopsis will be followed by the storyline's thematic analysis. The fourth section provides a sociocultural analysis to demonstrate the rationale behind these depictions and meanings and contextualize the era. The final section is the narrative form section. In this section, the analysis concentrates on the elements of the narrative and the reasons for their integration.

For the theme analysis, the researcher identifies the protagonist of the storyline, the protagonist's wants, and illustrates how the protagonist's arc develops to construct theme meaning about the social issue that the storyline addresses. Through character actions and reactions, social issues are examined to demonstrate the conveyed social values. This clarifies the values incorporated and circulated in programmes from each television production era. In this section, the character arc and the six elements offered by Pearson are utilized to extract the theme meanings for each storyline.

For the sociocultural analysis, the researcher textually interprets the social statuses of characters and their positioning in the narrative. This textual interpretation is supplemented by interpretations of the interview material. The researcher identifies commonalities and differences among the responses provided by the interviewees to highlight the rationale prompting the available depictions, social issues, and theme meanings. Additionally, other primary sources such as books, newspaper articles, and reports are used to illustrate the economic, political, and social situation of each era and provide context for depictions and interview material. This clarifies how and why male and female characters are positioned within the narrative, why such positions are portrayed in the programme, and to what extent are they reflective of Kuwaiti society of the time. Therefore, in this section, the extracted theme meanings, social issues,

characters and interview material are central to the analyses. This establishes the cultural and societal changes during each era and highlights how such changes inform the provided depictions. Because there are few histories of Kuwait available in English, the section will also utilize newspapers articles, journal and electronic articles, and Arabic sources in the analysis.

For the narrative form section, the researcher interprets the interweaving of storylines and the narrative elements utilized to construct these storylines across the season. Additionally, interpreting character development and change to distinguish characterization in every era is also significant to the analysis. This is supplemented by analyses of the interview material to explain the decision making process under specific industrial constraints. As a result, the character, beat, episode, and interview material are the primary units of analysis for this section. The section highlights how industrial changes inform the narrative form and the selection and incorporation of various elements.

Because serials from the pre-satellite and the satellite era are only eleven and fifteen episodes in length, their chapters are shorter than the serial from the network proliferation era which is thirty episodes in length. Also, the final case study provides an overall comparison between all three case studies to highlight the changes that have occurred and developed over time.

Conclusion

This chapter has covered the methodological concepts and laid out the conceptual framework that guides the investigation of three distinct Kuwaiti television production eras. The provided methods are practical for investigating the constitution of

the conventions of three distinct Ramadanian serial formats. Although each format differs from narrative, themes, and social issue perspectives, these methods are applicable for understanding and answering the questions of the research project. The objective is to define each format from each television production era and to highlight how themes and social issues have developed over time. As discussed, this requires an investigation of the selected case studies from a textual perspective combined with semi-structured interviews to illustrate the production practices that informed the textual construction of the object under investigation. Therefore, this chapter has formulated a model that is executed in each of case study chapters to generate findings and conclusions. This methodological approach is distinct because it addresses both the creative practices that lead to the construction of television programmes, and the deconstruction of portrayals within television programmes. The uniqueness of this approach is its applicability to three transformative television production eras. Also, this approach permits the understanding and detection of the reasons that television programmes are designed in, and how the development of these methods altered format conventions over the years. In this way, production practices of each era are examined and the evolution across eras is noted. The next chapter will now begin with the pre-satellite era.

The Pre-Satellite Era: *Al-Aqdar* (1977)

With a focus on the television serial *Al-Aqdar* (1977), this chapter represents Ramadan serials from the pre-satellite era (1961-1990). During this era, television institutions were state-owned and limited in number. Therefore, serial drama productions relied on syndication as the primary source of revenue and Kuwait produced one Ramadanian serial each year. These serial productions were eleven episodes in length and each episode lasts for forty-five minutes. *Al-Aqdar* was the first Ramadan television serial in Kuwait. By providing eleven episodes that address family and money, and an intertwining of four storylines, *Al-Aqdar* introduced this Ramadan serial phenomenon that became a standard production for many years to come. Narrative wise, *Al-Aqdar* offers fewer characters and develops fewer storylines at a time than subsequent case studies, and offers the least amount of weekly episodes. Storylines are constructed within eleven episodes with only three episodes airings per week. By providing fewer episodes, a limited number of storylines and characters, and fewer broadcasts per week, *Al-Aqdar* permit intervals, in terms of broadcast days, between episodes, with storylines progressing in a linear form.

This chapter will first list the characters involved in *Al-Aqdar* and then describe their relationships. The descriptions will aid the following section where storyline synopsis and theme analysis will be conducted. The synopses will provide a summary of events and actions concerning each of the four storylines. The theme analysis will highlight how meaning is generated to form the overall thematic argument for each storyline. After identifying the themes for each storyline, the sociocultural context section will then highlight the social statuses for male and female characters and detail

the political, economic, and industrial practices informing these positions and meanings. Finally, the narrative form section will analyze the interweaving of storylines and the creative decisions made to illustrate how and why this form developed under specific industrial demands of the time.

Al-Aqdar offers four storylines that address issues of family and money. The serial is set in two time periods: late 1950s and 1970s. Out of the four available storylines, two storylines extend across both time periods. They both begin in the 1950s and resolve in the second part of the serial during the 1970s. One storyline begins and resolves in the 1950s, and the last storyline begins and resolves in the 1970s. This construction is designed with an eighteen year narrative ellipsis that occurs in episode seven. The serial concentrates on conflicts between Khalifa and his brother Eisa, Khalifa and his brother-in-law Homoud, Khalifa and his wives, and Bader and Homoud. Each storyline addresses social issues to thematically convey meanings that concern family values. Before providing synopses and theme analyses, the following section will list characters, highlight their occupations, and relations.

List of Characters

Aisha	college student and Eisa's only daughter.
Bader	business manager at Khalifa's company, the son of Sebecha and the stepson of Khalifa.
Bin Eidan	sailor who works for Bo Suliman.
Bo Abdulrahman	business owner from Bahrain and Maryam's father.
Bo Sulaiman	wealthy business owner.

Eisa	business owner, the younger brother of Khalifa, Maryam's husband, and Aisha's father.
Homoud	corrupt business owner, Munira's brother, and Khalifa's brother-in-law.
Khalifa	business owner, the older brother of Eisa and the husband of Munira, Sebecha, and Najat.
Maro'ob	worker at Khalifa's store.
Maryam	Eisa's wife.
Munira	Homoud's sister and Khalifa's first wife.
Najat	Khalifa's third wife.
Sebecha	Bader's mother and Khalifa's second wife.

With characters identified, the next section will detail storyline synopses and offer brief analyses for their themes. The synopses will provide a summary of the major plot points for each storyline. Each synopsis will then be followed by the theme analysis that examines the plot points to foreground their thematic meaning.

Story Synopses and Theme Analyses

This section will first summarize each narrative strand and then provide a detailed analysis of its theme. For the purpose of distinguishing between storylines, each storyline will be assigned a letter. However, the letters are not in a chronological order of importance of the storylines. The purpose is to separate each narrative strand to aid the analytical process in extracting plot points and developing the theme meaning for each storyline. Therefore, the letters are ascribed solely to distinguish storylines.

Storyline A Synopsis

Khalifa's inability to have a child is at the forefront of this storyline's conflict. Khalifa is infertile but blames his wife Munira for their inability to have children without any medical proof. Because of that, Khalifa goes on to marry a second wife in an attempt to have his own child and solve the problem. Therefore, Khalifa marries Sebecha and becomes her son's (Bader) stepfather. However, Munira disagrees with his marriage to Sebecha and they decide to separate without getting a divorce. Munira moves to live with her brother Homoud, and Khalifa abandons her completely before deciding to divorce her after disputing with Homoud over her money. However, Khalifa fails to have a child with Sebecha and blames her for being infertile despite the fact that Sebecha has a child from her previous marriage, Bader. Khalifa then goes on to separate from Sebecha without divorcing her.

After his separation from Sebecha during the narrative ellipsis, Khalifa marries a third wife, Najat, in order to finally have his own child. Najat fakes her pregnancy, deceives Khalifa, and benefits by having Khalifa grant her some of his wealth. Fearing that Sebecha and Bader could ask for the wealth if Khalifa dies, Najat insists that Khalifa divorces Sebecha which he does.

Khalifa then starts to feel ill. He then receives a letter from Eisa confirming that Eisa is alive and that and Aisha is his daughter. Therefore, Khalifa informs Najat that the money he owns belongs to his brother and that he could end up losing it. After learning that the wealth is actually Eisa's, Najat then tells Khalifa that she faked her pregnancy and is willing to get a divorce. The revelation shocks Khalifa and he immediately divorces Najat for deceiving him. Khalifa's symptoms worsen due to this revelation and

he is then moved to the hospital for critical care. At the hospital, Khalifa apologizes to Sebecha and Bader for not being there for them, and apologizes to his brother Eisa for taking his money. Khalifa then dies at the hospital.

Storyline A Theme Analysis

Unlike the remainder of storylines where business and money form the basis for the development of their themes, this storyline is concerned with what constitutes a healthy marriage, and the fact that family is more than just having a child. It is thematically conveying that through a healthy relationship with a wife, there is potential for building a healthy family. This discussion is amplified through Khalifa's behavior and goals.

One reason for his failure to have a healthy relationship with his wives is self-deception. In his first marriage, Khalifa deceives himself by claiming that Munira is infertile without any medical proof. Thus, he bases his decision to marry another wife, Sebecha, on this self-deception. However, his second marriage suggests that the inability to have a child is his problem and not his wife's. Because Munira did not have a child, this second marriage is the perfect chance for Khalifa to have a healthy relationship with his wife, help parent her son, and have a family. Khalifa again deceives himself and blames Sebecha for being infertile despite the fact that Sebecha has Bader from her previous marriage. Clearly, Khalifa is failing to acknowledge that having a family is more than just having a child. By magnifying his failure to understand what constitutes a family, the story highlights that his priority is the child rather than the potential mother of the child. Therefore, Khalifa is unconcerned about the mother and is ignorant about his own condition.

However, his inability to identify good wives from bad wives is also at the forefront of his flaws. Khalifa abandons a good wife like Sebecha, who is concerned about Bader and her husband, and marries a woman who is only concerned about money, Najat. This obsession with having his own child prevents him from identifying the ideal woman that he could have a healthy family with. Instead of taking care of Sebecha and her son and seeking medical attention for his infertility, Khalifa engages in this third marriage. When he finally acknowledges that he left the only family he had and failed to have a child with his third wife, the thematic argument of the story is revealed. Thematically, the story conveys that having a family requires having a relationship with the wife and building a family through that relationship. By constantly blaming his wives for his condition, Khalifa fails to establish a healthy relationship with them. Had he refrained from blaming Munira and pursued medical attention, the outcome could have been different. Also, had he done the same thing with Sebecha and Bader, Khalifa could have kept the only family he had and used Sebecha as proof that he needed medical attention.

Storyline B Synopsis

Storyline B concerns family and money. After acknowledging that Khalifa's store is struggling to generate revenue, Eisa reaches a deal with Bo Sulaiman that guarantees revenue by paying upfront regardless of what happens to the awaited shipments. Khalifa learns that a deal between Eisa and Bo Sulaiman has been made without his permission, and therefore he immediately cancels the deal and fires Eisa. The decision to cancel the deal and fire Eisa is motivated by Khalifa's fear of losing control of the store to Eisa, who is the true owner but is unaware of his ownership.

Eisa then finds an opportunity to work on Bin Eidan's ship. They sail to Bahrain and Eisa stays there for a short span to collect products for their second trip back home. However, Eisa does not board the ship on its way back to Kuwait. Later, Bin Eidan sails back to Kuwait and on its way, the ship sinks and all crew members die. Khalifa learns of the shipwreck, assumes Eisa was on it, and holds a funeral for his death. Because of the shipwreck, Eisa finds it difficult to return home and decides to work in Bahrain. Eisa then meets a Bahraini business owner, Bo Abdulrahman, and proposes to marry his daughter Maryam. Bo Abdulrahman agrees and Eisa marries Maryam who later gives birth to their only daughter, Aisha.

After an eighteen year time lapse, Aisha, Eisa's only daughter, graduates from high school and desires to go to college in Kuwait along with her high school friends. At first, Eisa rejects Aisha's move to Kuwait but changes his mind when he learns that she is hurt and saddened by his decision. However, concerned for his daughter being abroad, Eisa decides to write a note to his brother Khalifa and have Aisha deliver it. In the note, Eisa informs Khalifa that he is alive and asks him to take care of Aisha.

Aisha moves to Kuwait and delivers the note to Khalifa. After reading the note, Khalifa realizes that Eisa has been alive all along. Khalifa is shocked by the revelation but treats Aisha well and ensures that Bader takes care of her. However, Khalifa becomes worried about losing the wealth he has once Eisa decides to return to Kuwait because it belongs to Eisa. After becoming ill from Najat's pregnancy revelation, Khalifa asks Aisha to tell her father that he wishes to see him. Aisha informs Eisa and he flies to Kuwait. Eisa visits the hospital where Khalifa is staying and Khalifa apologizes to Eisa for concealing that the wealth he owns belongs to Eisa. Khalifa dies after apologizing

and revealing the truth about the ownership of the wealth. Although Eisa reclaims the wealth, he immediately passes it over to Bader and Aisha to ensure that the newlyweds are secure economically.

Storyline B Theme Analysis:

The concentration on a conflict between family members over money provides one of thematic variations of the serial. In this case, the thematic meaning delivers an argument that highlights the prosperity of family members that prioritize family over money. In the process, it also highlights that characters that prioritize money over family end up losing both.

In the case of prioritizing family over money, Eisa is the character that constantly cares and accounts for his family members. For instance, the decision to make a business deal with Bo Sulaiman and save the store is an indication that Eisa, who believes that the store belongs to Khalifa, cares for the wellbeing of his brother's business. The behavior highlights that this character undertakes decisions that could help other family members. In contrast, Khalifa cancels the deal just for the sake of controlling the store and preventing Eisa from making decisions that concern the business. Moreover, Eisa's decision to allow his daughter to study in Kuwait and communicate with his brother for the sake of his daughter is another indication of his care for family. In fact, the decision to fly back to Kuwait eighteen years later when his brother asks to see him highlights that money for Eisa was never an issue. Had he been concerned with money, he would have ignored Khalifa's request to see him after being fired by Khalifa years earlier. However, Eisa's return highlights that this character is always concerned about his family members and money is never prioritized. Even the

family members that mistreat him, such as Khalifa, are forgiven. Finally, the prioritization of family over money is established when Eisa immediately passes over the wealth to Bader and Aisha to ensure that his daughter is cared for and economically secure. Had he been prioritizing money, Eisa would have kept the money instead.

Because of this prioritization of family over money, Eisa is with his wife, daughter, and son-in-law. In contrast, Khalifa is alone at the hospital regretting and apologizing for his family members. Therefore, thematically the storyline is contending that the wisdom of prioritizing family over money ultimately leads to family prosperity.

Storyline C Synopsis:

The conflict of storyline C is another variation on money and family. The conflict is between family members Homoud, Khalifa, and Munira. After marrying Sebecha, Munira objects. As a result, Khalifa tells her to live with her brother Homoud if she is unhappy with his decision. Munira moves to Homoud's home and tells him that she loaned Khalifa her money to help with his struggling store. Homoud then approaches Khalifa and tells him that Munira demands her money back. Because Khalifa has abandoned Munira, he never learns whether she did or did not demand her money back and this allows Homoud to deceive Khalifa without Munira's knowledge.

Munira becomes extremely ill after moving in with Homoud. Therefore, Homoud takes advantage of Munira's illness and separation from Khalifa and constantly tells Khalifa that Munira hates him and demands her money back. However, Khalifa refuses to return the money since he never divorced Munira. Because Khalifa fails to return the loaned money, Homoud informs the police and they transfer the ownership of the entire store to Homoud.

Khalifa then finds out about Bin Eidan's shipwreck and assumes that Eisa is dead. Therefore, he files a lawsuit against Homoud asking for the store back because Eisa is the actual owner and Khalifa is his only brother. The court rules the transfer of the store back to Khalifa and the money back to Homoud and Munira. After regaining ownership of his store, Khalifa divorces Munira.

Storyline C Theme Analysis:

Unlike the previous storyline where the prioritization of family over money is the focal point of the argument, this storyline does the opposite. The prioritization of money over family is the storyline's main concentration. The theme meaning here conveys that there is no benefit in prioritizing money over family. Characters that undertake this position fail to benefit in relation to both money and family.

All three characters in this storyline take decisions that put money first and family second. Munira initiates the conflict by telling her brother about loaning her husband the money. Thus, she betrays her husband by revealing such information. She could have reconciled with her husband had she not revealed such information. On the other hand, Homoud took advantage of this information and pursued the money and the store. This highlights his greed and his willingness to take his sister's money and his brother-in-law's store. Finally, Khalifa abandons his wife and refuses to return the money. Had he approached Munira, he could have found out that Homoud was deceiving him about her feelings and demand for the money back. Therefore, the three characters are concerned with the money regardless of what happens to the family.

The end result is that they all fail to achieve their goals. Munira is divorced as a result of the information she revealed to Homoud. Khalifa only gets his store back and

loses Munira's money. Homoud only gets Munira's money without the store. Not only do they all not get what they endeavored for, but the entire family separates and they all go in different directions as a result of their preference for money. The family breaks up and their money goals are not accomplished.

Storyline D Synopsis:

The final storyline of the serial concerns Bader and Homoud's masonry factory conflict. Working as a company manager for Khalifa, Bader is approached by Homoud to unite efforts and build a masonry factory. Because of its potential, Bader brings the project to Khalifa's attention and persuades him to undertake it. Despite their past history, Khalifa agrees and partners Homoud to build the factory together.

Despite this accomplishment and hard work, Bader is unappreciated and underpaid by Khalifa. However, Bader finds out that Homoud is forging Khalifa's signature in order to sell the factory without Khalifa's knowledge. Bader confronts Homoud to stop him for forging signatures and selling the factory. Homoud requests that Bader joins him in selling the factory, stealing company assets, and sharing the money. Bader rejects Homoud's offer and files a lawsuit on behalf of Khalifa against Homoud.

Bader then meets and proposes to marry Aisha. Eisa agrees to their marriage but postpones it until after the court ruling in regards to the lawsuit filed against Homoud. The court rules in favor of Bader and sentences Homoud to jail. Eisa passes the company to Bader and both Bader and Aisha marry.

Storyline D Theme Analysis:

In this storyline, the conflict provides another variation on family and money. However, family loyalty is magnified in the process to provide a theme meaning that negotiates the consequences of such loyalty that family is more important than money.

Unlike Homoud, who tries to steal from Munira and Khalifa earlier in the serial and attempts to do the same thing again in this storyline, Bader is loyal to his family regardless of how he is treated and despite being an ex step son. His loyalty is highlighted in multiple instances throughout. Firstly, he undertakes the project for its business potential despite being underpaid by Khalifa. Secondly, he tries to stop Homoud from forging and stealing assets. Finally, he files a lawsuit to save Khalifa's company. In each one of these instances, Bader is making a decision that benefits Khalifa. Had Bader been disloyal, he would have been less concerned with the masonry factory since he is underpaid. Moreover, he would have decided to join Homoud instead of filing a lawsuit against him. However, the decision to file the lawsuit is where Bader's loyalty to his family is highlighted the most. This decision conveys that for the underpaid and underappreciated Bader, family is more important than money. The outcome of the lawsuit and the passing of the company to Bader is where the natural justice of the storyline occurs because his loyalty to Eisa is indirect and the passing of the money is an indirect consequence of his decision.

In contrast to Bader, Homoud is given another chance by Khalifa after their first conflict settled in court earlier in the serial. Despite having this chance and being trusted by Bader and Khalifa, he again tries to steal money. Thus, for Homoud money is more important than family. The consequence for his theft is going to jail but the issue is once

again prioritizing money over family. Unlike Homoud, Bader is an extremely loyal person and this loyalty to his family indirectly results in gaining the money and marrying Aisha.

This section provided the synopses and thematic analyses of the four available storylines. The next section will provide contextual analyses to clarify why such meanings are presented during this era.

Sociocultural Context

The time periods that the serial depicts mark two distinct transitional eras for Kuwaiti society, the 1950s and 1970s. After the discovery of oil in the late 1930s, Kuwaiti society began to slowly adopt a modernized capitalist form of life. The oil boom that informed the transitional period for society began in the early 1950s. The British protectorate ended in 1961 and the constitution of Kuwait came into effect in 1962. Following these developments, Kuwait University launched in 1966 as the country's first four year college. Institutions and ministries began to form during this transitional period. Thus, Kuwaiti society moved from a difficult life style that relied heavily on trade with other countries for economic flow to a modern era that featured an establishment of institutions and an oil driven economy (Al-Nakib, 2016). During this time, political changes had also occurred and informed government policies and social developments.

These developments and transitions are evident in how *Al-Aqdar* positions family and money in its narrative. The serial emphasizes the ways in which money informs conflicts between family members. By doing so, this strategy encourages the preference of family over money. This is specifically evident in the thematic meanings where storylines develop to foreground the prevalence of one over the other. Through the thematic discussions of the storylines, the serial raises questions about family and

positions characters in a decision making process that either risks family or money. Characters that sacrifice money for the sake of keeping family are rewarded. Other characters that risk family for the sake of money are punished. In this way, the serial elucidates the flourishing economic situation but reinforces traditional tribal and national values about family. These values revolve around the overarching structure of the state. These tribal values maintain that “Families are patriarchal corporations (senior men are the final authorities)” (Tétreault , Rizzo, & Shultziner, 2012, p. 256) and are significant and central to the identity, status, and careers of individuals. Moreover, “Kuwaiti nationalism is based on the concept of *al-usra al-wahida*, the single or united family, adopted as a symbol of the nation in the early 1970s to promote national cohesion” (Tétreault & al-Mughni, 1995, p. 407). This emphasis on national cohesion resulted from the economic and political changes arising from modernization as it influenced the structure of families (Al-Nakib, 2016) and the Arab nationalist ideology spreading across the Middle East which threatened the social structure and the government’s legitimacy (Ismael, 1982; Tétreault et al., 2012). This legitimacy is derived from the country’s origins during the tribal settlements. These settlements formed the governmental structure by selecting a ruling family with a male leader (Ismael, 1982). Furthermore, the concept of the united family “Resonates with mythic idealizations of the old tribal families of the Arabian peninsula, in which everyone took care of everyone else and all lived securely under the protective wing of the family patriarch” (Tétreault & al-Mughni, 1995, p. 407). This explains the serial’s emphasis on establishing the ideal patriarch. Through the four primary male characters, the serial discusses what constitutes a suitable patriarch in Kuwaiti families. Usually, this patriarch prioritizes family over money

and acknowledges his leadership role and responsibilities towards his family members. Also, the emphasis on patriarchs leading their families highlights that this form of family is not only the ideal form but also the subordination of women within the family is the norm. This portrayal of women characters will be analyzed later in the section but the serial's conveyance of males leading families reflects the dominant cultural assumptions about Kuwaiti families and the initiative in enforcing these assumptions.

Because this era lacked accessibility and competition from other networks, social issues and values specifically addressed local Kuwaiti audiences. One interviewee insists that "Social values must always reflect society. This was the intention when writing. The idea is that this was a Kuwaiti serial that must reflect Kuwaiti society and appeal to this society" (Writer 3, Pre-Satellite Era).

The serial's concentration on economics addresses the transition that was taking place during this era and how a flourishing economy was influencing social relations and family structures. Before the oil boom in the early 1950s, society in Kuwait struggled economically. Muhamad Olimat asserts that "In the pre-oil era, Kuwait was a small port on the Northern tip of Arabia with limited resources. In the era of independence, Kuwait was a vibrant society empowered by a modernizing monarch – Amir Abdullah Assalim Assubah (r: 1950-1965), a vibrant government, and abundance of oil wealth" (2009, p. 199). This era lasted until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Al-Nakib notes that "The improved standard of living enjoyed by the majority of citizens concealed the fact that social relations in Kuwait were actually deteriorating rapidly" (2016, p. 174). Thus, the traditional tribal familial structure that define Kuwaiti families

and the government's structure were threatened by these ongoing political and economic shifts.

With the undergoing economic shift providing rising resources that were directed at modernizing the local economy and the living standards of society (Hewins, 1963), changes to the traditional familial structure was discouraged. The government aimed at keeping a traditional patriarchal family structure that formed from its historical tribal culture. Through the Social Policies Committee, media institutions were "Asked to promote family values based on obedience to the male head of household" (Tétreault & al-Mughni, 1995, p. 407). As a result, what writers contend to be social norms of the time were informed by economic and political influence and the state's national interest. With a flourishing economy and an improvement in living standards, television serials presented storylines that not only address patriarchal families but also encourage and reinforce this form. For the government, keeping the status quo prevents social disintegration and legitimizes its structure. At the time, even education in Kuwait endorsed the traditional beliefs of Islamic principles and ensured that these principles become the form of thinking and life, enlightened students to the history and evolution of traditional Kuwaiti society, and attempted to strengthen cooperation and brotherly ties in the spirit of one family (Al-Dekhayel, 2000). Kamal Al-Manufy's research reveals that education school books in Kuwait encouraged gender inequality and the superiority of males over females (1988).

"Social values, principles, and traditions should be considered before making a decision when writing about an issue. This is how I made my characters and storylines function" (Writer 2, Pre-Satellite Era). This assertion by the writer explains that there is

an insistence on traditional values of the time regardless of the changes being imposed by modernization. With family relations being central to the serial's conflicts, a particular familial construction is presented. There is also a conveyance of family values and a representation of the Kuwaiti family as a nuclear family. When identifying the Kuwaiti family, a writer discussing storyline development explains, "All families unite at the end and are usually blood related like a traditional Kuwaiti family" (Writer 1, Pre-Satellite Era). This description and the emphasis on revolving storylines around family in *Al-Aqdar* reflect a specific representation of Kuwaiti society at the time. During this period, the majority of families in Kuwait were nuclear families. A study shows that 59% of Kuwaiti families were nuclear and only 22% were extended families. The remaining are termed quasi-extended families and were only 19% of the population (Al-Thakeb, 1985). In this way, a specific family structure is presented based on the type utilized by the majority of the population. This change in family structure occurred after the oil boom. Before the oil boom, the extended family was the dominant structure (Alanezi, 2018). This highlights the progression occurring within society. Although there is an insistence on tribal and traditional representations of family (the extended family), the serial depicts nuclear families. Resisting this progression would fail to reflect the society that the serial is made for and although writers insisted on traditional representations, this insistence concentrates on who the head of the household is rather than the shape of the family itself. In an era where viewers were specifically Kuwaitis and national cohesion is significant, addressing the majority and acknowledging the change is uncontroversial when the patriarch is the leading central figure of the family. This approach ensures that these reflections are remarkable and appealing. In fact, one writer explains that "It

depends on the era that the social issue is being represented in. The era is significant because cultural perspectives change. Social norms change and determine the construction of issues" (Writer 2, Pre-Satellite Era). This explanation highlights the acknowledgement and consideration given for social acceptance during the era.

This is exemplified in how the serial addresses the issue of polygamy in storyline A. The serial is able to provide a specific representation that resonates with Kuwaiti social beliefs of the time. The storyline does not prohibit the practice of polygamy but argues that polygamy, which is a traditional religious practice and is legalized in Kuwait (Chaleby, 1985), fails to keep or build a family. This is a significant representation of a religiously legal practice but writers were able to address polygamy in this form because the practice was unpopular amongst the majority of Kuwaiti society. During this period, research shows that only 9.6% of Kuwaitis practiced polygamy (Al-Thakeb, 1985). Although the storyline A's thematic meaning is about Khalifa's failure to keep a family and thinks only about having his own child without giving any consideration to the women he marries, his constant practice of polygamy fails to help his case. At the time, writers did not account for viewers in other Muslim countries where this perspective about a religious right could be deemed controversial. This is because, unlike later eras where technological advancements and accessibility allowed viewers from other countries to directly access Kuwaiti serials in a competitive environment, access during this era was mainly local. Although syndication is the primary source of revenue, the scarcity of productions and the need for other regional networks to fill their broadcast schedules gave writers the freedom to ignore recommendations from other countries and address issues from a Kuwaiti perspective (Writer 4, Pre-Satellite Era). As a result,

writers were concerned with how Kuwaiti viewers feel about social issues. This is emphasized by one of the writers, “I considered Kuwaiti viewers and society. Their acceptance and reaction to dialogue, scenes, and conflicts were always considered in my writing” (Writer 2, Pre-Satellite Era).

As evidenced in the storylines presented in *Al-Aqdar*, social issues are carefully constructed to also reflect specific values about work ethics. Because the majority of the workforce consisted of foreign labor, the Kuwaiti government utilized various projects to encourage Kuwaitis to enter the labor market instead of relying on the government for housing, health, education, and other social services (Ismael, 1982; Tétreault & al-Mughni, 1995). This is highlighted in the character arcs of Eisa, Bader, and Homoud. Eisa’s concern for his brother’s business is highlighted when he makes a business deal with Bo Sulaiman to save their store. Bader, who is underpaid and underappreciated by Khalifa, remains loyal, honest, and faithful to his job and his family. Despite their struggles, their work integrity and honesty prevail. Both characters are able to establish families and become successful in their occupations. In contrast, Homoud goes to jail for being dishonest by forging checks and stealing money from his partner. In a way, these characters exemplify work ethics and support the notion of labor force participation for men.

However, the serial explores these values in relation to male characters only. In this way, the serial provides a specific representation about the status and social position of female characters. The characters responsible for the decision to either keep, build, or disintegrate families are males. Their decisions are essential to storyline developments. They are directly involved in the process and dictate the fate of female

characters. Khalifa decides to marry new women to have a child, Homoud decides to deceive Khalifa to take his sister's money, Eisa decides to allow his daughter to study in Kuwait, and Bader decides to marry Aisha with the approval of her father. In this way, female characters operate under the control and guardianship of male characters. Without these decisions, made by male characters, keeping, building, and establishing family fail to materialize in the narrative. It is through these characters that the structure of the Kuwaiti family functions in the serial. When a woman leaves one family, in the case of Munira, she moves to another family that is lead by another male character. The same applies to Sebecha, who lives with her son after separating from Khalifa, and Aisha who moves from her father's guardianship to her husband's.

Moreover, these characters are presented as housewives without any participation in the family's economics. This representation highlights their status during this era. According to al-Mughni, Kuwaiti women were secluded and oppressed during the pre-oil era, and although there were slight improvements after the oil boom, they continue "To be defined as mothers, wives and daughters, and to be placed under the authority of men" (al-Mughni, 1993, p. 61). Their lack of economic participation during this era is a result of economic growth. Although there was a slight change in terms of economic participation for women, "The coexistence of the traditional and modern in some aspects of living patterns and attitudes is a hindrance to the complete social and political emancipation of women as well as their wide participation in the whole range of economic activities" (Nath, 1978, p. 186). With a flourishing economy, and "Given its abundant wealth, the country has little need to mobilize human resource capitol for purposes of economic development or to consider the promotion of cultural change as a

mechanism for increasing productivity and growth" (Sanad & Tessler, 1988, p. 444). Therefore, the role of women remained that of housewives and the in terms of education, "The primary motivation for a woman to obtain education is to enhance her desirability as a wife and mother but in a manner that does not disturb the traditional structure of the family" (Meleis, El-Sanabary, & Diane, 1979, p. 123), which is reflected in the character arc of Aisha.

This economic growth, coupled with the rise of Islamist movements that advocated for traditional Islamic values that impose women subordination and the Arab nationalist movements advocating for more women rights across the Middle East, prompted the government to support the Islamists and encourage traditional values to legitimize its status and refrain from changes that could benefit Arab nationalist governments (al-Mughni, 1993). In fact, the Kuwaiti Women's Union, which featured two women's rights organizations, AWDS and WCSS, was dissolved, and its leader, Nouria Al-Sadani, was stripped of her citizenship for endorsing Arab nationalist ideals (Tétreault et al., 2012). This political need to subordinate women and enforce the patriarchal family was culturally and nationally significant. As a result, "Loyalty, to the patriarchal family became, in the 1970s, analogous to loyalty to the ruling family, making the preservation of the patriarchal family a political issue" (Tétreault & al-Mughni, 1995, p. 407).

For writers, constructing families in this form appeals to the majority of Kuwaiti audiences, ensures approval from the censorship department, refrains from creating controversy and negative reactions, and endorsing national values. A writer explains that "Families disputing over economics would attract viewers without offending anyone

and such conflicts were encouraged by the censorship department" (Writer 3, Pre-Satellite Era). With the single patriarchal family being central to the country's nationalism, positioning this form of family in situations of risk or reward through the narrative not only encourages this patriarchal structure but supports Kuwaiti nationalism. In this way, the narrative is promoting a specific form of nationalism that only the protagonists, Bader and Eisa, will achieve. Failure to create or keep family, such as the case with Khalifa, is in a way a failure to be Kuwaiti, or to be part of this society and culture. For writers, this is the most significant form of presenting social issues, as an interviewee explains, "The most important storylines I have written are the ones concerning the loss of family. I think they were significant because of the value of family to our society" (Writer 3, Pre-Satellite Era). Therefore, promoting Kuwaiti nationalism through patriarchal centered families with women being subordinate in these families is a method utilized to address the concerns of Kuwaiti society, legitimize the status of the Kuwaiti government, and reinstate the cultural assumptions derived from society's tribal and Islamic traditions.

This section detailed the sociocultural context of the pre-satellite era. The economic, political, and industrial factors informing the social positions of male and female characters within the serial's construction of the Kuwaiti family have been highlighted. The next section provides a thorough analysis of the narrative form of serials during the pre-satellite era.

Narrative Form

This section will detail how the eleven episode serial of the pre-satellite era interweaves four storylines throughout the season. The assessment will focus on each

of the four storylines to clarify their utilization in the development of episodes and the ways in which these episodes construct the season. The analysis will clarify how and why the serial is produced in this specific form and the extent of industrial constraints on narrative construction during Ramadan in the pre-satellite era.

The narrative form of *Al-Aqdar* utilizes an eighteen year narrative ellipsis to distribute the plot points of four storylines, reintroduce the same characters with different occupations and develop new storylines and characters, and resolve the ongoing storylines. This strategy is accomplished by presenting four distinct storylines. These are the season-long storylines (Storylines A and B), the temporary storyline (Storyline C), and the deferred storyline (Storyline D).

The four storylines presented are interwoven during episodes and across the season to avoid extensive concentration on any single storyline and permit the development and repackaging of characters to pursue new conflicts. Some storylines initiate and achieve closure at different stages. Three storylines initiate in the first episode and one storyline initiates in episode seven. One of the three storylines achieves closure in episode seven and the remaining storylines achieve closure during the final episode of the season, episode eleven. These storylines are manipulated by a narrative ellipsis.

With an eighteen year time lapse that occurs in the seventh episode, this narrative ellipsis functions to reestablish some characters and introduce new characters and conflicts. In this way, the serial is able to reintroduce the same characters with different occupations to engage in conflicts with the new characters. Characters such as Homoud reemerge after the eighteen year time lapse as a business man to develop

storyline D with Bader. Also, the eighteen year time lapse allows Bader's character to grow from childhood to adulthood and become a manager at Khalifa's company and navigate his own arc. Without this time lapse, initiating a conflict for storyline D becomes logically problematic. Moreover, the time lapse makes it possible for the growth of Bader's character from childhood to adulthood and introduce Khalifa's third wife, Najat in order to resolve storyline A. The time lapse also serves storyline A's meaning. Through its manipulation, Khalifa is displayed as a wealthy business owner who has abandoned his second wife for years and married a new wife in hope of having his own child.

This narrative ellipsis permits a distinct distribution of the four available storylines. The first form of storylines is the temporary storyline. This storyline (Storyline C) initiates in the first episode and resolves slightly past the midpoint of the season in episode seven. Thus, the storyline's plot points are constantly presented in the first seven episodes with episode two being the only exception. This narrative construction of the temporary storyline (Storyline C) offers a mid-season resolution. The serial distributes its storylines and resolves storyline C past the midway point and before the narrative ellipsis to establish Bader's character and the deferred storyline (Storyline D). Therefore, once storyline C achieves closure, the serial launches storyline D as its replacement. In this way, there are always three ongoing storylines at any one time. This limited ongoing amount of storylines is motivated by the concern for the level of viewer sophistication during this era. One writer insists that "Too many storylines in a serial could lose viewers. Ideally, it was better to have a limited number of storylines to avoid losing viewer attention" (Writer 1, Pre-Satellite Era).

By only providing two to three storylines per episode, the beats are designed to not only offer progression but also character depth. Thus, these beats are extremely lengthy in comparison with serials from other television eras. In *Al-Aqdar*, beats during this era were approximately seven minutes in length. Usually, these beats would offer a significant amount of character dialogue to reveal motivation and depth. For instance, some revelations of specific events required a lengthy conversation between characters. Through these conversations, character values and positions are highlighted. Although this also happens in later eras, but the conversations are short and beat lengths are brief. In this way, *Al-Aqdar* is able to address the level of audience sophistication by providing a gradual development of events through in depth explorations and distribute two to three storylines without rapidly revealing narrative data.

This form of storyline distribution is motivated by the lack of industrial constraints in an experimental era. At the time, syndication was the primary source of revenue but the amount of productions made for Ramadan was scarce (Writer 3, Pre-Satellite Era). Additionally, viewers were only able to access their state-owned networks and the programming that these networks aired (Ayish, 2000; Schleifer, 1998). As a result, the need to revisit all storylines in every episode to keep viewers from switching to other networks was unnecessary. In fact, writers dealt with unsophisticated audiences in a television landscape that lacked serial competition. One interviewee explains, “During the pre-satellite era, writers and productions were scarce which made it easier to get a script into production. Networks pursued scripts and writers to ensure that they had something produced for Ramadan” (Writer 3, Pre-Satellite Era). Because networks

prioritized having content without the need to compete with other networks, there was less emphasis on interweaving storylines in a specific form. The possibility for viewers to switch to different channels and select other serial programmes did not exist, and the potential for writers to select how and when to visit their storylines is more plausible. One interviewee elaborates,

> The organization of storylines was decided while I was writing. After I finished writing, I read my pages and decided where to revisit a specific storyline and where to suspend a storyline. It is about how I felt more than a pre-planned strategy (Writer 1, Pre-Satellite Era).

The assertion implicates the possibility and entitlement provided to writers when deciding on storyline organization during the pre-satellite era. Moreover, it highlights that this form of storyline distribution, where one of the main protagonists engages in a storyline past the midway point of the season, and the option to interweave storylines throughout the season is left to the writers. One writer insists, “I never faced any constraints regarding narrative form from networks. Networks were usually concerned with filling airtime than storyline structures” (Writer 2, Pre-Satellite Era). For the serial to provide four storylines in eleven episodes, developing three at a time with a limited amount of characters permits the development of the available characters and provides enough episodic space for storyline progression. Therefore, ending one storyline offers narrative space to initiate a new storyline in a limited amount of episodes. This also explains the inconsistency in storyline presentation during episodes. Although there are two to three storylines addressed during an episode, the focus varies between episodes. An interviewee explains that “Some storylines would disappear for one or two episodes. I looked at my script pages and when I saw that a storyline had disappeared

for a couple of episodes; I revisited that storyline in the subsequent episode" (Writer 1, Pre-Satellite Era). This is described by another interviewee as a balancing strategy,

> I tried to offer a variation of storylines in an episode. I also aimed to leave out some storylines to avoid an excessive amount occurring in my episodes. By avoiding the storyline overload, I invited viewers back to subsequent episodes for the missing storylines. It was a balancing strategy (Writer 2, Pre-Satellite Era).

Therefore, for the writers, switching episodic focus prevents the exhaustion of any specific storyline and invokes audience interest. Also, it allows them to progress the storylines they aim to end or introduce at specific stages of the season. Despite the serialization of storylines, some storylines are suspended during an episode and others emerge to occupy the majority of narrative progression. In this way, two storylines are usually presented and the third is occasional. This distribution then shifts with the third occupying the majority of an episode or two along with one of the first two. For instance, when storyline D is introduced in episode seven, it occupies the majority of the remaining episodes along with storyline A. In the process, storyline B becomes the least visited. By doing so, the writers are able to utilize the narrative ellipsis to logically resolve storyline C and establish storyline D, utilize enough narrative space for storyline investment, continue to develop storylines A and B, and withhold audience interest until the final episode of the season where storylines A, B, and D achieve closure at Ramadan's end. Thus, despite the seasonal constraints charted by the holy month, the limited amount of episodes and the scarce amount of productions along with the lack of accessibility and competition made it possible for writers to shift the episodic and seasonal focus of storylines and organize these strands more freely.

With this section providing analyses to highlight the form in which the pre-satellite era serial interweaves storylines throughout the season, the next section will recap the findings of this chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has concentrated on the theme meanings, sociocultural context, and narrative forms during the pre-satellite era. The findings suggest that social issues during this era concern the conditions of society during the oil boom and the status of family and state nationalism. This is represented in the themes that the four storylines portrayed. Conflicts are mainly concerned with family and money. The themes conveyed various meanings that amplify family values with patriarchs as leaders and women as subordinate in the social structure of the Kuwaiti family.

With these reflections being central to this era, the factors that contributed to the writing process during this era are highlighted. The role of the television institution in constructing these social issues in correspondence with the country's plans and vision towards modernization and the political pressures occurring from the rise of the Arab nationalist movement is clarified. Storylines contributed to the reflection of social issues that reinforce the traditional values derived from society's tribal origins despite these ongoing challenges to legitimize the governmental and promote the state's national interest that align with the Islamic movements at the time.

Lastly, the chapter investigated the form of the serial's narrative to discern the eleven episode format that initiated the Ramadanian model. Four storylines are provided with two ongoing story arcs. A temporary storyline, a deferred storyline, and two season-long storylines are utilized. However, only three storylines occupy the

narrative at a given time. The temporary storyline ends in episode seven and the narrative space is then provided to the deferred storyline which initiates in episode seven. The season-long storylines occur sporadically throughout the season. This form of storylines distribution is available because of the limitation of industrial constraints during an era where productions are scarce and competition was non-existent.

This chapter illuminated the themes inherent in serials during the pre-satellite era, highlighted the factors that contributed to the construction of these themes, and examined the narrative form of these constructions. The following chapter will investigate the development of this Ramadanian form by concentrating on the satellite era (1990-2000).

The Satellite Era: *Bo Marzouq* (1992)

The focus of this chapter is on a representative case study from the satellite era (1990-2000). In this period, Kuwaiti television serials expanded the number of episodes to fifteen episodes per season. Episodes would broadcast every other day during Ramadan until the serial achieved its narrative closure. This expansion in the number of episodes and alteration to its broadcasting was addressed in response to the changing television landscape. The change occurred after the initiation of satellite technologies. Satellite technologies offered access to viewers across the region and enabled the initiation of privately-owned networks. As a result, television institutions confronted an increase in competition from across the Middle East and serials were no longer produced by government-owned networks alone. Because of the access that satellite technologies provided, viewers were able to access networks from other Middle Eastern nations. The increase in competition informed the way Kuwaiti producers developed this fifteen episode format. Rather than providing three episodes per week, as was the convention of the pre-satellite era, producers decided to increase the amount of episodes for syndication purposes. Also, the amount of serials produced during this era increased to two per Ramadan.

This chapter's case study, *Bo Marzouq* (1992), is the first fifteen episode serial during this era with each episode being fifty minutes in length. Because Kuwait was invaded by Iraq during the years of 1990 and 1991, television serial production halted during this period. However, production continued after the liberation of Kuwait in 1991. By providing fifteen episodes, *Bo Marzouq* presents a longer narrative form than the previous era. By offering more episodes, a wider range of characters, and a different

approach of interweaving storylines, *Bo Marzouq* is a distinct serial form that departs from the conventions of previous Ramadanian serials and standardizing this fifteen episode serial model.

As with the structure of the previous case study chapter, this chapter will first provide a characters list to clarify the roles of characters, their occupations, and relationships. These descriptions will facilitate the following section where storyline synopses and theme analyses will be provided. Firstly, the synopses will consist of brief storyline summaries. Each synopsis will then be followed by a theme analysis to deconstruct the inherent meaning that the storyline presents about social issues. Following this section is the sociocultural section where a thorough contextual analysis of how and why these meanings are constructed and what they reflect about Kuwaiti society and the television institution during the satellite era. Finally, the narrative form section will provide analyses to highlight the impact of satellite technologies and regional audiences upon the development of this fifteen episode format and how this form marks a distinction from the conventional form of the pre-satellite era.

Bo Marzouq offers four storylines that address family relations and economic participation. The serial is structured to present Kuwait during the 1990s and address social issues in relation to the status of the country at the time. Storylines typically initiate in the first couple of episodes and achieve closure in the final episode of the season. The conflicts occur between family members and friends. The serial presents issues about family economics, parenting, and marriage relationships. The following section describes the characters and their relationships.

List of Character

Azhar	wealthy business woman and the wife of Marzouq.
Bo Adel	the retired husband of Huda and business partner and friend of Bo Marzouq.
Bo Marzouq	the retired husband of Om Marzouq and the father of Marzouq and Nora.
Fawaz	the son of Jasem and Nora.
Huda	the wife of Bo Adel.
Jasem	the husband of Nora and the father of Fawaz.
Leila	the maid at Jasem and Nora's residence.
Marzouq	the son of Bo Marzouq and Om Marzouq, the brother of Nora, and the husband of Azhar.
Nora	the wife of Jasem and the mother of Fawaz, the daughter of Bo Marzouq and Om Marzouq, and the sister of Marzouq.
Om Marzouq	the wife of Bo Marzouq and the mother of Marzouq and Nora.
Om Majed	Huda's friend and business partner.

The next section will provide a brief synopsis for each storyline and then analyze these synopses to reveal their theme meanings.

Story Synopses and Theme Analyses

This section will provide each storyline a letter to identify the storyline and help separate it from other storylines. The letters do not indicate a primacy for any of the storylines but are strictly assigned for identification purposes only. The structure will

present a storyline synopsis that is followed by its theme analysis before moving onto the next storyline.

Storyline A Synopsis

The first storyline of the serial concerns the family of Bo Marzouq, his retirement, and his businesses with Bo Adel. Bo Marzouq acknowledges that his son, Marzouq, is suspended from high school and hits him for it. Later, Bo Marzouq is forced to retire from work because of his age. After retirement, Om Marzouq asks Bo Marzouq to spend time with his family but he rejects her request. Bo Marzouq feels that he can still work and disagrees with the forced retirement. Bo Marzouq then decides to partner his retired friend Bo Adel by buying a car and becoming a taxi driver.

Bo Marzouq and Bo Adel discover that their taxi is struggling and it is a daunting business. Despite the struggle, they continue to work until Bo Marzouq becomes involved in a car accident that crushes their cab. However, they both survive the accident with minor injuries. After the accident, Om Marzouq insists that Bo Marzouq is too old to work and should spend time with his family. However, Bo Marzouq rejects her and decides to partner Bo Adel in a real estate business.

Their real estate business struggles and Bo Marzouq develops dizziness symptoms from the car accident. Instead of resting, Bo Marzouq continues to work at his real estate office. After learning that his son Marzouq married Azhar without informing him, Bo Marzouq faints. Both Bo Marzouq and Om Marzouq decide to stop speaking with Marzouq until he divorces Azhar. However, Bo Marzouq decides to reconcile with Marzouq for business purposes. Bo Marzouq is then visited by Azhar at his office and she informs him about Marzouq abusing her, his intention to marry

another woman, and steal her money. After hearing of his son's troubles with his wife, Bo Marzouq has a heart attack. After leaving the hospital, Bo Marzouq demands that Marzouq returns Azhar's money. Marzouq complies with his father's demands, returns Azhar's money, and divorces her. Bo Marzouq decides to stay home, spend time with his family, and have his son Marzouq manage the real estate office.

Storyline A Theme Analysis

The aim of this storyline is to position the patriarch's work and family needs in opposition. By doing so, the conflict generates a challenge for the patriarch that highlights his significance to his family and illuminates the issue of fatherhood. In this way, the storyline is able to develop a theme that explores the familial difficulties emerging from the patriarch's views on pride and work. These views are examined to provide a theme meaning proposing that fatherhood exceeds work at a certain stage in life.

To illustrate the character's concentration on work rather than family needs, the story establishes a belief demonstrated through Bo Marzouq's behavior. Work for Bo Marzouq is a priority. This is highlighted in Bo Marzouq's response to his retirement. After being informed that his employer signed off on his retirement without his permission, he insists on proving that he is still able to work. Therefore, Bo Marzouq's pursuance of work is a way for him to demonstrate that he is still capable of working and that the retirement decision by his employer is a mistake. This is exemplified in his insistence on finding work. After retiring, Bo Marzouq decides to partner his friend Bo Adul and start a taxi firm. Clearly, the character is willing to establish a business for the sake of working rather than retiring and spending time with his family. Another example

of this prioritization is the insistence on working despite his health concerns and the firm's failure. For instance, Bo Marzouq crashes the taxi and begins developing health issues that impact his daily activities, but he immediately opens a real estate office instead of monitoring his health condition. In this way, the character goal is demonstrated.

These health issues begin to challenge Bo Marzouq's ability to work and illuminate his flaws as a character. These flaws exist in his inability to recognize his family's needs and his inability to perform at work. The storyline is thus able to expose these flaws to emphasize a need for character change. This change is then established to magnify the need for him to look after his son. For instance, when he learns that Marzouq has been suspended from school, he proceeds to hit him rather than address the situation. In this way, the event highlights Marzouq's immaturity and the father's inability to address it in a form that would solve the problem. He also fails to address Marzouq for his ill-advised decision of marrying Azhar without informing his family and only decides to stop speaking with his son. However, once a work opportunity arises, Bo Marzouq decides to speak with his son again. This is demonstrated when his real estate office receives an offer that requires the rental of a building. Bo Marzouq approaches Marzouq for a building with specific characteristics. This clarifies that the father is willing to speak again with his son for the benefit of his work, and that he fails to address his son's ill-advised decisions. These events demonstrate the character's inability to recognize the son's immaturity and the need for his father's guidance. Therefore, the story is demonstrating that in his pursuit of his goal, Bo Marzouq is disregarding his family's needs.

However, the results of the character's flaws emphasize the need for fatherhood. Bo Marzouq fails to realize this need until he learns that the son is corrupt. In this way, he learns that his son's immaturity has reached a level that could ruin the son's life. This revelation motivates a change in behavior. Not only does the revelation of the son's corruptness bring Bo Marzouq to a realization of the need to father his son but the heart attack he encounters brings him to the realization that he is incapable of the tasks required by his real estate office. The heart attack is a sign that his health is worsening. These events motivate the change in Bo Marzouq's character. As a result, he guides Marzouq to grant Azhar a divorce and return her money. Also, he grants Marzouq the management of the real estate office and decides to retire. Clearly, the character's behavior towards his son's problems altered. This change highlights that Bo Marzouq's notion about work is inapplicable to his circumstances. The circumstances being that he has a son who is in need of his father's guidance to proceed with his life and stay out of trouble. In this way, the storyline is affirming that at this stage in his life and with a son that needs mentoring, the patriarch is to retire and guide his son.

This storyline presented the issue of fatherhood through a conflict that centered on the protagonist's pursuance of work and disregard to his family's needs. Through the protagonist's goal and flaws, the story establishes the need to address his personal health issues and his son's immaturity. In this way, the story provides a theme meaning elaborating that the patriarch is to guide his son and prepare him for overtaking the family's financial responsibilities. However, this meaning refers to a specific patriarch who is incapable of shouldering the workload due to health issues and not an overarching theme meaning alluding to all patriarchs.

Storyline B Synopsis

Storyline B is about the marriage between Bo Adel and his wife Huda. Bo Adel is retired and the couple is living on a limited budget. However, Huda's friend, Om Majed, proposes a business partnership with Huda (tailor shop). Huda asks Bo Adel to help her with the required amount but he refuses and decides to have his own business with Bo Marzouq. Huda visits Om Marzouq and Nora and asks them to stop Bo Marzouq from partnering Bo Adel because she wants the money her husband will invest with Bo Marzouq. Huda then offers the money she has to Om Majed but is rejected because the amount is low. Nora then decides to help Huda with the amount and Huda accepts. Huda begins working at Om Majed's tailor shop. Huda starts to do well at work and makes enough money to pay Nora back the borrowed amount.

Because Huda is spending most of her day at work, Bo Adel disagrees with her working. However, Huda's work is paying off and she is able to help Bo Adel with groceries and hires a house maid. Bo Adel is happy about these services. Later, Nora offers to have her own tailor shop with Huda. Huda accepts Nora's offer and leaves Om Majed's shop to work with Nora. However, Nora then informs Huda that Jasem is against the tailor shop idea and she will not be pursuing it. Huda goes back to Om Majed and asks for her job back but Om Majed refuses to have her back. Days later, Om Majed asks Huda to return to the tailor shop and when Huda returns, she finds that Om Majed is struggling to manage the shop and attract customers. Huda takes over and the business flourishes again. Bo Adel then asks Huda for money because his business is struggling. Huda supports Bo Adel with the money he needs and he finally agrees that his wife working is the right decision.

Storyline B Theme Analysis

This storyline debates the issues of patriarchy and economic necessity. The conflict revolves around Bu Adel's refusal to accept having his wife Huda support the family. This refusal is derived from his perception about women as housewives and the role of the patriarch in addressing the family's economic needs. By challenging this patriarchal belief through economic need, the theme meaning that this storyline proposes is that economic necessity surpasses patriarchy when the wife's contribution is needed and the couple is without children to parent.

The storyline demonstrates the family's economic struggle through Bo Adel's behavior of constantly saving and informing his wife about their need to save money. Moreover, the storyline establishes Bo Adel's patriarchal belief through his control of the family's economics and refusal to have his wife contribute. This is exemplified when Huda asks to borrow money in order to pursue a business partnership with Om Majed. In this way, the story establishes that Bo Adel is governing the family's economics and determining what to do with their finances. Through Huda and Bu Adel's behaviors, the story is displaying that Bo Adel is against the idea of having his wife economically contribute to the family.

However, the economic struggle and the belief that the wife is better situated as a housewife motivate the character to pursue a business partnership with his friend. At the same time, the economic struggle motivates the wife to pursue a business partnership regardless. These events highlight the challenges that Bo Adel is confronting. On one hand, he needs to support his family. On the other hand, his wife is making efforts to do the same thing.

Despite this approach, his businesses continue to fail and his wife succeeds at her sewing shop. This is exemplified when the taxi firm is lost due to a car accident and when the real estate office struggles to generate revenue. Clearly, the patriarch's attempts to support his family are failing. However, the wife succeeds in borrowing money from a friend and works well enough to support the family. As a result, she begins taking care of their spending by hiring a maid and providing groceries. In this way, the belief that the wife is better off as a housewife rather than a participant in the family's economics is challenged. The economic need that drove both members of the family to pursue careers is testing the validity of Bo Adel's belief and the story's positioning of patriarchy. This belief begins to change once he responds in approval to the bettering of their financial situation. This is highlighted when he praises Huda for hiring a maid and improving their life. Evidently, the character is in the process of diverging from his belief that his wife is best suited as a housewife and adheres to this new situation. Obviously, the acceptance is a product of his struggle to support the couple the way Huda is.

Up to this point, the story is highlighting Huda as an economic contributor and Bo Adel is still rejecting the idea. To magnify the significance of economic need and the wife's work, the story presents a dispute that forces Huda to leave her job. Following the dispute, both Huda and Bo Adel are devastated from the outcome. Clearly, Bo Adel's position has changed from his earlier stance of disapproval of the wife's work due to economic need. Where the storyline affirms its theme meaning is when Huda returns to work, the real estate office struggles to generate revenue, and Bo Adel is forced to ask Huda for money. Thus, while her support only helped their financial situation earlier, her

support is now essential for their economic survival. Also, the change in Bo Adel's behavior is noticeable. From refusing to have his wife work and governing their finances to the inability to support the family and needing the wife to do so, this behavioral change verifies the significance of economic necessity. It also highlights how the notion that a patriarch must govern his family's finances is circumstantial and that when economic necessity is present, the wife should be able to support the family as long as the patriarch remains the head of the household, which is manifested in her decision to give him money instead of leaving him.

Through Bo Adel's economic struggles, the storyline presents a meaning that magnifies the wife's support for economic survival when there are no children that the wife needs to mother. Therefore, the story highlights that when the patriarch is confronted with economic need and without a child to parent, it is acceptable for the wife to contribute economically. In this way, these circumstances develop a conditional perspective that encourages the wife to support the needy patriarch and contribute to the finances of the household.

Storyline C Synopsis

This storyline concerns Marzouq's conflict with his wife Azhar. Marzouq is suspended from high school for being regularly absent and late to class. Jasem hires Marzouq at his real estate company. After receiving his first salary, Marzouq skips work and travels without informing anyone. Jasem acknowledges Marzouq's absence from work and fires him. However, Om Marzouq asks Jasem to rehire Marzouq and he meets her wishes. Jasem then assigns Marzouq the task of managing one of their client's

properties, Azhar. Marzouq rents Azhar's building and calls to inform her. Azhar is impressed with Marzouq's handling of her properties.

Marzouq then asks Azhar out for dinner and she accepts. Marzouq offers Azhar a new project. Azhar likes the project, pays for it, and wants Marzouq to manage it. Marzouq then notices Jasem visiting Azhar's house. Marzouq then tells Azhar that he likes her and enjoys her company.

Marzouq tells Om Marzouq that Jasem is cheating on Nora with Azhar. This causes a dispute between Jasem and Nora. To hire Marzouq, Azhar demands that Marzouq attains permission from Jasem and tell Nora the truth about the incident. Marzouq apologizes to Jasem and Nora and explains that he was wrong about Jasem and Azhar. Marzouq then begins working for Azhar. While managing Azhar's private properties, Marzouq decides to sell one of her lands but she tells him to wait. Marzouq then tells Jasem that he wants to sell him the land without informing Azhar but Jasem rejects the idea.

Marzouq leaves Azhar a note stating that he loves her. After reading the note, Marzouq and Azhar get married without informing his family. Marzouq then apologizes to his family for marrying Azhar without their knowledge but refuses their suggestion to divorce her. Now married to Azhar, Marzouq informs Jasem that he has a power of attorney and full control of Azhar's properties and that Jasem should deal with Marzouq directly without Azhar's permission.

Bo Marzouq informs Marzouq about his office's need of a building consisting of forty offices to be able to undertake a government project. Marzouq agrees to offer his father a building that Azhar owns. However, Azhar refuses to sell the building to Bo

Marzouq's real estate office. Azhar then visits Jasem to check on one of her lands and Jasem informs her of Marzouq's power of attorney. Azhar is shocked and tells Jasem that she never gave Marzouq power of attorney. Azhar then searches Marzouq's file cabinet and finds a forged power of attorney. Marzouq learns that Azhar searched his files, starts to harass her, and demands full control of her wealth. Azhar asks Marzouq to divorce her but he refuses. Azhar then visits Bo Marzouq's office and begs him to force Marzouq to divorce her. Marzouq informs Azhar that he is willing to divorce her if she relinquishes one of her lands. Azhar accepts and signs a paper to relinquish the land. Bo Marzouq forces Marzouq to divorce Azhar. Marzouq tells his father that he divorced Azhar but Bo Marzouq insists he returns the land and Marzouq promises to do so.

Storyline C Theme Analysis

By establishing Azhar as a wealthy widow that endures an unsettling marriage because of a conflict that revolves around her money, the storyline debates the relationship between a woman, her money, and the threat of a corrupt husband benefiting from the patriarchal system. This emphasis is developed through Azhar's relationship with her husband Marzouq and his intent to take her money. The storyline positions Azhar in situations that challenge her possession of money. By doing so, the theme meaning of this storyline asserts that in the case where the husband is corrupt and there is no child to parent, it is acceptable for a woman to divorce, be independent, and govern her money.

The storyline highlights Azhar's wealth by having Jasem's company manage her properties. Also, Jasem's company refers back to Azhar whenever a decision is to be

made about her properties. In this way, the character's exceptional ability and involvement in making and evaluating business decisions about her wealth is highlighted. She decides which properties are available for rent, and which properties are available for sale. Clearly, this female character is in control of her money. However, this control is threatened and challenged by a corrupt husband.

Azhar is exceptional at assessing business opportunities but fails in assessing her soon to be husband, Marzouq. She is vulnerable and can be deceived because of her focus on money, which she relies on to evaluate Marzouq. Her vulnerability occurs when she believes that Marzouq loves her. Thus, her attraction to Marzouq creates her constant misjudgments until her wealth is threatened.

Azhar's misreading of Marzouq is highlighted in three different incidents. All three events foreground that she is emotionally naïve and that Marzouq is a corrupt character. The first incident is lying about Jasem and Azhar's affair and only telling the truth under the condition that he works for her. The second incident is marrying her without informing his family. The third incident is forging a power of attorney to control her money, which occurs after their marriage. Azhar fails to identify that this character is interested in the money. For instance, the lie about her affair with Jasem was set up to stop Jasem from handling Azhar's projects. The marriage without his family's knowledge was intended to avoid any opinions or rejections about the marriage that will grant him money. The forging of the power of attorney is a way for him to govern her money without her knowledge. These three events establish the corruptness of the character and his fondness for money. At the same time, they establish Azhar's

incompleteness in assessing these situations, which is a product of her attraction to him.

After the marriage, Marzouq seizes the opportunity and assumes control by behaving like the owner of the wealth. He makes business decisions without her permission. For instance, he tells Jasem that he is in control of all projects and that he should be dealt with directly without referring to Azhar. Also, he agrees to offer his father a building before gaining Azhar's permission. Thus, the character is imposing and benefiting from the patriarchal system. This imposition threatens the wife's control of her wealth.

Although Azhar discovers that Marzouq forged a power of attorney to dictate her wealth, this discovery is motivated by her interest in business projects rather than a proper assessment of the corrupt husband. This is highlighted when she visits Jasem's office to check on the market and inquire about new opportunities for investing. During the visit, Jasem displays his surprise and tells her that he expects Marzouq to inquire and undertake such tasks because of the power of attorney that he possesses. The revelation shocks Azhar who then proceeds to her house, searches Marzouq's office, and finds the forged power of attorney. The discovery brings the character to a realization that the husband is corrupt and that his love claims are false. Therefore, it is Azhar's interest in business opportunities that leads to the revelation of Marzouq's corruptness. In this way, the threat to her wealth is the key determinant that brings the character to this awareness which clearly confirms that the husband is corrupt and a threat to her wealth.

This threat is emphasized when Azhar requests a divorce from Marzouq. Here the character is explicitly manifesting the significance of her wealth. The willingness to separate from a corrupt husband is proposing that under these circumstances, it is better to separate than to remain in a marriage that risks the continuity of her control of the wealth. Marzouq's refusal to divorce is further indication that the character, who is now in control of the money, achieved his true objective and is benefiting from this patriarchal system. To further emphasize the need to separate from this situation, Azhar asks Bo Marzouq to compel Marzouq, which he does. Also, she agrees to Marzouq's request and relinquishes one of her lands. These incidents verify that she is being punished for her emotional naivety and that separating to remain in control of her wealth is the proper means when confronted by the threat of a corrupt husband that is benefiting from patriarchy. The divorce demand and realization of Marzouq's corruption by Bo Marzouq validates the proposition that it is acceptable for this woman to govern her own wealth. However, this proposition is determined by the non-corrupt patriarch, Bo Marzouq. Therefore, the storyline asserts that a woman's relationship with her wealth is determined and approved by the patriarch. However, Azhar and Marzouq are also married without children. Thus, the corrupt husband and being without children are the circumstances provided by this storyline. In this way, the storyline is able to provide a variant circumstance in the development of the theme's meaning.

By marking Marzouq as corrupt and threatening to his wife's control of her wealth, this storyline emphasized the relationship between a woman, her money, and her husband. It created a conflict that highlights a dispute between a rich widow and a deceitful individual. By challenging the woman through obstacles that threaten her

wealth, the storyline resolves in a form that implies that it is acceptable for a woman without children to separate from a corrupt husband and, with the patriarch's approval, control her money.

Storyline D Synopsis

Storyline D concerns the conflict between Jasem and his wife Nora. Jasem learns that Nora relies on the house maid to take care of Fawaz. Jasem tells Nora to take care of Fawaz instead of relying on the house maid. Jasem then realizes that Fawaz is struggling to speak Arabic properly and complains about Nora's lack of attention towards Fawaz, and her failure at teaching him.

Nora, trying to speak on the phone, is irritated by Fawaz's loud noise while playing with his toys. Nora tells the maid to take Fawaz to the park so she can speak on the phone. On his way to the park, Fawaz is hit by a car. Jasem brings Fawaz home from the hospital and is reliefed that his son is alright. Nora then decides to partner Huda in a tailor shop without informing Jasem. Nora then leaves Fawaz at home with the maid and visits Huda at the tailor shop. Jasem returns home and discovers that the maid is wearing Nora's clothes and using her products. Jasem decides to fire the maid but Nora insists that he should not.

Nora tells Jasem that she would like to work instead of staying home but he rejects because he is providing economic stability. Nora then learns from her mother that Jasem visited Azhar's house and accuses him of cheating on her. Nora decides to leave her house and stay with her family. Later, Nora is informed by Marzouq that he lied about Jasem and Azhar. After learning the truth, Nora reconciles with her husband and returns to her house. After returning to her house, Nora tells Jasem about wanting

to have her own tailor shop but Jasem rejects because they are doing well economically and work for Nora is unnecessary. Nora tries to convince Jasem again but he rejects and threatens to divorce her if she opens her own business.

After being threatened to lose her marriage, Nora starts to help Fawaz with his homework. Later, Fawaz tells his father a poem and Jasem is impressed with his improvement. One day, Nora discovers that her jewelry is missing and finds out that the maid stole her jewelry and fled the country. Despite her despair of ever retrieving her jewelry, Nora is relieved that Fawaz is safe and the maid left without harming him.

Storyline D Theme Analysis

With the focus of this storyline being on the conflict between Nora and her husband Jasem, the theme of motherhood is addressed through the development of Nora's character arc. The storyline positions Nora in circumstances that highlight her goal, owning a sewing shop, and her flaws, failing to recognize the complications arising from her decision of delegating her role as a mother to the maid. In this way, the storyline is able to form a theme meaning that demonstrates the significance of being a housewife and mothering a child when the family is economically secure.

To illuminate the need for Nora to be a housewife rather than a business owner, the storyline challenges the character through her family needs. The goal of the character in this storyline is highlighted through multiple attempts to obtain a sewing shop despite the husband's rejection. This suggests that the character's goal is to be a business owner rather than a housewife. Multiple events exemplify Nora's desire to be a business owner. This is manifested in Nora's decision to lend Huda the necessary amount for partnering her. It is also presented in her response, irritated and angry, when

Huda returns the amount. Nora's intention is to partner Huda rather than just help her work with Om Majed. When her first attempt of partnering Huda fails, Nora decides to open her own sewing shop and have Huda operate it once she learns that Huda is stressed from the workload at Om Majed's shop. These events demonstrate that the character is trying to find ways to become an entrepreneur. In this way, the goal of the character is established.

However, the character is failing to understand her family's needs. This failure is a flaw that is endangering her son and disrupting the condition of her marriage. The family's needs are not economic because Jasem is providing economic security through his real estate firm. Rather, the family needs Nora to look after her child but the character is constantly unable to recognize this need by delegating it to the maid. The results and influence of Nora's flaws are manifested in her son's development. For instance, Jasem learns that the maid is unable to teach his son how to speak Arabic and that Fawaz is having problems pronouncing words and sentences. Another example is when Nora, focused on speaking with Huda over the phone, tells the maid to take Fawaz to the park resulting in an accident that endangers his life. Despite these events, Nora fails to realize that the maid is incapable of mothering the child. This failure is displayed when she leaves the son home with the maid and Jasem finds out that the maid is wearing Nora's clothes and accessing her personal belongings. In this way, the story is emphasizing the character's constant failures to understand the limitations and shortcomings of the maid. At the same time, the story is emphasizing how the character's failure to recognize her flaws is impacting the family. Therefore, the

implication is that the family needs Nora to assume these duties rather than rely on the maid.

Although these events illuminate the character's flaws, these flaws indicate that there is an inability to recognize family needs rather than intentionally ignoring the family. The character cares about her family but fails to identify their needs. This is highlighted in her response when she learns that Jasem is cheating on her with Azhar. Had the character not cared about her marriage, she would have ignored the allegation. Instead, her care is manifested when she leaves to stay with her parents and when she reconciles with Jasem and returns home after learning that the accusation is false. In this way, the character is caring of her family but is unable to realize the importance and impact of her role as a mother in the household. Further clarification is provided when the character changes. The change in the storyline occurs when the threat of losing her marriage is posed. Therefore, this character is clearly against the loss of her marriage and because the threat of losing her marriage occurs, she changes. The threat of divorce by Jasem is the turning point that highlights the change. As a result of this threat, the character finally complies with Jasem's requests by abandoning her pursuit of a sewing shop. This change settles the theme of the storyline.

In addition to the character's change, the consequences of this change reveal its impact. To foreground the significance of this change, the storyline presents the development of Fawaz. For instance, Nora begins helping Fawaz with his homework and he starts speaking Arabic fluently by telling his father a poem. To further emphasize the need for Nora's motherhood, she discovers that the maid has stolen her jewelry and escaped. The maid's actions illustrate her morals and the consequences of Nora's

inattentiveness that could have caused damage to Fawaz. Clearly, the theme meaning developed from this storyline is that when economic security is present and when there is a child to parent, the wife is to mother her child and manage her home.

To offer a theme meaning that illustrates the significance of motherhood and the role of the housewife, this storyline presented the character of a wife that pursued entrepreneurship without an economic need to do so. Also, it presented a wife that has a son who is failing to develop under the guidance of her maid. In this way, the story is able to demonstrate how this character needs to change and assume her role as a mother in order to accompany her family's needs.

This section provided synopses and theme analyses for the available storylines to reveal the meanings discussed about social issues. The next section will provide contextual analyses to clarify the factors informing these meanings.

Sociocultural Context

As highlighted above, the social issues conveyed during the satellite era concern a variation of perspectives on family economics, women economic empowerment, fatherhood and motherhood, and the roles of men and women in Kuwaiti families. These representations are significant because of their time period. For the social issues portrayed, the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990 and the liberation in 1991 informed the development of storylines that address the status of society after the liberation. However, the ability to access networks by regional pan-Arab audiences due to satellite technologies and the increase in competition between networks as a result of these technologies also informed these circumstantial variations on thematic meanings. This

explains the variety of perspectives proposed through the four storylines on social economics and family roles.

After the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War left Kuwait in debt to the liberating coalition nations. Per national debt percentages, Kuwait's debt percentage reached 151.15% in 1991, which is a drastic increase from its pre-war debt of only 1.09% ("Country Economy," 2016). Although the country's debts began to gradually decrease, numbers show that this economic situation took ten years to resolve ("Country Economy," 2016). These economic struggles are a result of the war. One of the main factors informing the Iraqi invasion was the economic upset that Iraq was undergoing after its eight year war with Iran (Hassan, 1999). In this way, Iraq's invasion was a way for its government to compensate itself by acquiring the resources of Kuwait. After losing the battle against the coalition forces, the Iraqi forces burned many of the oil wells before withdrawing from Kuwait (Chilcote, 2003). One of the burned oil fields was Burgan, which is the second largest oil field in the world and a major source of the Kuwaiti economy (EIA, 2013). With oil being the major financial resource that the country relied on, Kuwait struggled economically and encountered a financial crisis. Also, the infrastructure that the government had built during the oil boom era was severely damaged (McDonnell, 1999). Therefore, Kuwaiti society faced a struggling economic period and the government grappled with its financial crisis and mission to rebuild society. With a tarnished image and an increase in public scrutiny for failing to defend the country during the invasion, the challenge for the government was to regain the population's confidence (Barakat & Skelton, 2014). The emphasis and prioritization of economic restoration was a method that the government utilized to

cement its status, regain the population's confidence, and display that it is capable of reconstructing the nation (Walter, 2016). Because the government has historically relied on its media to "encourage the development of a Kuwaiti identity" (Crystal, 2016, p. 70), the popularity and significance of television serial dramas of Ramadan provided the valuable platform to instill the nation's vision of social order, promote values and beliefs, and address the social concerns of the time.

The television institution employed, through television serials, a particular image about Kuwait after the war in order to provide various perspectives on social issues to balance between the women organizations calling for equal rights, the Islamic parties insisting on traditional roles for men and women within the family, and persuade Kuwaitis who fled during the war to return home. This approach was undertaken because more than half of the population, 400,000 out of 700,000, fled Kuwait during the invasion (Ibrahim, 1991). Also, the burned oil fields resulted in an environmental disaster that generated media attention about the toxic impact it could have on people's health and their safety living in the country (Husain, 1995). As a result, fleeing Kuwaitis were hesitant to return home under such risky circumstances. To address the issue, the television institution prohibited storylines that encouraged Kuwaitis to work in neighboring countries. According to Writer 2, this is "because the television institution was trying to paint a nice picture of the country instead of highlighting the drawbacks" (Writer 2, Satellite Era). He also went on to point out the significance of the era and the social values of the time. He contends that "Social values must reflect society for viewers to engage with. Without reflecting the values of the time, the serial would fail to relate to society. This is why understanding the era is important" (Writer 2, Satellite Era).

By acknowledging the impact of the war and the status of postwar society at the time, television serials reinforced the patriarchal structure of families which is derived from society's tribal and Islamic culture in an attempt to convey that the war failed to change the nation and that postwar society is the same as prewar society, and reinforce the country's nationalism. In a way, this would encourage fleeing Kuwaitis to return home. Therefore, the television institution highlighted specific circumstances for storylines that would reflect unconventional social values in response to the needs transpiring from the economic situation. These needs require an active participatory role for Kuwaiti women in family economics.

This is reflected in how *Bo Marzouq* constructs themes that highlight the role of men and women in Kuwaiti families. Each theme provides a different perspective depending on character roles and their social status. Storylines B and D offer two distinct perspectives about economic necessity. In storyline B, women are encouraged to work and support the patriarch when there is an economic necessity to do so. In storyline D, women are encouraged to maintain a housewife role and mother their children because the husband is providing financial security. What separates both perspectives is the role of each character. Huda is married to Bo Adel without a child to parent. On the other hand, Nora is married to a business owner and they have a child to parent. By positioning both characters in these distinct situations, the narrative is proposing that having women in the workplace is acceptable under certain circumstances. This construction is also magnifying the significance of the family. Women without children are encouraged to work but women that have children are better off parenting their children. Clearly, variations are presented about women in the

workplace. The third perspective is presented in storyline C where a woman, Azhar, is to separate and govern her money when the husband is corrupt and there are no children to parent. Therefore portraying women in the workplace is plotted as a conditional position. According to the writer, “Society became more conservative after the war because of the increase in religious and Islamic political parties. These parties pressured the government through parliament and the television institution was obliged to conform to certain perspectives” (Writer 2, Satellite Era). Islamists, according to al-Mughni, emphasized the need for women to remain housewives and that their primary role is to be mothers (1993). Despite attributing such considerations to the political environment alone, the country’s attempt to please and bring together Kuwaitis for the sake of reinstating Kuwaiti identity and nationalism is at the forefront of these portrayals. One writer insists that “After the war, there was an emphasis on restoring and building Kuwaiti nationalism. Kuwaitis felt a strong sense of nationalism after experiencing the Iraqi invasion” (Writer 1, Satellite Era). Thus, despite the changes and the need for economic diversification, a reinstatement of nationalism meant that patriarchy remains intact but women roles could be elevated through economic participation. In this way, the serial would provide a balance that would please traditional perspectives about women as housewives and refrain from offending society by providing circumstances for storylines that encourage their participation in the workforce. This would also address the country’s economic situation at the time.

During the pre-satellite era, television serials concentrated on the role of the patriarch in leading family economics. For political reasons, they disregarded the aspirations of women organizations and their pursuit of emancipation and equality (al-

Mughni, 1993; Tétreault , Rizzo, & Shultziner, 2012). With a flourishing economy and a united society during prewar Kuwait, there was no need to conform to these organizations that were constantly challenged by Islamists and carried notions about gender equality that were supported by Arab nationalist movements that were considered a threat to the Kuwaiti government. However, the political reforms after the war impacted such portrayals. The first postwar election took place in 1992, and three diverse Islamic parties that shared different views about society won twenty-two out of fifty parliament seats (Al Rumaihi, 1994). These were the Islamic Constitutional Movement (Muslim Brotherhood ideals), the Islamic Popular Movement (Salafi ideals), and the National Islamic Coalition (Shia ideals) (Sadowski, 1997). Despite these political changes, the need to reunite society and reestablish Kuwaiti nationalism meant that the government had to account for opposing views as well. Thus, having women in the workplace departs the conventional portrayals that were typical of the pre-satellite era.

The departure is motivated by the country's economic need in the workforce and the fact that women were being recognized for their courage and nationalism during the Iraqi invasion (Levins, 1995). Although women in Kuwait remained subordinate in the patriarchal structure of Kuwaiti families (al-Mughni, 1993), their critical role in the Kuwaiti resistance was influential. John M. Levins highlights that Kuwaitis acknowledged the significant role of Kuwaiti women in the resistance during the war and their valuable services in carrying out a multitude of tasks to fight the invaders (1995). This stance strengthened the position of women activists' call for more rights and the enhancement of the position of women in society. Although the dominant viewpoint of embracing the role of the mother and the housewife remained, society acknowledged

their patriotism during the war. However, television serials, in an attempt to provide a balance between the status quo, the Islamists, and women's movements, refrained from strictly focusing on women rights. One writer further confirms this notion about women rights during the 1990s. He states that "Any script that would discuss women rights would be rejected because society was unprepared to accept such portrayals" (Writer 2, Satellite Era). Clearly, writers were grappling to please various perspectives and a direct encouragement of unconventional values would be deemed controversial. Instead of presenting storylines that would directly highlight women rights, writers considered the dominant cultural assumptions and presented women in the workforce under certain conditions to avoid controversy.

Although women activists in Kuwait were organizing events that aimed to enlighten society and demand rights, they failed to influence the government or the National Assembly (Walter, 2016). During this time, the Islamists were also responding to women's social associations and contending for women to continue their traditional role of housewives and mothers (al-Mughni, 1993). However, the economic need of the time required considering all possible strategies to bring the country back to its prewar growth. Because education for women was free and supported during prewar Kuwait (Nath, 1978), Kuwaiti women were educated enough that their training cost would be low, making them "an important potential labor pool" (Crystal, 2016, p. 169). As a result, encouraging their involvement in the labor force seemed appealing to the government for as long as this encouragement refrained from disturbing the traditional patriarchal family structure. In fact, the man that fails to honor this patriarchal system and tries to

benefit from it, Marzouq, is constructed as a flawed character that needs guidance from a righteous patriarch, Bo Marzouq.

In storyline C, the marriage between Marzouq and Azhar transpires due to money. Marzouq decides to marry Azhar for her wealth. The marriage ends in unfavorable fashion. In this way, writers are able to provide a theme that elevates the role of women as economically self-reliant. To further establish justification for the patriarchal structure, Bo Marzouq resolves the conflict. The storyline's resolution implies that divorce is acceptable for a just cause, which conforms to the patriarch's request. In this case, the patriarch is Bo Marzouq and he demanded that Marzouq divorces Azhar. The storyline is able to reinforce the status of patriarchy and defend the status of a woman with money by having Azhar approach Bo Marzouq to solve the problem instead of filing a lawsuit against Marzouq. In this way, divorce and stealing a wife's money are both positioned to conditionally debate the need for women to govern their wealth. However, by not having a child to parent, the storyline is able to refrain from encouraging women to divorce and leave their families. One writer explains that "Divorce is acceptable but discouraged in Islamic principles" (Writer 2, Satellite Era). Such a portrayal would undermine the country's national value, the single united family. Also, by making Marzouq benefit from the patriarchal system, the storyline is highlighting his failure to be in a marriage and live up to this national value.

Moreover, the serial reinforces the patriarchal structure by having Azhar approach Bo Marzouq instead of Om Marzouq for her divorce. Clearly, the power to force Marzouq is held by his father. In this way, the mother is also positioned in a subordinate role within the family hierarchy, even when the issue concerns her own son.

Thus, despite the attempts to elevate women's status in the family, other storylines counter such attempts to reinsert traditional values and emphasize a limited elevation that must conform to the patriarch.

This is also demonstrated through an emphasis on the role of women as housewives in storyline D. Nora's character change only occurs after Jasem's threat to divorce her. After the threat, the character changes and begins parenting her son. Although the loss of family is the indicative meaning of the plot point, the character change reflects a specific status for Kuwaiti women in society. The status indicates the need for Nora to be a housewife and a mother. Such a status is accomplished by the storyline's resolution, a happy ending with Nora keeping her family intact as a result of her character change. Additionally, the threat of divorce that changes Nora by a character like Jasem, the provider of the family's economic security, highlights his authority and illustrates Nora's flaw as a housewife and the female's position in the patriarchal structure. The resolution only transpires when the woman accepts her role as a housewife and a mother.

Although there is limited progression from portrayals of the pre-satellite era, women in Kuwait were still considered second class citizens in comparison to the rights that their male counterparts held during the 1990s. According to Sanja Kelly, "Gender inequality is most evident in personal-status codes, which relegate women to an inferior position within marriage and the family, declare the husband to be the head of household, and in many cases require the wife to obey her husband" (2010, p. 7). Furthermore, the economic participation of women in the workforce only began to show a slight increase during the early 2000s (Shah, 1995, 2004). Despite the ongoing

increase and the need to modernize the economy, the status of women remained subordinate in Kuwaiti society (Tétreault & al-Mughni, 1995). Therefore, the serial's portrayal of the limited and conditional role of female characters participating in the family's economic status or governing their own wealth reflect the dominant viewpoint of the time writers' attempts to highlight the limitations of this viewpoint and initiate debates without offending predetermined beliefs. An explanation for this approach is described by one of the writers, "Sometimes we criticized the values of previous generations that were about traditions derived from our tribalism. In other words, I was writing to highlight the need for a change in perspectives" (Writer 1, Satellite Era). This attempt is a result of economic need. The other writer claims that

> Economic investments are crucial social issues. These were social issues that the country as a whole dealt with and I think continue to deal with. The lack of investments impacted society and classes. I reflected this issue in some of my storylines (Writer 2, Satellite Era).

Moreover, the production environment at the time required the consideration of other audiences from across the region. This was the result of satellite technologies. The introduction of satellite technologies expanded the serial's reach and offered a regional competitive landscape. Equality and the status of women in other Arab societies differ. Some societies were more progressive and others were conservative to these portrayals. For instance, the status of women in Egypt was far more progressive than Kuwait and their feminist movement had been ongoing for nearly an entire century (Badran, 1993). At the time, women in Lebanon were socially empowered, held political posts, and participated in the governance of their country (Abu Nassr, 1996; Maksoud, 1996). In Syria, women were participants in the workforce and major supporters of the family's economy (Sha'aban, 1996). In contrast, women confronted cultural constraints

in regards to their workforce participation in Saudi Arabia (Doumato, 1999). Therefore, by offering circumstantial thematic meanings and three storylines that address variations on these issues, the serial would appeal to the diversity of pan-Arab audiences in an uncertain television environment. One interviewee clarifies the challenges of this era:

> We were trying to export sociocultural messages during this era due to the increase in the number of networks. The audience was slowly expanding and we were no longer writing for our society alone but for other societies as well. The task was to find a way to address issues that would resonate with both Kuwaitis and other Arab societies. It was also a way to market Kuwaiti society and the status of the Kuwaiti people after the liberation (Writer 1, Satellite Era).

Despite these attempts, the role of the patriarch, typical of Kuwaiti families, remained uncontested. In fact, the storyline that provides a theme about women in the workplace and their role in helping the economic status of their families only further reinforces the patriarchal structure. This is evident in storyline B where Huda works to support her husband. Despite her husband's failure at work, Huda's work is highlighted as only necessary for economic purposes. Again, Huda is without a child to parent. Because of this conditional justification, the storyline encourages that a woman works to support this structure and maintain the family rather than a theme that encourages women to be self-reliant and separate from the unreliable husband. Although Nora refrains from participating in her family's economics, the decision is taken to please the husband. Therefore, despite the circumstances, pleasing the patriarch and adhering to his conditions are reinforced. Even in Azhar's case, as argued above, leaving the corrupt husband required approval from the righteous patriarch, Bo Marzouq.

These storylines appeal to postwar Kuwaiti society and other Arab societies. At the time, the total amount of women, Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti, participating in the labor

force was slowly increasing in comparison with previous decades. Female participation in the labor force was at 39.09% in 1990 ("IndexMundi," n.d.). This number slowly began to increase and reached 43.46% in 1995 and by 1999, the percentage reached 44.15% ("IndexMundi," n.d.). However, the amount of Kuwaiti women participating in the labor force had been 20% in 1985 and only 23.5% in 1993 (Shah, 1995). Despite this slight increase in participation, there were still a percentage of women in Kuwait already participants in the labor force. In this way, offering themes that conditionally encourage women in the workplace would target a percentage of the population, encourage a different perspective that addresses the social concerns of the time, and appeal to wider pan-Arab audiences.

Moreover, the need for men to participate and prepare their children for participation in the workforce is highlighted through the need for the patriarch to guide, parent, and delegate economic responsibilities to future generations. The economic situation of the country forced the government to decrease the number of foreign workers in the country after the liberation by restricting visas and limiting work opportunities (Cordesman, 1997). The Kuwaiti labor force relied on foreign workers since the discovery of oil due to their skills and the lack of expertise found in many Kuwaitis. This is a result of the modernization projects undertaken during prewar Kuwait. The projects aimed at modernizing Kuwaiti society and encouraging labor force participation but the majority of the labor force remained occupied by foreign workers due to their skills. Also, the drastic increase of the population highlighted the need to create job opportunities for future generations (Cordesman, 1997). However, a decrease in foreign labor would further harm the economic situation in postwar Kuwait.

Cordesman clarifies that the government needed Kuwaitis to fill the void that that foreign laborers would leave in the workforce (1997). This explains the rationale for television serials to provide storylines that address parenting and developing future generations for economic participation.

A theme about parenting and economic participation is presented in storyline A. Bo Marzouq's character arc is developed to finally reach a resolution that establishes the passing of the business and relinquishing economic responsibilities to his son Marzouq. This is a unique position in comparison to storyline D, where Nora is better off parenting her son than participating in the family's economic situation. The difference is that storyline A presents Bo Marzouq as a retiree. Thus, the need for work is less significant for Bo Marzouq. On the contrary, storyline D presents Nora as a housewife without any prior work experience. By positioning Bo Marzouq as a retiree, the storyline avoids a conveyance that would reflect parenting as a sole purpose for the patriarch. Instead, the storyline highlights that a patriarch is able to work, retire, establish a business, and be a parent. In Nora's character arc, the theme restricts her to parenting. Therefore, it is best for a woman with a child to be a mother and parent her child instead of seeking work opportunities. However, both storylines emphasize parenting and economic participation for children. In storyline A, the resolution is reached when Bo Marzouq finally realizes the need to pass the business to his son. In storyline D, the last scene presents Nora stating to the family that Fawaz will soon carry the economic load of the family, and the serial ends. In this way, both storylines highlight the importance of parenting and preparing the next generation for economic participation.

This section provided contextual analyses to foreground the economic, political, and social factors that informed the creative decisions in developing storyline themes during the satellite era. The economic situation of Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion, the role of Kuwaiti women during the war and the impact that this role had on women activists after the war, the rise of conservative Islamic groups in the parliament, and the competitive regional television landscape all contributed to the construction of social issues in this circumstantial form. The next section will illuminate the impact of satellite technologies and regional networks on the development of the narrative form.

Narrative Form

Unlike the pre-satellite era (1961-1990), where serials consisted of eleven episodes and offered a lengthy narrative ellipsis to interweave storylines and develop characters, during this satellite era serials are fifteen episodes and the fictional time spans for approximately two years. Television serials diverged from what had been considered traditional television storytelling in Ramadan for thirteen straight years. This divergence is a product of the introduction of satellite technologies.

The introduction of satellite technologies increased competition through the introduction of privately-owned networks and offered viewers access to various regional networks (Amin, 2001; Schleifer, 1998). Television state-owned and privately-owned networks are now accessible by pan-Arab audiences from all Arab speaking countries (Kraidy, 2002; Sakr, 1999a). This introduction changed the state of television broadcasting in the region where state-owned television networks have traditionally dominated without direct competition (Ayish, 1997). With some of these regional networks producing their own serial dramas during Ramadan, syndication which is the

primary form of generating revenue, became competitive. Syndication, which was the source of revenue for Kuwaiti serials during the pre-satellite era, remained because of the uncertainty that advertisers faced during this competitive landscape. Advertisers were reluctant to pay for television spots because the region lacked sophisticated measurement and ratings systems (Fakhreddine, 2001; Sakr, 1999b). It was an experimental territory for advertisers and coming to terms with networks in regards to the inclusion of commercial spots during programmes is decided after the network obtains syndication rights. To clarify this process, one of the writers explains, “We were not informed of any commercial breaks during pre-production. This was decided by the executives when they aired the show” (Writer 1, Satellite Era). Therefore, the main source of revenue was generated through syndication because revenue from advertisements is uncertain. In this way, by only producing eleven episodes and airing three per week, the television institution in Kuwait would risk losing viewers to other networks for the remainder of the week, would find it difficult to keep viewers waiting or returning for subsequent episodes in the following week, and would decrease their chances of syndication. At the time, even privately-owned networks that produced their own serials needed to acquire programmes to fill the remainder of their broadcast schedules (Sakr, 1999b). As a result, some of these networks established acquisitions departments for such purposes (Gher, 1999). To seize the opportunity presented by this network increase and entice networks, Kuwaiti serials offered fifteen instead of eleven episodes to fill these broadcast schedules. The transition from eleven to fifteen episodes benefited Kuwaiti serials because an increase in the number of episodes and minutes per episode (fifty instead of forty-five) would increase the price of syndication.

This increase was intriguing to networks because it allows them to provide an episode every other day and occupy the majority of the week and the month. In return, they were able to promise advertisers more exposure throughout the week and the month. This would address the needs of networks during a competitive and uncertain landscape and address the pan-Arab audience during Ramadan.

The fifteen episode serial model offers four storylines that initiate during the first episode and simultaneously progress towards the final episode to achieve narrative closure. This is a departure from *Al-Aqdar* (1977) where one storyline initiates in the first episode and achieves closure in the seventh episode, two storylines initiate in the first episode and progress to achieve closure in the final episode, and the fourth storyline initiates in the seventh episode and achieves closure in the final episode. The lengthy narrative ellipsis permitted such storyline progression and thus, the serial always only had three storylines running at any one point rather than all four at the same time.

Although these factors informed the development of this fifteen episode form, the analyses in this section will foreground how this form developed from the traditional Ramadanian form of the pre-satellite era and how the change in the production landscape informs the way characters and storylines are presented. This narrative form interweaves storylines in a form that evenly balances their prominence.

With satellite technologies creating a competitive landscape for syndicating television serials, the competition generated from these technologies informed the way storylines are presented in serials. Whereas writers were able to provide three storylines and introduce new characters and the fourth storyline past the midway point of the season (episode seven in *Al-Aqdar*), utilizing this strategy was difficult in this

more competitive landscape and would risk losing viewers to other networks. This is because syndication in the pre-satellite era targeted the available state-owned networks and their audiences had limited choices to select from. As a result, the audience of that country had limited options and watched the serial provided by the available networks only.

With the aim to target diverse pan-Arab audiences and compete with other regional serials, there was a need to introduce all storylines and the variety of characters early in the season. In this way, characters that appeal to various audiences can keep them tuned in throughout the season. By doing so, the serial would appeal to diverse perspectives. As a result, *Bo Marzouq* introduces all of its characters during the first two episodes, establishes all the conflicts during these two episodes, and utilizes the remainder of the season to develop the characters and their storylines. Therefore, the emphasis is on introducing storylines and characters, and having them occur in every episode.

One of the writers insists that “Episodes were usually utilized to provide narrative data about all storylines in a continuous form” (Writer 2, Satellite Era). This suggests that episodes are treated to exploit all of the characters and storylines gradually. He follows this up by claiming that “The progression of storylines determined where plot points occurred during episodes” (Writer 2, Satellite Era). Therefore, the prioritization is on developing the available storylines in every episode rather than deciding on when to suspend and revisit storylines episodically, which was the case during the pre-satellite era. Thus, each episode is balanced from a storyline perspective. In fact, episodes constantly interchange between the four storylines without leaving any storyline

unaddressed. Even in episodes where a storyline occupies less narrative time than others, its occupation reveals significant narrative data to keep audience interest for subsequent episodes. The balancing strategy that was utilized during the pre-satellite era where a storyline disappears for an episode or two before reemerging again is replaced with a strategy that constantly presents the storyline with the aim of providing irrevocable plot points to tempt the viewers that are interested in that storyline. For instance, the episode's focus might be on storylines A, B, and C as they occupy the majority of the beats but despite only featuring in a couple of beats, an irrevocable plot point for storyline D occurs. In this way, storyline prominence is not only determined by the amount of scenes that a storyline occupies during an episode. Rather, storyline prominence is constructed through a balance between scene amount and plot point significance and progression. An interviewee declares that this allows the "Setup of revelations at different points during the season" (Writer 1, Satellite Era). The assertion suggests that such episodic utilization of irrevocable plot points are distributed at various stages during the season to ensure that progression varies between storylines. By doing so, each episode is able to keep storylines relevant regardless of the amount of scenes they occupy, shift the balance between scene occupation and progression, and continuously reinforce all four storylines for subsequent episodes. In this way, all storylines progress without exhausting any specific storyline and audience interest is sustained.

Despite the focus being on the reoccurrence of characters and their conflicts rather than designating specific episodes during the season for specific storylines and characters, such reoccurrences do not necessarily provide irrevocable plot points. In

fact, some episodes equally present all four storylines without irrevocable plot points. In said episodes, scene occupation keeps all four storylines prominent. Although these episodes lack irrevocable plot points, they reinforce narrative data and display character perspectives. In the process, the storylines are revisited without irrevocable plot points but the preferences of diverse audiences are addressed.

Moreover, scenes in the serial are approximately four minutes in length. This is distinct from the seven minute duration that characterized the pre-satellite era. This decrease in scene duration increases the pace but more importantly, addresses the level of sophistication in a pan-Arab landscape. The seven minute duration of the pre-satellite era operated to ensure that viewers comprehend the available storylines and refrained from confusing viewers. However, by decreasing the duration, writers acknowledge that lengthier scenes could prolong and exhaust storylines in an environment where network accessibility permits viewers to switch to other networks and serials. As a result, decreasing the duration permits an interchange between the four available storylines without exhausting narrative events. Unlike western dramas where Nelson (1997) argues that the flexi-narrative was employed for the increased level of viewer sophistication, this four minute duration without a standalone dilemma highlights the difference in the development of sophisticated viewers in the Middle East when compared with other regions in the world.

The analyses in this section highlighted how the impact of the economic and competitive landscape informed the priorities of the writers and the characteristics of the Kuwaiti Ramadanian serial form during this era. By considering the every other day broadcast, sophistication of audiences, network competition and syndication, writers

during this era were prompted to keep all available characters and storylines relevant by reoccurring in every episode from start to finish but they utilized a strategy that ensured serialized progression, balance, and prominence all at the same time.

The emphasis of this section was to highlight the factors informing the characteristics of this fifteen episode narrative form. The presentation and interweaving of storylines and characters altered in comparison with the pre-satellite era. The next section will detail the findings of this chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter investigated the representative case study of the satellite era, *Bo Marzouq* (1992), to illuminate the social issues and theme meanings provided, highlighted the sociocultural context of the time period, and critically examined the impact of satellite technologies upon the production context and the conventions of serial forms. The findings suggest that television serials during this era provided a variety of theme meanings to reinforce the traditional patriarchal structure of Kuwaiti society, encourage the traditional housewife role of Kuwaiti women, but at the same time elevate the status of women participation in the economics of the Kuwaiti family and highlight the acceptability for women to govern their wealth, and preserve the patriarchal hierarchy. In this way, the serial offered aspects of social progression and at the same time preservation of the status quo. Also, the findings demonstrate the consideration of pan-Arab audiences in the development of themes that empower women. Finally, the chapter exhibited the increase in character types, the change in the form storylines interweave, and the function of characters in storylines as a result of the uncertainty and competitiveness of the television landscape.

The next chapter will examine the representative case study of the network proliferation era (2000-onward), *Zawarat Al Khamis* (2010). The era is characterized for the excessive amount of networks and the initiation of media cities across the region. With competition at its highest and advertisers aggressively requesting and competing over commercial breaks, Kuwaiti television serials increased the amount of episodes to thirty per season in order to cover the entire month of Ramadan. The increase and the demand for further audience segmentation, the developments in Kuwaiti society, and the rise of new networks informed the themes and conventions of the thirty episode model that will be briefly investigated.

The Network Proliferation Era: *Zawarat Al Khamis* (2010)

What scholars term the second expansion era (Sakr, 2007), or purely the satellite era (Kraidy & Khalil, 2009), this thesis acknowledges as the network proliferation era. The terminologies ascribed by scholars are derived from their emphasis on the political economy and broadcasting technologies emerging in the Middle East without distinguishing how these changes inform programme development. However, as highlighted in the introduction and literature review chapters, this study's objective is to investigate how viewer accessibility and network competition influence the decision making of writers and their assumptions about viewers when developing Kuwaiti television serials. During this era, Kuwait produces approximately nine serials per Ramadan. This chapter will examine a representative case study, *Zawarat Al Khamis* (2010), from the network proliferation era (2000 onward) to demonstrate the development of this thirty episode form and the underpinning rationales for the presented thematic meanings and narrative conventions.

Unlike the previous case studies where serials were either eleven or fifteen episodes in length, *Zawarat Al Khamis* consists of thirty episodes that run throughout the entire month of Ramadan by airing every day. Each episode is forty minutes. The serial consists of seven storylines in comparison with the four storylines that each of the last two case studies contained. Therefore, the serial interweaves the seven storylines in ways that are distinct from the previous eras and provides more characters with variations in types. Whereas the pre-satellite era provided social issues that address the patriarch's relationship with family economics, and the satellite era addressed the elevated role of women in supporting the family's economics, this serial departs from

the social issues that penetrated the previous two eras and instead concentrates on contemporary issues concerning Kuwaiti and GCC societies. These issues are about the value of marriage and the importance of families for both men and women.

The first section of this chapter, list of characters, will provide the names, roles, and relationships between characters. The second section, synopses and theme analyses, will provide synopses and theme analyses for the available storylines to highlight what the storylines convey about specific social issues. The third section, sociocultural context, will provide contextual analyses to highlight the underpinning rationales for the thematic meanings and the final section, narrative form, will interpret the character types and the ways in which the serial interweaves seven storylines across thirty episodes.

List of Characters

Adib	private investigator and a former classmate of Zaina.
Ahmad	the son of Thunayan and Moza, the husband of Tasnim, and the father of Thunayan A.
Amina	the wife of Saud and the mother of Thunayan S.
Aziz	the brother of Thunayan and father of Dr. Saud.
Bo Adel	Ahmad's friend.
Dalal	wife of Marzouq and the mother of Little Moza and Thunayan M.
Dr. Saud	the son of Aziz and Shahah's future husband.
Ez	the son of Thunayan and Moza and the husband of Jenan
Faisal	the son of Thunayan and Moza and Zaina's husband.

Ghada	Faisal's second wife and Musa'ad's sister.
Homoud	the older son of Wahab and Rasha.
Jenan	the friend of Moza N and the wife of Ez.
Khalid	Ahmad's student and Najat's son.
Mansour	Shahah's husband.
Marzouq	the son of Thunayan and Moza, the husband of Dalal, and the father of Thunayan M
Mohammad	the younger son of Wahab and Rasha.
Moza	the wife of Thunayan, the sister of Nadia, the aunt of Moza N and Salem, the mother of Faisal and Marzouq, Saud and Ahmad, and Ez and Shahah.
Moza N	the daughter of Nadia and the sister of Salem.
Musa'ad	the brother of Ghada.
Nadia	the sister of Moza the mother of Moza N and Salem.
Najat	the mother of Khaled and second wife of Ahmad.
Nuha	the owner of the home service salon and the cousin of Jenan.
Om Nasib	Thunayan's former nanny and his grandchildren's current nanny.
Rasha	Wahab's widow, Saud's second wife, and the mother of Homoud and Mohammad.
Salem	the son of Nadia and the brother of Moza N.

Saud	the son of Thunayan and Moza, the husband of Amina, and the father of Thunayan S.
Shahah	the daughter of Thunayan and Moza, and the wife of Mansour.
Tasnim	the wife of Ahmad and the mother of Thunayan A.
Thunayan	the husband of Moza, the father of Faisal and Marzouq, Saud and Ahmad, Ez and Shahah, and the brother of Aziz.
Thunayan A	the son of Ahmad and Tasnim.
Thunayan M	the son of Marzouq and Dalal
Thunayan S	the son of Saud and Amina.
Wahab	Saud's best friend, Rasha's husband, and the father of Homoud and Mohammad.
Zaina	the wife of Faisal.

Storyline Synopses and Theme Analyses

Like preceding case study chapters, this section will provide brief synopses and theme analyses for every available storyline. Each storyline will be labeled with a letter for distinguishing purposes only.

Storyline A Synopsis

The focus of this storyline is on Moza and her family. The story is about a woman who constantly tries to keep her family intact by helping her children's marriages, taking care of her husband, and helping her sister manage her life. The story begins with Moza searching for pregnancy tests in the trash cans that belong to the rooms of her married

sons as a way to check on the wellness of their relationships. For Moza, pregnancy tests mean that their relationships are well and their families are growing.

The next night, Saud returns home late, informs Moza that it is his anniversary, it is late and the shops are closed, and he forgot to buy a gift for his wife. To prevent a conflict between Saud and his wife, Moza gives Saud some of her own jewelry to help satisfy Amina. The next day, Moza finds that Zaina is angry and is about to leave the house. Moza insists on joining Zaina and they both drive to the beach house where Zaina finds Faisal with another woman. Moza argues and yells at Faisal for cheating on his wife, Zaina drives away and gets into a car accident shortly after. Moza goes to the hospital, stays with Zaina and takes care of her during recovery.

One night, Thunayan is playing with his grandson Thunayan M. Angry from losing to Thunayan, Thunayan M goes to his room and grabs his father's real gun, returns to the living room and pulls the trigger only to find Moza jumping in front of Thunayan and taking the bullet for her husband. Although Moza goes into a coma for a couple of days, she survives the shooting and returns home.

Days after recovering from her coma, Moza learns that Amina is mad with Saud for recording a football match over their wedding tape. Moza throws a small wedding party for Amina to ensure that she lives and records the experience once again in order to please her.

One day, Moza learns that Tasnim is suspicious of her husband Ahmad and wants to know what he is paying rent for. Fearing that this could cause a dispute between the two, Moza joins Tasnim and they both go to the building only to find out that Ahmad is helping a friend and his family.

Later, Moza learns from Dalal that Mansour wishes to commit adultery with her. For Moza to believe and help Dalal without Shahah's knowledge, she joins Dalal to Mansour's private apartment. With the apartment keys at Dalal's disposal, they both arrive before Mansour and Moza hides in the bedroom to overhear the conversation. She finds out that Mansour is trying to commit adultery with Dalal and forces him to divorce her daughter Shahah without telling Shahah the reason of the divorce to prevent her from being hurt.

Moza's concerns for her children's marriages continue. She finds out that Ahmad is spending time at the hospital with Khalid and away from his wife Tasnim due to Tasnim's hormonal issues. Therefore, to keep Ahmad around his wife, she prepares the guest room for him and tells him to better be around for Tasnim in case she needs him.

Although Moza is very caring for every family member, Thunayan begins to develop a romantic affair with her sister Nadia. Thunayan buys Nadia jewelry, colognes, and an expensive watch without Moza's knowledge and they start dating secretly.

Moza is then approached by Dalal about Marzouq's suspicious and abusive behavior but Moza convinces her that Marzouq loves her. After these incidents, Moza informs Thunayan that she is worried about her children's families and marriages. Because of she is worried, Moza decides to approach every couple and ask about their relationships' wellbeing but they refrain from telling her the truth. Despite her efforts, Moza finds out that her sons have secret affairs and are married to other women. To salvage her sons families, Moza dismisses Najat when she sees her speaking with Ahmad at the guest house and tells Saud to ensure that Amina remains unaware of his second marriage.

However, Moza is suddenly divorced by Thunayan and he goes on to marry Nadia. Shocked from this incident, Moza leaves to stay at the beach house alone. However, she is followed by her sons' wives after they decide to leave their husbands. Moza and the girls stay at the beach house for weeks until Thunayan dismisses his sons from the house because they threatened Nadia and tried forcing her to divorce him. Therefore, the sons go to the beach house and inform Moza that their cousin, Dr. Saud, visited them and showed them proof that Thunayan stole his father's inheritance money. Although Moza did not make any attempts to save her own marriage, she decides to help Dr. Saud file a lawsuit against Thunayan to retrieve the house for her children. Moza, Dr. Saud, and her children win the lawsuit and retrieve the house but Moza drops dead right before entering the house. After her death, the sons and their wives are back together, Shahah marries Dr. Saud, and Moza N marries a random character. The final scene presents Moza's children happy and having lunch with their spouses in the house without Thunayan and Nadia.

Storyline A Theme Analysis

The conflict of this storyline develops to convey a thematic meaning about family survival. It is about men maturing in their marriages and women being patient and tolerant to their behavior. At the same time, it also highlights that when patriarchal values are inconvenient to family survival, then they are unacceptable. Thus, the theme meaning is arguing that family is the priority when confronted with the values of patriarchy.

This meaning is reflected in Moza's character arc and perspective about what constitutes a lasting and healthy family. However, although Moza's own marriage fails to

survive, her perspective about marriages prevails. In the process, she becomes the example that is not to be taken as representative for all marriages. Her perspective about men changing and evolving and women continuously tolerating until that evolution occurs is highlighted in her behavior. For instance, in each case where Moza involves herself to save her children's marriages, Moza either tells the wives to remain in the marriage (Dalal and Zaina) or takes an action to please the wives (Amina and Tasnim). Moreover, she both fights her children for the wives mistreatment and asks them to change for the better (Faisal's case), or helps them conceal their wrongdoings to prevent further conflicts with their wives (Ahmad and Saud's cases). In this way, the patriarchal values of marriage are convenient for the sake of her son's marriages.

However, unlike her sons, Moza's exceptions are her own husband and her daughter's husband. This is highlighted in her daughter's marriage where Moza is intolerant to Mansour's behavior by trying to cheat with Dalal and her own marriage where despite the shock, she moves on without trying to salvage her own marriage. Therefore, for Moza, her children are prioritized, and she believes that her sons will grow and evolve. In both her case and her daughter's case, Moza's values imply that the patriarchal values of marriage are inconvenient for their situations. Therefore, they are unacceptable. By insisting on these values for her sons and expecting their wives to be patient, and in contrast, neglecting these same values for herself and her daughter, the storyline conveys the prioritization of family when confronted with patriarchal values of marriage. However, the story is not forbidding these patriarchal values. Instead, it is displaying family preference. As highlighted, her children are more important than the

traditional patriarchal values and these values are to be adhered to when they are convenient.

To further establish this prioritization, Moza only decides to file a lawsuit to retrieve the house from Thunayan for the sake of her children. Because Thunayan dismissed her children from the house, he threatened her children's families. Had he not attempted this action, Moza would have continued to live in the beach house. Although she dies after taking the house back, the death implies that there is no future for her. However, the final scene magnifies her vision. With her sons' marriages intact and with Shahah married to Dr. Saud, Moza's values are confirmed. Through these developments, the storyline is able to thematically provide a meaning about family survival. In this case, the meaning is for a family to survive, the men must grow and mature, the women must tolerate their misbehavior until they mature, and that family exceeds the traditional values of patriarchy.

Storyline B Synopsis

This storyline is about the state of the marriage between Faisal and Zaina. The storyline begins with Zaina calling to check on where Faisal is and he mistakenly forgets to hang up when they end their conversation. Therefore, Zaina overhears a girl flirting with Faisal. She then drives to the family's beach house and finds Faisal with a girl. Shocked and angry, Zaina drives away and gets into a car accident. She survives the accident but it turns out that she was pregnant and the accident caused a miscarriage of the baby.

Zaina forgives Faisal and gives him a chance to change. Later, Faisal travels for work. However, when Faisal returns from his travels, Zaina unpacks his luggage and

finds women clothing. The incident angers Zaina and she leaves the house. Faisal notices that she is mad and follows her. They both go to a restaurant to discuss the issue. While Zaina is in the car waiting for Faisal to order food, a guy approaches and attempts to flirt with Zaina. Faisal notices, fights him and the guy beats Faisal. Zaina takes care of Faisal's wounds but refuses to speak with him because of the amount of times he has cheated on her.

Zaina then finds out that she is pregnant and as a result, Faisal promises to change and keep his marriage intact. Later, Zaina finds a receipt from a jewelry store in Faisal's jacket. She becomes suspicious but is surprised when Faisal gives her a gold ring.

One night, Faisal is driving home and is stopped by a hitchhiker, Ghada. She asks for his help and tells him that she is lost and looking for her husband. Faisal gives Ghada a ride and on their way, they find that the road is blocked with police cars and ambulances. Ghada recognizes her husband's car, grabs her phone and quickly leaves Faisal's car, and realizes that her husband died in a car accident. On his way home, Faisal hears an unfamiliar ringtone and realizes that Ghada left her phone in his car and mistakenly took his phone instead. He drives back and they switch phones.

Later, Ghada calls Faisal and begs for his help. They soon meet in a parking lot where she tells Faisal that she was secretly married and her cousin is now proposing which complicates her situation with her family. Therefore, she wants Faisal to marry her to save her from having her secret marriage exposed to her family, which will cause her trouble. Faisal rejects Ghada's suggestion and without both noticing, Ghada's brother Musa'ad is hiding behind a car and watching the two engage in a conversation.

Musa'ad assumes that Faisal is having a romantic affair with his sister and informs Ghada that he will kill Faisal if the two fail to marry.

While leaving his house for work, Faisal is attacked and stabbed by Musa'ad. However, Faisal survives the stabbing. At the hospital, Faisal receives a note from Musa'ad threatening to kill him if he fails to marry Ghada. Faisal then informs Ghada that he will never marry her but fearful for Faisal's life, Ghada tells Musa'ad that Faisal is now her husband.

Later, Zaina finds the note that Musa'ad sent to Faisal in Faisal's wallet. Musa'ad then tells Ghada that he wants proof that Faisal is her husband. Zaina then asks Faisal what the note is about and he tells her that it is a prank done by his friends. Ghada, once again, tries to convince Faisal in a phone call but he refuses to marry her.

While leaving work, Zaina is attacked by Musa'ad in a parking lot. She survives the attack and so does her baby. At the hospital, Zaina is approached by a former college classmate who is now an investigator, Adib. He tries to understand what happened but Zaina lies and tells him that she only fell. Zaina then tells Faisal about Adib's interest in her since college and out of jealousy, Faisal slaps her. Zaina then tells Adib the truth about the parking lot incident and asks him to find out who is behind it.

Faisal decides to marry Ghada only to save himself and Zaina from Musa'ad. Zaina then finds Faisal's marriage contract in his closet and tells him about it. Faisal explains that he did it to save them but she refuses to believe him. Faisal then divorces Ghada and shows Zaina the divorce papers but she refuses to believe him and leaves the house to stay at the beach house.

At work, Zaina is approached by Adib and he proposes to marry her when she is granted a divorce by Faisal. Zaina notices Faisal hiding in the hallway and trying to listen to their conversation. Therefore, she accepts Adib's proposal. Faisal then goes to the beach house and confronts Zaina. He apologizes, tells her that he misses her, and that he did not cheat with Ghada but it was a misunderstanding. Zaina accepts his apology and they reconcile.

Storyline B Theme Analysis

This storyline provides one variation of a husband changing to salvage his marriage. It highlights the value of marriage and how the evolution that Moza envisioned is achieved. In this way, the thematic meaning of this storyline maintains that honesty and trust between the couple makes the marriage worthwhile. This is achieved when the husband is trustworthy and honest to his wife in order to keep and improve the conditions of his marriage. Without this maturity, the marriage is unstable.

By committing adultery early in the storyline and being caught twice by Zaina, the storyline is highlighting how Faisal is a dishonest character and that this dishonesty is ruining the conditions of his marriage. However, the problem with Ghada and Musa'ad provides an opportunity for Faisal to be honest and tell Zaina the truth. Instead, Faisal conceals the issue from Zaina and even lies when asked about Musa'ad's note. Thus, there is an insistence to remain dishonest despite not having a relationship of any sorts with Ghada and a failure to realize that this is stopping him from winning his wife's trust. As a result, this dishonesty continues to complicate his relationship with his wife to the point where the trust is completely lost and as a result, the marriage is viewed as

insignificant for Zaina. Clearly, Faisal's goal is to keep his marriage but fails to realize that being dishonest is making him lose his wife's trust.

In contrast, Zaina wants Faisal to be honest so she can trust him. Only then is this marriage worth keeping. Despite finding out that he cheated and is lying to her, Zaina continues to give him another chance. Thus, the character is tolerating the marriage. However, because of his constant untruthfulness, she gives up on this marriage. This is highlighted when Faisal divorces Ghada and shows Zaina the paperwork but she refuses to believe him and leaves. However, it is only when he confronts his wife and explains everything about Ghada and Musa'ad, Zaina believes and forgives him. This honesty repairs the conditions of the marriage by making him trustworthy and as a result, makes the marriage worthwhile for Zaina. Clearly, the issues here is the transformation of Faisal and through it, the storyline highlights his worthiness of being a husband. Without this transformation and maturity, from dishonesty to honesty, the conditions of this marriage worsen. With the transformation, the theme meanings highlights that marriage is valuable when there is honesty and trust between the couple.

Storyline C Synopsis

On the night of their anniversary, Amina is up late awaiting her husband Saud to return home and celebrate together. She calls to check on him and it turns out that Saud has forgotten about their anniversary. Because it is too late to go shopping for a gift, Saud borrows a necklace from his mother and gives it to Amina. However, Amina gives Saud a brand new gift and realizes that the necklace he gave her is the one she

bought for his mother a year earlier. As a result, she is disappointed and her anniversary is ruined.

Days later, Amina, excited to show her friends a VHS of her wedding, plays the VHS and finds out that Saud recorded a football match over their pre-recorded wedding. The revelation shocks her because the VHS is her only copy of the wedding and she cries in despair.

Later, Saud is out fishing with his friend Wahab at night. Wahab's fishing line is stuck in the water and dives to detach it, only to sink without Saud being able to help him. Saud is miserable about losing his best friend and blames himself for Wahab's death. Therefore, Saud decides to take care of Wahab's family by buying them groceries and helping Wahab's son, Homoud, with his homework. On his way to picking up Homoud for school, Saud realizes that Wahab's widow, Rasha, is laboring and he decides to take her to the hospital. He also decides to pay for Rasha's hospital room and take Homoud with him to the beach house to play with his children.

At the beach house, Thunayan S and Homoud get into a fight and Saud sides with Homoud and grounds his son. Thunayan S then tells Amina that he dislikes Homoud because his father treats him better. Later, Rasha tells Saud that constantly visiting their house ruins her social reputation. Therefore, Saud decides to marry Rasha to be able to take care of her and her children without damaging their reputation and conceals this marriage from Amina.

Weeks later, Rasha tells Saud that she is pregnant but he shows no signs of excitement, instead, Saud is worried because his marriage to Rasha was only a reason

for him to be able to redeem himself and take care of his best friend's family. Later, Amina tells Saud that she is pregnant.

However, Rasha confesses to Saud that she has feelings for him but he reminds her that the marriage only took place for him to be able to take care of her and the children and that he does not feel the same way towards her. Rasha tells Saud that she wants him to be around her more than being with Amina but he refuses because he loves Amina.

Saud goes to Amina's house and while changing his clothes, he finds a pregnancy tester in his pocket. Saud realizes that Rasha plant it there for Amina to find. In this way, Rasha is trying to ruin Saud's marriage. Saud disagrees with Rasha for planting a pregnancy tester and tells her that it is difficult for him to manage both marriages.

Days later, Rasha labors and is taken to the hospital where she dies along with the baby while giving birth. Saud then moves Homoud and Mohammad to Amina's house. One night, Amina notices Mohammad wearing Saud's shirt and tells him to take it off. Mohammad refuses and tells Amina that his mom bought this shirt for Saud which reveals to Amina that Saud and Rasha were in a relationship. Amina tells Saud that she is aware of his marriage to Rasha and he insists that he never loved her and only married her to take care of her children. Amina leaves the house to stay at the beach house. Saud then follows her and apologizes for being selfish and inconsiderate. Amina forgives him and they reconcile.

Storyline C Theme Analysis

Unlike the previous storyline where the growth required the protagonist to be honest and trustworthy, this storyline is about a protagonist seeking redemption and constantly putting himself first and his wife and family second. As a result, the conditions of his marriage continue to worsen and are only improved when he finally realizes the need to care about his marriage and be considerate to his wife. By valuing this marriage, he is able to salvage it. Thus, the theme meaning is about the value of marriage but the argument posed is that a marriage is worth having and keeping when it is valued by both the husband and wife.

To highlight the thematic meaning, the storyline initiates with Saud being inconsiderate towards his wife and fails to value his marriage. This behavior is consistent throughout his decisions and actions. For instance, he forgets about his anniversary and goes fishing, records a football match over his wedding tape, and finally marries another woman to redeem himself for the loss of his friend. In each case, Saud is prioritizing himself and ignoring his spouse. Clearly, the character undervalues his marriage. However, the loss of his second marriage and Amina leaving to the beach house after finding out about his second marriage are the turning points for Saud. The loss of the second wife and the fear of losing the first highlight Saud's realization of the value of his marriage. When Saud apologizes to Amina about being inconsiderate and selfish, the apology and his excuses are indications that the character has learned the value of his marriage to Amina. The character that once disregarded this marriage has finally come to a realization after being threatened to lose it.

Amina's acceptance of his apology foregrounds her goal. For Amina, respect and consideration is what she pursued from this marriage. This is highlighted in her values. Her preparation and consideration of their anniversary, her excitement and pride in showing her wedding tape, and finally her disappointment about Saud being married to another wife are all indicative that this character values her marriage and wants her husband to do the same thing. Moreover, her behavior in each case displays her perspective about the marriage, which indicates what the marriage means to her. Therefore, for Amina, her marriage is important. However, when she decides to leave to the beach house, it highlights that the marriage is no longer significant unless the husband starts valuing it the way she does. When Saud finally acknowledges the value of his marriage, he is able to change the conditions and reconcile with his wife. In return, this details the learning process that Saud undergoes and that marriage is valuable. Amina accepting his apology and reconciling highlights that this marriage is now worth salvaging, because both parties value it.

Storyline D Synopsis

Tasnim answers her home phone and a man on the other side of the line asks about Ahmad and informs her that the landlord awaits the month's rent. Tasnim is surprised from the query and suspects that Ahmad is married to another woman. Tasnim follows Ahmad to the building and learns that Ahmad is supporting his friend, Bo Adel, and his family by paying their rent because Bo Adel is crippled.

One night, on their way out of the supermarket, Ahmad and Tasnim find Khalid and his mother Najat disputing in the parking lot. Ahmad approaches Khalid and calms him down. Ahmad learns that Khalid is troubled with his mother and his uncle dismissed

him from their house. Therefore, Ahmad offers to have Khalid sleep over at his house. The next morning, Ahmad wakes up and cannot find Khalid and realizes that his watch is missing. Ahmad then receives a phone call from the police and heads to the station where he finds that Khalid tried selling his watch to a jeweler and was caught by the police. Ahmad bails him out by telling the police that he gifted Khalid the watch. Outside of the police station, Khalid and his mother are disputing over the incident and while he tries to run away from his mother, Khalid is hit by a car and is taken to the hospital. Ahmad donates blood for Khalid and he survives the accident.

Days later, because of hormonal exhaustion, Tasnim is pregnant and can barely tolerate Ahmad. Therefore, she tells him to sleep in another room and keep his distance for a while. Ahmad agrees but at the same time, he visits Khalid and interacts with Najat. Ahmad lectures Khalid about respecting his mother regardless of how she feels and Najat overhears him. Najat then thanks Ahmad, holds his hand, and invites him for lunch on a daily basis. She begins questioning Ahmad about his age, marital status, the number of children he has, and even offers to give him a ride to his house. Ahmad rejects the ride but later regrets doing so.

One day, Ahmad notices that the landlord is asking Najat for money at the hospital and he decides to pay their rent. He then decides to spend the night with Khalid at the hospital. Najat then tells Ahmad that she thinks they both like each other but he disagrees.

Later, Ahmad is told by Tasnim that she has overcome her hormone problems and he can now sleep in her room. While sleeping, Ahmad remembers what Najat said about liking each other, gets out of bed and leaves the house to go to the hospital.

There, Ahmad tells Najat that he has feelings for her and he felt jealous when he saw one of her coworkers visit her and Khalid. Najat explains that she is engaged to her workmate. Ahmad, disappointed by the revelation, tells her that they should stay away from each other. Days later, Ahmad receives a wedding invitation from Najat. He calls to congratulate her but she tells him that the invitation is fake and she only wanted to see his reaction and ensure that he cares.

On his way to visit Khalid, Ahmad learns that Tasnim is being rushed to the hospital and he immediately drives there. At the hospital, Najat visits Ahmad and brings him dinner but he asks her to leave and not be noticed by his family members.

Tasnim then leaves the hospital but Ahmad decides to sleep in the guest room and leave Tasnim alone with the baby. Ahmad then decides to marry Najat and confronts Tasnim about it. Although she disapproves and asks for a divorce, he ignores her wishes. Ahmad then proposes to Najat and she accepts to marry him. Tasnim learns of the marriage and again asks Ahmad for a divorce but he refuses because it is his religious right to do so.

Najat's and Ahmad decide to keep their marriage a secret from Khalid. One night, Khalid knocks on his mother's bedroom door and Ahmad hides to prevent him from knowing about their marriage.

Days later, Khalid is riding next to Ahmad, opens the glove box, and finds the marriage contract. He argues with Ahmad for marrying his mom and leaves the car. Ahmad goes home and starts discussing his relationship with Tasnim. They both agree that they miss each other and their old life but he gets a phone call from Najat and decides to leave. Tasnim then packs and leaves to stay at the beach house.

After filing a lawsuit against his father, Ahmad informs Najat that he will need her help economically. Realizing that he is broke, Najat asks for a divorce. Ahmad complies and divorces her. Ahmad then goes to the beach house and tells Tasnim that he regrets marrying Najat and apologizes for doing so. Tasnim accepts his apology and they reconcile.

Storyline D Theme Analysis

In this storyline, the husband's perspective is that it is acceptable to have two wives at a time. Unlike the previous storylines where their second marriages take place without the first wife's knowledge, marriage in this storyline takes place with Tasnim's knowledge. Thus, for Ahmad, learning the value of his marriage happens when he realizes that his second marriage is failing because of the woman he chose. In the process, he learns that his first marriage and wife is the one to preserve. It is about Ahmad learning the value of marriage and being able to differentiate between women and marriages, and identify the worthy one. Also, it highlights the shift of his perspective, from polygamy to monogamy. Thematically, the storyline proposes that marriage is valuable when it is monogamous. Through monogamy, Ahmad and Tasnim agree that their marriage is worth keeping.

To highlight the significance of accepting monogamy as an appropriate form of marriage, this storyline again argues for the value of marriage. Through Tasnim's character, the story conveys that her values in having this form of marriage. For instance, she immediately checks with the building to find out who the apartment Ahmad is paying rent for belongs to. Moreover, she rejects his offer of marrying another woman and asks for a divorce after learning that he has. Finally, she leaves the house

and separates from Ahmad. Clearly, Tasnim is only accepting of having a marriage where the husband is only married to her.

In contrast, Ahmad's values highlight that he believes in having more than one marriage at a time. Unlike his brothers where they kept their marriages secret and practiced polygamy for other reasons, Ahmad's practicing of polygamy is motivated by his belief that it is acceptable. This is highlighted when he approaches Tasnim and informs her that he is marrying another woman. Also, it is highlighted in him refusing to divorce Tasnim and insisting on having both marriages. Finally, when he reveals that it is a religious right, the revelation conveys his notions and justifies his consistent behavior. Clearly, this character believes that having more than one wife is appropriate. However, when he breaks up with Najat and divorces her, Ahmad is left with one marriage. The marriage he is left with is also breaking up and for him to preserve it; he must value having one marriage and adhere to Tasnim's values. Once Ahmad does, the storyline conveys that the marriage is worth keeping. Therefore, the thematic meaning is that the monogamous marriage is worthwhile.

Storyline E Synopsis

Marzouq interrogates his wife Dalal before leaving the house, questions her about her friends, and demands that she puts on less make up. Dalal leaves her house and finds her car with a flat tire. She returns inside and Marzouq informs her that he finds it difficult to trust her friends and insists on giving her a ride. Although Dalal disagrees and they argue, Marzouq's nose bleeds and in consideration for his condition, Dalal agrees to have him drive her to her friends.

One day, while driving to work, Marzouq passes by Dalal's car, calls her cell and insists that she returns home but she refuses and he threatens her. Dalal cries and tells him she's going to stay at her parents' house. Marzouq apologizes and she forgives him.

At work, Marzouq investigates his suspect, Nuha, for dating while under the age of 21. He threatens to bring in her father but she begs him not to because the father is old and ill and knowing about this incident could kill him. Marzouq ignores Nuha's request, brings in the father and verbally harasses him for not being attentive to his daughter until the father faints and dies. While visiting Moza's house with her cousin Jenan, Nuha recognizes Marzouq and decides to seek revenge. Therefore, Nuha markets her business, a home service salon, to Dalal and Dalal books an appointment. Days later, two employees from Nuha's salon visit Dalal to offer their services, and in the process steal some of Dalal's clothes, sunglasses, and jewelry.

One day, Marzouq receives a note at work with a message from someone who claims he can date his wife. Marzouq returns home angry, grabs Dalal's phone from her hands, and finds that she is only texting her friend. Later, he finds Dalal's sunglasses on his windshield with a note stating that she forgot them at her lover's house. Marzouq then begins interrogating his son Thunayan D about what Dalal does when he is at work. Dalal walks in and tells Marzouq to stop interrogating the child. He then hides his infant daughter from Dalal and she cries and tells him to stop involving her children in their problems. Dalal asks for a divorce but Marzouq apologizes and she forgives him under the condition that he keeps the children away from their problems.

While visiting Dalal's house again, Nuha's employees place a bag full of birth control pills near Marzouq's drawers. Marzouq later finds the pills and asks Dalal about whom she is cheating with but she ignores him. Marzouq grabs his gun and points it at Dalal, threatens to kill her, and dismisses her from the house. Dalal leaves and goes to stay at the beach house. Marzouq then leaves for work only to stop on the side of the road because he is unable to see and is losing his vision. He is then taken to the hospital by Ez and the doctor informs Marzouq that he has multiple sclerosis.

The next day, a former employee of Nuha's brings a box full of Dalal's clothes to the house. Marzouq is surprised and both he and Ez follow the employee's car and arrive at Nuha's house. Marzouq realizes that its Nuha who has been planting his wife's clothes and sending him notes to ruin his marriage. Infuriated from the revelation, Marzouq leaves the car to enter Nuha's house but stops feeling his body and drops on the ground.

Because his condition worsened, Marzouq is paralyzed and must be in a wheelchair. Marzouq is later taken to the beach house by Ez where he apologizes to Dalal and tells her that he regrets mistreating her. Dalal forgives him, they reconcile, and he undergoes a successful surgery.

Storyline E Theme Analysis

This storyline is the most extreme version of women suffering to keep their marriages. Also, it highlights the importance of marriage for men. The outcome developing from the plot suggests that a woman is to suffer and withstand abuse to commit to a marriage. In this way, the theme meaning proposes that there is potential to

improve the conditions of a marriage and when the wife tolerates abuse, the husband will eventually learn and need his wife.

What differentiates this storyline from the other marriages is that the condition that stops Marzouq from being abusive is a health condition. Although he does learn that Nuha framed Dalal, his abusive behavior has been consistent even before Nuha's impact. However, despite his health condition not being a direct consequence of his behavior towards his wife, it is part of his change. After learning that Nuha was framing Dalal and being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, Marzouq decides to apologize and reconcile with Dalal. In a way, the health condition made him need his wife. However, it is his wife's tolerance to his abusive behavior and patience all along that provided the potential for this marriage to evolve. Her consistency in tolerating his abusive behavior highlights that she values this marriage and suffers to keep it. Therefore, this marriage is worthwhile for Dalal. His apology at the end provides a different meaning from the apologies of his brothers to their wives. It implies that he is regretful and in need for his wife and for the marriage to continue. This need makes him finally realize the value of his marriage.

Storyline F Synopsis

While driving at night, Ez runs over a girl. He leaves his car to check on her, but decides to leave her on the side of the road and drive away.

Days later, Ez tells his cousin Moza N that he thinks she is pretty and she is overjoyed from his remark. One night, Ez finds Jenan in a wheelchair and studying with Moza N. He recognizes that she is the girl he ran over. Ez decides to date Jenan. Both

Ez and Jenan begin to date and he suggests that she keeps their relationship concealed to prevent Moza N from knowing. Jenan agrees to do so.

Ez tells Moza N that she is beautiful and when she displays signs of joy, he begins making fun of her and tells her that it is only a prank. Moza N is disappointed and saddened by the prank. She then blames her mother for failing to teach her how to dress properly to attract Ez. Nadia promises to help Moza N by teaching her how to put on make-up and select outfits. In the process, Nadia lies to Ez and informs him that Moza N is engaged.

While Jenan is visiting their house, Ez mistakenly places a note proposing to marry Jenan in Moza N's notebook instead of Jenan's. Moza N finds the note and thinks that he is proposing to her. She celebrates and tells Ez that she accepts but is shocked when he tells her that the note was intended for Jenan. He then seeks Moza N's help in selecting a gift for Jenan. She agrees to help him and he buys her a gift along with Jenan. However, Ez decides to postpone their wedding because of Salem's death but Jenan disagrees with him. Because of their disagreement, they break up and Ez tells Moza N about it.

Ez then directs romantic lines at Moza N and she thinks he is flirting with her. However, he tells her that he is practicing these lines to reconcile with Jenan and Moza N is emotionally distraught. Days later, Ez makes fun of Moza N's looks while speaking with Jenan over the phone. Moza N overhears him and cries. Later, Ez finds out that Shahah gave Jenan his old pictures and in them is the car that he ran over Jenan with. Fearing that Jenan might notice the car and realize that he ran over her, Ez tells Moza

N to bring them back before Jenan sees them and Moza N agrees to help him. Moza N then tells Ez that she loves him and has loved him for a while which surprises him.

Before their wedding, Jenan confesses to her cousin Nuha that she purposely threw herself in-front of the car in a suicide attempt because her family refused to let her marry her boyfriend.

After their marriage, Ez calls Moza N and tells her that he does not love Jenan and only married her to redeem himself. Moza N informs him about Jenan's suicide attempt and he refuses to believe her and calls her a selfish liar. Jenan overhears him, tells him the truth about the suicide attempt, and offers him the choice of divorce. Ez divorces Jenan and informs his family. He then tells Moza N that he loves her and wants to be with her but Moza N rejects his proposal, tells him that she does not love him anymore, and she goes on to marry someone else.

Storyline F Theme Analysis

In this storyline, the concentration is on the maturity of Ez. Through his lack of transformation, the storyline is able to convey how it affects his goal and his relationships. Because he fails to mature, the theme meaning of the storyline highlights that an immature man is undeserving of a marriage.

Ez is presented as an immature character that constantly fails to realize the outcomes of his decisions. For instance, he escapes the accident scene and leaves Jenan to die. Had he called for help, he could have saved her from being disabled. He also disregards Moza N's feelings by constantly making fun of her and in the process emotionally hurting her. Finally, his decision to engage in a relationship with Jenan and marry her is a matter of redemption. Not only is this character failing to realize the

consequences of his decisions, but his decisions are also hurting others. Thus, for Ez, it is acceptable to use others for his own good, which is highlighted in the couple of times that he seeks Moza N's help despite hurting and verbally abusing her.

In contrast to Ez, Moza N cares about him and values their relationship. This is highlighted when she changes her looks just to please him and helps him buy a gift for Jenan. In this way, Moza N's perspective is the opposite of his. She prioritizes his needs and is considerate of his feelings. However, Ez fails to transform and learn. Therefore, he remains immature and fails to value others. Although he asks to marry Moza N after divorcing from Jenan, the proposal is too late and indicative that he is proposing to Moza N because he is redeeming himself from a wrong decision, which is to marry Jenan. His immediate divorce once given the chance by Jenan and Moza N's rejection to his proposal highlight that this Ez is unworthy of marriage. Therefore, thematically the storyline conveys that marriage to an immature man is unachievable.

Storyline G Synopsis

Mansour points out to his wife Shahah that she should seek medical attention from his sister for her infertility. Therefore, Shahah visits Mansour's sister and she is told that her exams indicate that she is infertile and will need further treatment. Unsatisfied with her results, Shahah tells Mansour that she would like to seek medical care overseas but he rejects the idea. Mansour convinces Shahah that they could take it slowly because he is not in a hurry to have children.

Shahah decides to show the medicines prescribed by Mansour's sister to Zaina. After seeing the medications, Zaina informs Shahah that they are only vitamins. Therefore, Zaina decides to take Shahah for a second opinion from another doctor. The

results from her second opinion report indicate that Shahah is fertile. Despite the results, Shahah tells Zaina that Mansour and his sister are liars but she will forgive him because she loves him.

Mansour calls Dalal, flirts with her and tries to convince her about having a romantic affair with him but Dalal rejects his proposal. Mansour tries again but she threatens to tell her husband and the entire family about his attempts. However, Mansour approaches Dalal's car near her house, tries to convince her for the third time and gives her a key to his apartment. Later, Dalal calls Mansour and tells him to meet her at his apartment. Dalal arrives before Mansour, he walks in and starts flirting only to find Moza appearing from the hallway. Moza forces him to divorce Shahah without telling her to refrain from hurting her feelings.

Mansour goes to his house and divorces Shahah. He then informs her that he divorced her because he is infertile and did not want to hold her back from having children. Shahah believes him and he convinces her to remarry without her family's knowledge to avoid any objections that could arise from the fact that they had just divorced. Later, Mansour tells Shahah that he needs money and she writes him a check. Despite writing him a big amount, Mansour asks for the house and Shahah decides to relinquish her house to satisfy him.

One night, Shahah returns home from visiting her family and finds Mansour with another woman. Disgraced and shocked, Shahah tells him to divorce her and he agrees to do so under the condition that she writes him another check. Shahah leaves and calls Mansour at a later time to discuss the divorce and Dalal overhears her conversation. Shahah then asks Dalal to help her divorce Mansour. Dalal calls Mansour and threatens

to show everyone his text messages if he fails to divorce Shahah without any conditions. Mansour agrees to Dalal's request and divorces Shahah.

Storyline G Theme Analysis

The difference between this marriage and all the other marriages is that Mansour is not one of Moza's sons. Also, as highlighted in storyline A, Moza is against this marriage after finding out that Mansour is cheating on her daughter. In this way, it is a perspective on the daughter being in an unhealthy marriage and Moza wants this marriage to end. Although Shahah values her marriage and is willing to be with Mansour without her family's knowledge, Mansour is quite the opposite. In this way, the storyline thematically argues that being tolerant to this marriage is inconvenient.

To highlight how this marriage is different, Mansour regards his marriage as a way to benefit economically. Thus, for Mansour, that is Shahah's purpose. This is displayed in him lying about her infertility and sending her to his own sister for evaluation. Clearly, he is refraining from having a child with Shahah. Moreover, he tries to cheat on her with her brother's wife, Dalal, and when she asks for a divorce, Mansour demands that she writes him a check. In contrast to Mansour, Shahah values her marriage and is willing to suffer to keep it. For instance, she finds out that he lied about the infertility and decides to forgive him, adheres to his wish and secretly remarries him without her family's knowledge, and relinquishes her house to ensure his economic security. However, Shahah's transformation is where the storyline conveys that her mother's perspective about Mansour and this marriage is accurate. Although Shahah never knew that it was her mother who forced Mansour to divorce her daughter, she learns that being in a marriage with Mansour is the wrong decision. She transforms from

being accepting to his misbehavior to rejecting it and involving Dalal to threaten Mansour and get rid of this marriage. In this way, the storyline reinforces Moza's perspective. Shahah recognizes her mistake in remarrying and salvaging this marriage.

Sociocultural Context

Unlike the pre-satellite and the satellite eras where social issues and thematic meanings were specifically constructed for Kuwaiti viewers and to a lesser extent pan-Arab audiences, social issues presented in contemporary Kuwaiti serials are constructed to address viewers from Kuwait and other Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC). These countries are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, and The United Arab Emirates. The difference is that issues in contemporary serials can concern pan-Arab audiences but are developed to convey thematic meanings that reflect Kuwaiti values. For instance, issues such as adultery are debated regionally due to the increase in the number of cases occurring in many Arab countries and in many of these cases, adultery is stated as the primary reason for the rising number of divorces (Khamis, 2015). Countries where adultery is a central social issue include Morocco and Saudi Arabia (Allilou, 2015). Therefore, Kuwaiti serials highlight this issue in more than one storyline by positioning the unfaithful character in specific circumstances to foreground the value of marriage. Foregrounding the significance of marriage addresses the concerns of Kuwaitis and GCC viewers. Addressing social issues in this form would entice pan-Arab audiences and at the same time, 'Kuwaiticize' storylines. The emphasis on marriages is derived from the increase in divorces and the change in perception about marriage in Kuwait. According to Anser Layachi, "Despite the prevalence of traditional values important changes in the concept of marriage are apparent, including

a gradual move away from arranged marriages, relative delay in the age of marriage, and emergence of marriage across ethnic and class boundaries" (2013, p. 65). The same study shows that in Kuwait, divorce rates have grown and range between 34% and 46% (2013, p. 65). In 2017, 60% of the marriages ended in divorce and the number of marriages declined while the number of divorces increased ("Arab Times," 2017). This change in perception about marriage is associated with the empowerment of women and their socioeconomic status. The need to marry for economic security is no longer the case because females in Kuwait are now regular participants in the workforce. For women, education and obtaining jobs are primary endeavors and more important than marriage (Westall, 2012). Also, addressing family economics is no longer a priority because of the status of contemporary Kuwaiti economy. After the war, the government set up a plan and succeeded in rebuilding the infrastructure and growing the economy in the early 2000s (Pfeifer, 2004). The economic growth and the rise of oil prices in 2007 increased job opportunities and helped raise the social living standards (Hamilton, 2009). Therefore, family economics became less of a social concern to Kuwaiti society.

However, as highlighted in the previous case study, during the 1990s postwar society began to acknowledge the role of Kuwaiti women due to the war and their economic participation was slowly progressing. The economic situation of the 1990s and the gradual progression increased the amount of women's economic participation. Female labor force participation in Kuwait changed drastically from year 1991 until 2019. Recently, Kuwait ranked first in the region in terms of female labor force participation and opportunity ("Arab Times," 2018). Women have also gained more

political rights. In 2005, the Kuwaiti parliament agreed to have women vote and participate in the government (Olimat, 2009). Therefore, a change in the role of women has been developing economically, politically, and socially. This change has influenced perceptions and the status of marriage in Kuwaiti society. For writers, addressing social issues about these debates would entice Kuwaiti and GCC viewers but the strategy to broaden the amount of thematic variations on social issues within a serial is made available by this thirty episode form. One writer explains that

> Social issues were limited in the past in comparison with what is produced today because serials were shorter and the amount of storylines one could write and develop to fit a limited number of episodes was less than the amount pervading serials today. There is a broad range of social issues discussed in contemporary serials which was not the case back then (Writer 3, Network Proliferation Era).

This form of social issue construction, increased in number and Kuwaiticized, is significant for the television landscape during the network proliferation era. Salamandra (2010) notes that during this era, Syrian writers are struggling to address social issues that concern the state of their society and country because television networks expect and demand serials to address issues that concern viewers from GCC countries. Because of their tribal roots and historical developments, these countries share similar cultural values and concerns. The focus on GCC audiences is derived from network and advertising preferences. Sakr highlights that “Advertisers’ biases towards wealthy Gulf audiences must also be taken into account, especially for Egyptian and Lebanese satellite companies, whose managers are keenly aware that, in order to maximize revenues, their programs should be suitable for Gulf consumption” (1999, p. 8). A report highlighting the trends and opportunities for producers and broadcasters demonstrates the rapid growth of access and viewing habits in the Gulf region (Chahine, El Sharkawy,

& Mahmoud, 2007). For producers, Gulf audiences are mandatory because of their viewing habits but for advertisers, Gulf audiences are mandatory because of their wealth and ability to spend on products. As a result, studies have encouraged advertisers to display their products on Arab networks and specifically identify Gulf audiences as an attractive market (Kalliny, 2014; Sakr, 2007). By considering Gulf viewers as the primary target for networks and advertisers, Kuwaiti serials are produced to culturally relate to GCC audiences. However, because Kuwait is part of the GCC countries, Kuwaiticizing storylines becomes less of a problem for Kuwaiti writers. In fact, sharing conservative cultural values with neighboring GCC countries provides writers the freedom to address issues in a form that is considered acceptable for the Kuwaiti and neighboring viewers.

With adultery and divorce being central to Kuwaiti and GCC societies, the process of Kuwaiticizing social issues is explained by one of the interviewees, “I usually get my ideas from regional media outlets and sometimes regional serials or films but I develop the issues differently to reflect Kuwaiti concerns” (Writer 2, Network Proliferation Era). Another writer insists that Saudi audiences are dedicated viewers of Kuwaiti serials, “We consider Saudi viewers because they are important and form the majority of audiences and advertisers support prevailing issues that concern Saudi society” (Writer 1, Network Proliferation Era). To further elaborate on how social issues are developed, the same writer declares,

> As a writer, I try to target general issues that any GCC country can relate to. Writing a serial specific to Kuwaiti society alone is no longer the aim. GCC viewers such as Saudis welcome the idea of seeing their issues being reflected in Kuwaiti society rather than being reflected in their own society (Writer 1, Network Proliferation Era).

These assertions explain how *Zawarat Al Khamis* develops social issues and thematic meanings that provide variations on the patriarchal system. While there has been a change in perspective about patriarchy in Kuwait, other GCC societies still withhold traditional patriarchal values (Anser, 2008). For instance, the narrative provides four women characters that need to be tolerant to the misbehavior of their husbands and accept the patriarchal system. The other two women, Moza and Shahah, leave their husbands once the husbands commit adultery. In this way, the narrative appeals to various GCC audiences.

Alqashan notes that “In Kuwait, increasing rates of family breakdown and divorce have raised public concern about the severity of marital and family problems” (2008, p. 2). This explains the overarching perspective of storyline A. In Moza’s character arc, the thematic meaning develops to highlight the flexibility when dealing with these traditional values about patriarchy. This flexibility highlights that only when this system is convenient to the family; it is acceptable to adhere to it. When it is inconvenient to the family, it is acceptable to abandon it. Because of the rise in the number of divorces and shifts in responsibilities and expectations between spouses in Kuwait (El-Haddad, 2003), the narrative highlights the significance of the family to address these breakdowns. In this way, adhering to the traditional patriarchal values is optional rather than mandatory. This is also a product of the political situation in contemporary Kuwait. During the pre-satellite era, the political tension in the region threatened the legitimacy of the government. Therefore, the single united family was adopted to protect the ruling family and instill patriarchal values. During the satellite era, the political situation required finding national unity and reinforcing this national ideology of the single united

family to reestablish the country after the invasion and legitimize the government. However, the political environment in contemporary Kuwait has settled due to the lack of political threats arising in the region and the flourishing economic situation (Crystal, 2016). Therefore, imposing traditional patriarchal values are no longer necessary for the government. With women now politically and economically empowered, Kuwaiti society is gradually shifting from patriarchy to partnership (Anser, 2008).

Although the facets of these traditional values are weakening in Arab societies (Al-Kazi, 2008), the narrative ensures that the variations provided are able to appeal to traditionalist and the more liberated GCC viewers. The serial highlights that men are to grow, mature, and value their marriages. Those that fail to mature are unable to settle and marry (Storyline F). Also, women are to be patient and tolerant to these men until they mature. Thus, a traditional perspective is provided. However, there is also a different perspective, provided through the characters of Moza and Shahah, which departs these traditional beliefs. While issues of adultery, polygamy, and abuse are plotted to disrupt the conditions of the marriage, the meaning associated with these storylines build to argue for the value of marriage. In contrast, adultery in Mansour's and Thunayan's cases develops to provide meanings that depart these traditional values about women suffering for the sake of keeping their marriages. An interviewee notes that "It is about the ways in which social issues are addressed rather than what their subject matter is" (Writer 2, Network Proliferation Era).

However, women are also presented with more agency and are portrayed as powerful characters. It is through these women that the marriages are contained. Their patience eventually keeps their families. Even in Moza's case, her patience and care for

her children keeps their families. Her decision to have her daughter divorce Mansour saves her daughter. Moreover, Shahah's decision to stay with Mansour is what kept their marriage intact. Also, this power is highlighted from another perspective. The polygamous marriages are influenced by women. For instance, Ghada influences Faisal's decision, Rasha influences Saud's decision, Najat influences Ahmad's decision, Jenan influences Ez's decision, and Nadia influences Thunayan's decision. Even in the storyline where marriage is not the problem, Nuha influences Marzouq's treatment of Dalal. Clearly, they influence and impact the decision making of the male characters. In these cases, women are either luring men into marrying them or have enough agency to influence their behavior. This emphasis and progress in the social status of women characters highlights the difference between serials from the previous eras where they were clearly subordinate in the familial structure and their decisions relied on the approval of the patriarchs. In this serial, women subordination is lesser than previous eras. Not only do they possess the power to lure men, keep their families, and make significant decisions about their families and relationships, but in none of the storylines are they subjected to the decision of the patriarch or husband. These specific portrayals highlight the change in the social status of women within Kuwaiti families and how their current statuses differ from that of the satellite and the pre-satellite eras.

In this way, women are no longer characters that function as housewives or narrative elements that support the protagonists' arc like those presented in *Al-Aqdar*, nor are they characters that either function to economically support the family, raise children and be housewives, or are only economically empowered like those presented in *Bo Marzouq*. Instead, the narrative acknowledges women as significant characters

that dictate outcomes and that the husbands must account for their desires. Through this positioning of men and women, the narrative is able to reflect the status of men and women in contemporary Kuwaiti society. However, there are also limitations in portrayals. Writers explain that addressing these social concerns attracts viewers without offending cultural norms. As a result, storylines with romantic affairs end in polygamous marriages. One writer notes that

> Adultery has been utilized because of our society. Our conservative society treats this issue as sensitive and writers capitalize on it despite the constraints of the censorship's department that require adultery to be committed by men and not women. This issue is mostly followed by viewers and engages their attention (Writer 1, Network Proliferation Era).

Without justifying adultery by ending it in a polygamous marriage, the serial would convey that Kuwaiti women are sinners. This manifestation is considered offensive for a Muslim society where a woman's sexual behavior is an essential and sensitive part of the family's honor (Tétreault 2001). Therefore, failing to resolve the social issues of adultery through polygamous marriages would cause controversy. A study shows that more than half of the Kuwaiti participants agree that females should be punished for committing adultery and a third of the participants support a law that would legalize violence against female adulterers (Gengler, Alkazemi, & Alsharekh, 2018). These results reflect the dominant perception about violence and female adultery and the considerations assumed by the writers when developing such portrayals. However, this also explains and justifies the storyline where violence towards a woman transpires. In storyline E, abuse is practiced by Marzouq towards Dalal. Despite his abuse, Dalal is to be patient and keep the marriage. Moreover, it also justifies Musaad's issue with Ghada and Faisal. In this case (storyline B), only marriage can save Faisal and Zaina's

lives from being killed by Musa'ad for his assumptions about Faisal committing adultery with Ghada. In Kuwait, the law is apologetic with honor killings and although such cases are rare, these killings occur every once in a while and have caught the attention of women activists who have only recently began to organize campaigns, Abolish 153, that advocate for the need to revoke the law (Al-Shammaa, 2017). In 2016, an art exhibition was completely dedicated for abolishing article 153, which states that honor killings are considered internal family issues (Alessi, 2016). To demonstrate the goal of their campaign and magnify their objectives, the website of the movement precisely describes article 153, "This law states that any man who surprises his mother, sister, daughter or wife in an unsavory sexual (Zinna) act with a man and kills her or him or both will be treated as committing a misdemeanor punishable by a maximum of 3 years in jail time and/or a fine of 3000 Rupees (KD 225)" ("Abolish 153," 2015). With this dominant perception about female adultery and violence towards female adulterers, writers are culturally aware and cautious when developing such storylines. One of the writers emphasizes that the priority for networks and production houses in terms of thematic meanings and social issues is to ensure that "Issues should not offend the culture or the society" (Writer 3, Network Proliferation Era). For advertisers, the aim is to present storylines that attract GCC audiences but these advertisers are uninvolved in storyline development. The relationship between networks and advertisers is sophisticated. Sakr explains that networks are unwilling to permit advertisers the freedom to intervene or have influence on plot specifics because their licenses can be suspended by country that they operate from if specific representations are presented (2007). Therefore, networks and production houses would rather have full control. The

process is to have writers write the script, gain approval from the censorship department, and ensure that a star or multiple stars are attached before agreeing to produce. According to one of the writers,

> One of the more significant factors for script approval is the amount of stars attached to a script and the censorship department's approval. Networks and production houses desire scripts that have stars attached to them. Actually, this is a criterion for approval. This is the way for them to attract sponsors. Stars bring more sponsors and networks want to attract as many sponsors as possible (Writer 3, Network Proliferation Era).

To further elaborate on this matter, another writer insists, "Networks have never intervened in my writing. They do not have any constraints because the script is shot first by the production house and then sold to the network" (Writer 2, Network Proliferation Era). Although advertisers are not directly involved, their preference for GCC audiences makes writers search for social issues that can relate to these audiences. According to an interviewee, "Adultery is relevant at all times but depends on how it is conveyed. Any GCC drama that deals with adultery will attract viewers because it is a significant social issue to GCC societies" (Writer 1, Network Proliferation Era). In this way, not only are writers concerned with writing issues and themes that concern society and attract audiences but they are also evaluating cultural acceptability despite the regionalization of television. The grapple between addressing social issues that concern GCC audiences and at the same time reflect Kuwaiti values demonstrates the changes occurring in the serial. Although one writer insists that social issues must reflect Kuwaiti society (Writer 3, Network Proliferation Era), addressing GCC social issues in a Kuwaiti context is a form adapted to ensure that serials can attract audiences, networks, and production houses in an era where syndication is no longer the primary source of revenue.

The difference between this era and the previous two is reflected in the gender social statuses and thematic meanings developed in *Zawarat Al Khamis.* During the pre-satellite era, female characters were positioned as housewives that are subordinate to that of the male characters. Their agency in plot development is extremely limited, and their decisions needed approval from the male characters. Munira needed approval from her husband and her brother to leave and live with her brother. Sebecha married Khalifa without seeing or knowing him and the decision was made by her father. Maryam also needed her father's approval to marry Eisa and Aisha needed her father's approval to study abroad and marry Bader. Although Najat deceived Khalifa, their divorce can only take place under Khalifa's permission. These approvals confirm the guardianship of the male characters and reinstate the country's national interest. Additionally, the storylines developed in *Al-Aqdar* construct thematic meanings that concern the patriarch's governance of the family's economics. The narrative is therefore constructed to convey meanings that address values concerning the patriarch's significance and position within Kuwaiti families. How different patriarchs value family and money is at the forefront of their thematic developments.

Although progression is made in regards to gender relations within Kuwaiti society in *Bo Marzouq*, it is limited and serves to preserve the patriarchal point of view. Women in the serial have more agency in regards to their decision making but this is only applicable to their economic participation and when there are no children involved. In this way, the progression is acceptable but under certain circumstances and with the approval of the patriarch. With these portrayals, the guardianship of women within

Kuwaiti families still existed and progression was only made from a socioeconomic perspective.

The changes in social reflections reveal the developments occurring in Kuwaiti society across eras and the technological imperatives of each television period. During the pre-satellite era, the emphasis for writers was to address the status of prewar society where the subordination of women within families was the norm due to the steady economy of the oil boom era and the status of the patriarch developed from the country's tribal roots. Because of that flourishing economic period, the participation of women in the family's economics and the elevation of their status within families were unnecessary. Also, because of the political tension of different movements that encouraged changes to the established structure of families in Kuwait, the government emphasized that media outlets encourage a social structure where the dominance of patriarchy is preserved and encouraged to legitimize and enforce the country's nationalism. This would also legitimize the government, its status, and protect its royal family form which is also derived from the country's tribal roots. Such emphasis is achievable during that era because productions across the Middle East were limited in number and syndication was the primary form of revenue. For producers, syndicating to other networks was almost guaranteed because networks needed to fill their broadcast schedule during Ramadan and most Middle Eastern countries failed to produce their own dramas. Also, viewers only had access to their country's networks without the ability to access networks from other parts of the Middle East. Therefore, the focus was to provide characters and thematic meanings that are Kuwaiti specific without considering pan-Arab audiences.

However, this emphasis changed after the war with Iraq because of the failing economy. Writers in the satellite era incorporated a variation of thematic meanings. Although circumstantial, some meanings encouraged the participation of women in the family's economy. The struggling economy, the heroics of Kuwaiti women during the war, and women movements began to influence social perspectives about women rights and equality. Therefore, postwar society was accepting to the change in women's economic participation due to the economic struggle of the time. Additionally, the satellite era provided direct competition because viewers began to access networks and serials from other nations across the Middle East during primetime slots in Ramadan. Therefore, developing themes where female characters are economically independent and elevating their social statuses would also help Kuwaiti serials attract broader pan-Arab audiences for as long as these social positions refrained from disturbing the patriarchal structure of the Kuwaiti family.

Finally, as highlighted in this section, gender relations and thematic meanings during this era progressed to the point where the serial addresses the behavior of men and more specifically, highlights the value of marriage. In the process, the serial investigates issues that concern contemporary Kuwaiti society and other GCC societies. The thematic variations provided concern both the traditional perspectives and the more liberal values. Rather than insisting on the patriarchal structure, the serial highlights that patriarchy is acceptable in circumstances and unacceptable in others. Family convenience is the priority and the value of marriage is at the forefront of these meanings. In this way, writers are able to provide storylines that are regarded as significant to the coveted GCC societies during an era where drama production

permeates the vast number of available networks and the increase of advertising revenue influences network preferences.

This section provided a thorough analysis of the changes occurring during the network proliferation era and the rationale for the depictions presented in *Zawarat Al Khamis*. The manipulation of social issues and the Kuwaiticization of these issues to ensure that they attract Kuwaiti and GCC audiences are undertaken by the writers. These writers aim to reflect Kuwaiti society through developing thematic meanings that portray specific relevant values and place the characters of men and women in specific social statuses and positions that are relevant and reflective of Kuwaiti society without offending the traditional norms. The next section will investigate the narrative form to assess the thirty episode format and highlight how it differs from the formats of the satellite and the pre-satellite eras.

Narrative Form

With serials now increasing the amount of episodes and presenting thirty episodes to meet the requirements of networks and advertisers to cover the entire month of Ramadan, the broadcasting schedule has changed from that of the satellite and pre-satellite eras. Writers are now required to provide an episode per day to cover thirty days and keep audiences returning on a daily basis. This shift is caused by the increase in the amount of networks during this era and the competition between networks over advertising revenue and audiences (Sakr, 2007). Addressing this changing landscape requires writers to develop serials in a form that is different and more intriguing for contemporary viewers. Therefore, providing four storylines and progressing all four in a serialized form like that of the satellite era is no longer a utilized

strategy in a competitive landscape. Providing certain storylines and introducing others later during the season or having a lengthy narrative ellipsis that is connected by returning characters like that of the pre-satellite era are useless to the daily broadcast. These strategies would require the exhaustion of the available storylines across thirty episodes. Therefore, contemporary writers tend to increase the amount of storylines and interweave them in a form that is similar to that of the continuous serial. In this way, they integrate soap opera elements into a closed serial format to ensure that the daily broadcast can offer viewers a variety and prevent the exhaustion of any particular storyline. Thus, adhering to the conventions of Kuwaiti serials from the previous two eras becomes problematic for inviting audiences back for the next day. As a result, unsteadily shifting between six or seven storylines and continuously changing the focus from one episode to the next would allow progression without boring viewers.

Although advertisers are not involved in storyline construction and their demands are fairly limited due to the sophisticated relationship with networks (Kraidy & Khalil, 2009; Sakr, 2007), demanding thirty episodes allows networks to sell more ad spots and compete for ad revenue with other networks. Filling the entire month of Ramadan increases the networks' chances for generating more revenue during this primetime month. Additionally, it allows the network to syndicate episodes after their first run. One of the writers explains, "I consider advertisers and network demands because they require thirty episode formats regardless of what my story is about and sometimes I find myself needing to add an extra storyline to cover narrative time and reach thirty episodes" (Writer 1, Network Proliferation Era). Although star attachment, serial summaries, and approval from the censorship department are criterions, networks insist

on having thirty episodes as a criterion for production approval. Another writer highlights how this works in the contractual agreement, “In the contract, it states that the writer is only obligated to provide thirty complete episodes and where the network decides to insert commercial breaks is a matter that concerns the network only” (Writer 3, Network Proliferation Era). By demanding thirty episodes, failing to inform the writers about where commercial breaks might occur, the network is able to increase the amount of commercial slots per episode as much as possible. In fact, commercial slots may increase from episode to episode and reach as many as eight breaks per episode (Writer 2; Writer 3, Network Proliferation Era).

These conditions inform and provide the writers with enough freedom to determine how to interweave their storylines during an episode and across the season. In *Zawarat Al Khamis*, six to seven storylines are presented within an episode. Rarely, the number drops to five storylines per episode. However, the emphasis in terms of progression is usually on three to four storylines. The other presented storylines would occur in the background similar to that of a soap opera. Although Christine Geraghty fails to precisely demonstrate the amount of total storylines occurring in a soap opera, she argues that episodes of the continuous serial focus on three storylines with the rest occurring in the background (1981). This form of storyline interweaving is further developed in contemporary soap operas. Kirstin Thompson contends that contemporary soap operas offer eight storylines per episode (Thompson, 2003). Interweaving eight storylines per episode is twice as many storylines as those presented in western primetime serials and series programmes (Dunleavy, 2017; Nelson, 1997; Newman, 2006). With six to seven storylines occurring in a single episode, *Zawarat Al Khamis* is

integrating this soap opera element into its closed narrative format. This allows writers to ensure that they are presenting most of their storylines to refrain from losing viewers that are interested in specific storylines. A storyline or two disappearing for an episode becomes less problematic because of the daily schedule. If a storyline disappears for an episode, viewers will not have to wait a couple of days to revisit their preferred storylines. This serves to enhance viewers' enthusiasm and keep them waiting for the subsequent episode. In this way, viewers that are satisfied with the progression of their preferred storylines would tune in for the next episode and those whose favorite storylines failed to progress will be eager to tune in as well. Two of the writers explain this process of storyline manipulation,

> I do not have a specific method for occurrences and I prefer not to allow the viewer to predict what the next storyline will be or what the next episode will contain. Sometimes a storyline occurs less than other storylines but begins to centralize towards the end of the season (Writer 1, Network Proliferation Era).

According to the other writer,

> I do not usually have a blueprint or a specific way of ordering my storylines through the season. It is about how I feel about the storylines during the writing process and that determines how and where my storylines occur and disappear (Writer 2, Network Proliferation Era).

Clearly, the manipulation of storylines is approached in a strategy that resembles soap operas in a closed narrative form where narrative closure is achieved. Storylines can centralize in different stages of the season. Although episodes will usually have three to four storylines progressing and central, this could change as the season progresses and in *Zawarat Al Khamis*, this happens quite often. This strategy also addresses the problem of exhausting storylines. With seven available storylines in thirty episodes, an even progression would require a significant amount of events and

repetition to achieve closure. Therefore, an unsteady progression can shift the focus throughout the season without exhausting any specific storyline. The interviewee insists that

> Each storyline progresses in a form that is distinct from the other storyline and so on. They progress at different rates through episodes. Every episode contains scenes to progress as many storylines as possible to provide a variety and offer some progression to the available storylines. The idea is to keep viewers engaged. The aim is to keep scenes short to move between storylines (Writer 3, Network Proliferation Era).

With this difference in the rate of progression, *Zawarat Al Khamis* is able to provide seven storylines and progress all seven without consistently focusing on specific storylines. This prevents the serial from forming a storyline hierarchy like that of British soap operas where the influence of outside agencies prioritize certain social issues over others (Henderson, 2007). In return, the dilemmas and social issues that interest different audiences in the pan-Arab landscape will be rewarded from day to day in a four week span. Although this form of interweaving is an element of soap operas, there is a vast difference between the two. In soap operas, dilemmas that are not centralized and can last for months or years without being addressed (De Kosnik, 2013). However, in *Zawarat Al Khamis,* there are only four weeks available for the narrative to achieve closure. Therefore, there is expectancy for storylines to progress and end on the final day of Ramadan. In this way, viewers are aware that their storylines will always be revisited and that centralizing specific storylines will only last for one or two days before other storylines replace them and so on.

However, the element of commentary which is also typical of soap opera episodes (Allen, 1985) is also utilized to a certain extent in this format. Occasionally, some episodes in *Zawarat Al Khamis* offer a significant amount of commentary on a

specific dramatic event. In this way, the episode is less focused on progressing storylines and more focused on highlighting character perspectives about specific issues and relationships. However, unlike soap operas where this element is consistently present in every episode and throughout the season, it is sporadic in *Zawarat Al Khamis*. As the writer highlighted, most episodes are concerned with progressing as many storylines and scenes are approximately two minutes in length. In this way, from a beat by beat perspective, the serial utilizes the American primetime (PTS) serial scene length described by Newman (2006). Therefore, not only does *Zawarat Al Khamis* incorporate soap opera elements into its closed serial, but because of the shift in the television landscape, the serial adopts a beat design to address the competitiveness in a network proliferation era. The difference is beats in PTS programmes construct season acts due to the sophistication of the sweeps seasons and to build arcs for future seasons. In *Zawarat Al Khamis*, beats are constructed to only provide information and build arcs to achieve narrative closure in episode thirty and adhere to the boundaries of the holy month of Ramadan. In this way, these beats are to address as many storylines as possible, provide character depth, and establish plots by shifting the focus from one episode to the next to keep all seven storylines relevant rather than concentrating on specific A and B plots like the PTS format.

With these distinctions exhibiting the uniqueness of this thirty episode form, there is also a development in the complexity of characters across three production eras. In *Al-Aqdar*, characters fail to develop or learn through the progression of their arcs. Although some characters acknowledge their flaws during the climax, the majority of characters fail to learn from their mistakes. Eisa, Bader, Homoud, and Khalifa are

passive and arrive at the resolution without change. Female characters are constructed similarly. Munira, Maryam, Aisha, Najat, and Sebecha are the same characters in the beginning as they are in the end. This is similar to how soap operas, according to Rosalind Coward, developed their characters (1986). Therefore, characters are either righteous and their progression is constituted to move from plot point to plot point without changing or learning, or are immoral and their movement through plot points is also consistent. Such character construction is suitable for the level of audience sophistication during that period. In their responses, writers insist on the development of events without any specificity or concentration on character development (Writer 1; Writer 2; Writer 3, Pre-Satellite Era).

However, in *Bo Marzouq*, characters vary in terms of complexity. Some characters learn and change while others fail to do so. Bo Marzouq, Bo Adel, Nora, and Azhar learn that their perspectives are inaccurate and they change their point of views to resolve their conflicts. Jasem, Marzouq, Om Marzouq, and Huda fail to develop. In this way, the variation involves both male and female characters. Clearly, it is a progression from serials of the pre-satellite era. In fact, writers during this era clarify their consideration of characters during storyline development. One writer highlights that "It depended on the characters and their backgrounds. Once that was figured out then events emerged in my writing" (Writer 2, Satellite Era). Another writer adds that "Usually, it was about creating reactions from characters and that would reveal the character's perspective" (Writer 1, Satellite Era). The assertions suggest a different perspective in comparison with writers from the pre-satellite era in regards to character

concentration. However, there is even more emphasis and increase in character complexity in *Zawarat Al Khamis*.

Almost all characters in *Zawarat Al Khamis* learn and develop as the serial progresses. In fact, every character begins with a specific perspective and reaches the climax being a different character. The married sons learn that their misbehaviors needed to change to save their marriages and they do so. Ez learns that concealing his issue with Jenan made him marry the wrong girl and that he truly loves Moza N. Thunayan started off in love and loyal to his wife Moza and then divorces her and marries Nadia. Moza is also a character that learns, changes, and develops in regards to her children and her husband. The same applies to Shahah with her husband Mansour. The married women also change throughout and that change is highlighted through their perspectives about their husbands and the actions they undertake. Amina, Dalal, Tasnim, and Zaina learn to be patient for their marriages to survive. For a serial that aims to attract and manipulate storylines in a form that resembles soap operas, investing in characters is a significant method for achieving this aim. In fact, failing to increase character complexity would hinder this possibility because of their strategy in centralizing and decentralizing storylines for a day or two. One writer explains that “I do not consider events to be at the centre of quality writing because I feel that character development is more important” (Writer 2, Network Proliferation Era).

This over time development of character complexity highlights the significance of the television landscape for serial development in Kuwait. Without the need to broadcast daily, attract wider pan-Arab audiences, and account for competition and accessibility, the level of audience sophistication informed character development. As

industrial demands altered, the need for such character construction grew from one era to the next and reached a point where it is now a necessity to have the majority of characters learn and grow throughout the season.

This is different from the ways in which western serial and series programmes address their character developments. Character development in American television series occurs over the span of multiple seasons (Dunleavy, 2017; Mittell, 2006; Newman, 2006), which is different from the episodic series that relies on quick or accumulative changes (O'Meara, 2015). In both *Bo Marzouq* and *Zawarat Al Khamis*, character development is neither rapid nor multi-seasonal. Characters must develop and resolve conflicts during the span of a single season, Ramadan. As a result, this development is gradual for the purpose of plot development and to accommodate the closed form of the serial. Additionally, the strategy of repetitiveness to reinforce narrative data which is fairly often in soap operas is unavailable due to the limited amount of episodes available to build multiple characters and storylines. When closure is achieved and the narrative is resolved, there are no subsequent seasons where these characters can return to progress or explore new conflicts. Therefore, developing such complex characters require accounting for the amount of available episodes, the amount of characters, and the closed form that Ramadan dictates. This also explains why in a fifteen episode form like *Bo Marzouq* the amount of complex characters were limited in comparison with a thirty episode form like *Zawarat Al Khamis*. It also highlights how focusing on developing few characters is no longer a possibility in an era where network and serial competition is at its peak and audiences are exposed to various serials from across the region.

This section has provided analyses of the narrative form of the thirty-episode Ramadanian serial. A demonstration of how this closed format utilizes elements of soap operas to engage viewers, achieve closure, and function under the conditions of the network proliferation era has been provided. The concluding section will address the findings of this chapter and highlight the changes occurring across three transformative production eras.

Conclusion

By examining the changes occurring across three transformative production eras, this chapter has foregrounded the industrial developments, the social issues and themes presented In Kuwaiti serials during this era, the process of storyline selection and development, and the narrative form of serials during the network proliferation era. As highlighted, thematic meanings address conflicts revolving around relationships and marriages. In the process, these meanings establish the necessity for men and women to value their marriages and families. This emphasis is a product of the breakdown in Kuwaiti families, the increase in the amount of divorces, and the rising cases of men and women rejecting marriages due to the steady economy. The values are developed to construct meanings that are relevant to contemporary Kuwaiti society, address their social concerns, and also appeal to other GCC societies. Also, the narrative form of the thirty-episode serial interweaves storylines by integrating elements of the open soap opera format. In this way, episodes are able to present as many storylines as possible and centralize and decentralize storylines throughout the season. This construction is developed due to the daily broadcast required during the network proliferation era and aims to keep storylines relevant throughout Ramadan.

Such developments are different than the social issues and thematic meanings of the satellite and the pre-satellite eras. During the satellite era, storylines emphasized the need for women to participate in the family's economy when necessary. However, they also preserved the role of the patriarch within Kuwaiti families. Such representations reflect the dominant perceptions of postwar society and the transition occurring during that period. These perceptions developed as a result of the war with Iraq, the political tension to rebuild the nation, and the growing number of women rights activists highlighting issues of equality. During the pre-satellite era, storylines emphasized the role of the patriarch and positioned women as housewives only. Thematic meanings concentrated on what constituted an ideal patriarch and how patriarchs must manage the family and the family's economics. Because of the plan to modernize a society that grew from tribalism during the oil boom era, these meanings intended to highlight a specific familial structure and encourage patriarchs to emphasize family over money and also legitimize and protect the governmental structure of the country. In this way, the country is able to preserve its governmental structure that is also derived from tribalism.

Finally, the majority of characters in this serial are complex. Characters learn and develop through the narrative and gradually change to achieve closure. Such complexity is more intense than serials from previous eras. During the satellite era, only few characters learn and change. Prior to that, characters in the pre-satellite era failed to learn or change. This explains how changes in the industry informed characterization and narrative forms. Serials in the past were eleven episodes and utilized a lengthy narrative ellipsis. This form which relied on syndication was no longer available or

applicable in an era where episodes must broadcast every other day to attract advertisers. During the satellite era, the serial provided four storylines in every episode to gradually develop and achieve closure. With a rapid increase in networks and advertisers, the demands changed and providing episodes for daily broadcasts is now a necessity. As a result, the integration of soap opera elements in the way the thirty episode format functions is necessary to interweave seven storylines and provide as many as possible in each episode.

With these developments occurring across three transformative production eras, the Kuwaiti television serial accommodated each era and constructed storylines that are historically significant for their time. This highlights how periodization is necessary for understanding programme development from a format's perspective and a meaning's perspective in the Middle East. The analyses for this case study and the comparisons provided with case studies from earlier television periods demonstrate the development of the writing process of Kuwaiti Ramadanian serials over time. The suggested findings reveal that cultural change influenced by economics, politics, and social occurrences, and narrative forms influenced by technological and industrial demands are primary determinants for developing social values in Ramadan serials in Kuwait.

Conclusion

This study investigated the historical development of serial programming during Ramadan in Kuwait. The investigation focused on the social issues and narrative form of a serial format that developed to address the social concerns and accommodate the ritual habits of a Muslim society. Across three distinct production eras, this serial form developed to represent society and gradually incorporate narrative elements in response to the changing television landscape in the Middle Eastern region during the holy month of Ramadan. The aim of this research is to identify and situate the Kuwaiti Ramadanian serial format within broader Middle Eastern and international contexts. Inquiries into television fictional programmes addressed the various formats from different regions and demonstrated the link between technology, culture and content, programming form, and accessibility. In the Middle East, scholars have concentrated on the political economy and broadcast technology without giving specific attention to the impact that such developments could have on programming form and content. This thesis demonstrated that in Middle East, the distinct stages of technological developments influenced the television production industry in a way that is completely unique in comparison with other parts of the world. The social and cultural habits of society informed and continue to impact the development of a distinct narrative form that originated to accommodate the religious habits of Muslim societies. This thesis foregrounds that Kuwaiti television serial dramas reflect the dominant assumptions of Kuwaiti society and adapt to the social and cultural developments and changes. By identifying these reflections from three different television eras and detecting the changes in representations over time, this research revealed the sociocultural factors influencing these depictions, the rationale prompting creative decisions, and the

construction of a serial format that adheres to the boundaries of the primetime season in the Middle East, Ramadan.

Television programming in the Middle East vary with regards to their production contexts. Each country's production context informs the way in which serial drama programmes are developed and produced. Despite sharing a regional broadcasting system, the development of every country's television institution and programming vary. With that said, Kuwaiti television serial dramas of Ramadan are distinct from other regional serial dramas. As the study has shown, these serial dramas initiated with the aim of providing social issues that concern Kuwaiti society and address the social and cultural assumptions of the oil boom era. Despite this emphasis, the sociocultural change occurring after the war and the increase of accessibility created by satellite technologies informed the representations and social reflections of these serials. However, further developments have occurred during an era where serial competition is optimum and social and cultural concerns changed in response to the ongoing economic, political, and social developments. As a result, writers adapted to this competitive landscape and developed a strategy to address regional pan-Arab audiences but develop storylines to address Kuwaiti concerns.

The findings suggest that despite the social and cultural change over three production eras, the social statuses of men and women within these serials only developed in terms of economic participation. Although representations suggest a progression in female emancipation, this progression aims to preserve the familial structure of the Kuwaiti family and reinstate the male as the leader of the household and significant to the survival of family. By doing so, these serials are constantly reinforcing

Kuwaiti nationalism that developed from the country's tribal origins and governmental structure. This form of social issue representation differentiates the Kuwaiti serial from other regional programmes and highlights its significance to Kuwaiti and other GCC audiences.

During the pre-satellite era (1961-1990), the representative case study addressed and negotiated issues of family and money. These issues were informed by the oil boom and the modernization projects taking place at the time. This era was highlighted for its flourishing economy and state income. Along with these developments, the political tension rising from the Arab national movements across the Middle East threatened the tribal development of the Kuwaiti government and society. Therefore, the representative case study from this era, *Al-Aqdar* (1977), thematically addresses social issues to ensure that a familial structure where the male is the leader of the family and prioritizes the family over money is highlighted. In this way, the serial constructs the Kuwaiti family as a family governed by its male leader to promote Kuwaiti nationalism, a nationalism that resembles the country's royal family and its male leader. In the process, the serial presents Kuwaiti women as subordinate in this familial structure and completely uninvolved in the economics or decision making of the family. This reflection highlights the status of women during prewar Kuwait where their subordination is encouraged as the government supported the traditionalist Islamist movements contending with the Arab nationalists to legitimize and protect its status. Although syndication was the primary source of revenue, social issues and thematic meanings address and concern the local Kuwaiti audience because during this era,

serial production was regionally scarce and the available state-owned networks pursued programmes to fill their airtimes.

Despite these representations, the narrative form during this era was developed in a television landscape that lacked competition. Therefore, writers distributed their storylines without the need to account for serials airing on other networks. In fact, storylines varied in regards to their starting or resolution points and episodes only consisted of two to three storylines to accommodate the level of audience sophistication at the time. Furthermore, the level of character complexity was also scarce during this era. Character change did not exist and the plot events were central to the development of storylines without the protagonists learning or developing in the process. This was also due to the level of sophistication during an era where exposure to regional and international television programming did not exist, and viewers were only able to access the programmes presented by their state-owned networks.

However, this form of storylines distribution changed during an era where satellite technologies emerged and audiences were able to access networks from other countries in the region. During this uncertain period and competitive landscape, the satellite era (1990-2000), Kuwaiti serials increased their Ramadanian output to fifteen episodes to entice networks and the regional advertising companies, which is highlighted in the representative case study *Bo Marzouq* (1992). In this way, serials would broadcast every other day during the holy month and increase their chances for syndication and advertising revenue. To accommodate this television landscape, storyline distribution no longer initiated in what was considered a balancing strategy. Rather, the balancing strategy of the pre-satellite era altered to become an episodic

balancing strategy. Writers ensured that all storylines would occur in every episode from start to finish and would be given equal prominence. The balance came from scene distribution and plot point emphasis. Storylines that were given more scenes during episodes are countered with a significant irrevocable plot point for the storyline that is less emphasized in terms of scene amount and progression. In this way, all four storylines remain relevant throughout the season, keep viewers from tuning to other networks, and address the increased level of audience sophistication. To address this level of sophistication, serials provided a variety of character with some complex characters as they learn and develop throughout the season.

Unlike the pre-satellite era where social issues highlighted the need for the patriarch to prioritize family over money and for other family members to live under his leadership and governance, during this era storylines present the benefits for patriarchs to share economic responsibilities with other family members including women. Although these storylines are circumstantial and are based on economic necessity, they encourage families to allow women to participate economically when there is a need to do so. This is a result of the sociocultural dynamics of postwar Kuwaiti society. Writers during this time acknowledged the country's struggling economy after being invaded by Iraq and then liberated in 1990. Thus, the country's infrastructure was severely damaged and half of the population, including the government, fled the country during the invasion. Female participation in the Kuwaiti resistance during the war and women rights organizations after the war changed the way society previously viewed Kuwaiti women, as only housewives and mothers. By acknowledging these social needs, television serials encouraged women participation in the labor force in certain

circumstances but at the same time encouraged the traditional housewife and mother role. In this way, the traditional cultural assumption was preserved and the evolving assumptions are proposed to refrain from offending any particular segment of the Kuwaiti audience. This also allowed the serial to address various pan-Arab audiences. Moreover, the role of the patriarch as the leader of the family is preserved as those that participate in their families' economies only do so. In this way, changes to the dominant cultural assumptions are proposed while preserving the Kuwaiti nationalism.

Although socioeconomic and sociopolitical developments influenced these representations, further developments during the network proliferation era (2000 onward) are reflected and discussed in the construction of social issues. *Zawarat Al Khamis* (2010) addresses issues of marriage and divorce in response to the significant sociocultural changes happening to contemporary Kuwaiti society. With an increase in and acceptance of Kuwaiti women to participating in the labor force and further progression in terms of their political rights, their social statuses changed to the point where they are not only allowed to assist in the family economy. Their self-reliance from an economic standpoint changed their perceptions about marriage and family build-up. As a result, marriages decreased and divorces increased. Therefore, the serial highlights the need for women to be tolerant to the challenges of marriage for families to survive. However, it also provides a variation by highlighting that the traditional values of patriarchy could be abandoned when they are inconvenient to the family. Additionally, men are expected to understand the value of marriage and family and value their marriages. Such representations, writers insist, address the concerns of Kuwaiti society and other GCC countries because of the similarities in cultural values between these

audiences. With GCC countries being sought after by advertisers and networks for their economic and spending capabilities, serials during this era Kuwaiticize storylines by incorporating social issues that concern various pan-Arab viewers and plot them in a form that would highlight Kuwaiti values.

Not only have serials during this era developed their social issues but with a plethora of networks, advertisers, and an extensive competitive landscape, serials consist of thirty episodes that air every day during Ramadan. As a result, the strategies employed to interweave storylines are distinct from those employed during the previous two eras. During this era, writers employ narrative elements that resemble the openness of soap operas. Episodes consistently present six to seven storylines with a shift in focus from one episode to the next. Also, most characters learn and develop throughout the season which was limited during the satellite era where only few characters were complex and non-existent during the pre-satellite era.

By investigating representative case studies from three distinct television eras, this study highlights the evolution of a distinct television format that initiated in response to the religious habits of society in Kuwait. Such inquiries into television programming in the Middle East are scarce and consideration of programme definition and identification are neglected. As highlighted in the findings, the Kuwaiti television serial format of Ramadan is a cultural-specific programme that reflects society's dominant assumptions and values about social issues. These values are informed by the ongoing societal and cultural changes occurring in Kuwait. The attributes of these serials distinguish Kuwaiti Ramadanian serials from other serials in the Middle East and the world and formulate an understanding of Kuwaiti society and television over time. Social concerns and

cultural values have evolved and changed and the social status of men and women have also developed and progressed from one era to the next. This demonstration details the significance of this programming form to television institutions in the Middle East, Kuwaiti and other Middle Eastern societies, and provides a comprehensive account of creative writing in a region that is distinct in its television development from other regions in the world.

This thesis establishes a framework for future scholars interested in investigating social issues and narrative forms in the Middle East. By focusing on Kuwait, the study highlights how every country within the Middle East established and developed their serial formats in accordance with the sociocultural changes occurring in that country and the evolution of the television landscape. Thus, to understand serial formats in the Middle East, considering the relationship between the national and the regional is a prerequisite for such investigations. Although technology, accessibility, and viewer sophistication are central to the debate, the production context of each country varies and influences the construction of the text from content and narrative perspectives.

Appendices

Questions for Writers

1. What creative, economic, and network considerations were given when writing in your era?

1- شنو العوامل (او الاعتبار) الفنيه, الاقتصاديه, والفضائيه تحسبلها حساب في كتابتك للسيناريو في حقبتك؟

2. How do you deal with network constraints, if there are any?

2 – اذا وجدت, كيف تتعامل مع شروط وقوانين القنوات؟

3. Do you consider commercial imperatives when writing?

3 – هل تحسب حساب الفاصل الاعلاني عند الكتابه؟

4. How many events or storylines do you write per serial and why?

4 – جم حدث او قصه تكتب في البدايه؟

5. What is the function of scenes in your script? Are they constructed in segments, sequences, or as a whole?

5 – هدف المشاهد في كتاباتك؟ وكيف تنسقهم؟

6. Do your scenes function to progress an episode's dilemma, or to present a specific topic/theme, or both?

6 – هل مشاهدك تهدف الى تقديم قضيه الحلقه, تحضير موضوع معين, او الاثنين؟

7. Do you attempt to make your narrative strands relate in some way?

7 – تحاول ربط القصص (في الحلقه) بشكل ما؟

8. When do you prefer having your strongest dramatic scene?

8 – متى تفضل وجود افضل مشهد درامي في الحلقه؟

9. Do you break your episodes into groups, each containing specific information for a number of episodes to construct a theme?

9 – هل تقسم حلقاتك الى مجموعات وكل مجموعه تحمل كميه معلومات لبناء فكره رئيسيه (معنى معين) او افكار؟

10. Do you write in an act-break structure or did you construct each episode as a whole with/without mini climaxes?

10 - هل تكتب الحلقه بشكل كامل او بشكل بدايه وسط ونهايه؟

11. Were episodes pre-planned or did each episode have to obtain approval from the producers/networks before continuation?

11 – هل الحلقات كانت مخططه (تكتب بالاول) او تنتظر موافقه المنتج على بعض الامور قبل تكمله الكتابه؟

12. If you have written in two different eras, what are the differences from a production and creative standpoint?

12 – اذا كتبت في اكثر من حقبه, ماهو الفرق من الناحيه الفنيه والانتاجيه (رقابه؟ تشديد؟)

13. From your perspective, what is considered quality writing? (audience engagement, issue storylines, writing structure)

13 – من وجهه نظرك كيف تقيم الكتابه او على شنو تعتمد جوده الكتابه (رده فعل الجمهور, قضايا معينه, بناء معين؟)

14. Was there a storyline or storylines that were utilized over a period of several years? What were they? Why did they engage with the audience?

14 – هل توجد قصه او قضيه استخدمت لفتره طويله او عده مسلسلات؟ ماهي؟ ولماذا تعتقد انها جذبت الجمهور؟

15. Was there constraints regarding certain storylines?

15 – هل كان في قيود على بعض القصص والقضايا؟ ماهي؟ ولماذا؟

16. Do you write with the purpose of presenting specific social issues to the audience? If so, where do you grasp these ideas from?

16 – هل تكتب بهدف تقديم قضايا اجتماعيه محدده الى الجمهور؟ ومن وين تاخذ هذه الافكار؟

17. What storylines were most popular with the audience?

17 – ماهي القصص الذي كانت مشهوره مع الجمهور؟

18. Are productions reflecting social values of the time or was there attempts to discuss social and cultural issues? Perhaps covertly?

18 – هل المسلسلات كانت تعكس قيم ومبادئ اجتماعيه لوقتها او كانت محاولات الى مناقشه قضايا اجتماعيه وثقافيه بخفيه؟

19. Name storylines that dealt with social issues that you felt crucial for you as a writer and how did you attempt to address them?

19 – ماهي القصص اللي كتبتها وحسيتها مهمه وحساسه وكيف عالجتها؟

20. Name storylines that dealt with controversial social issues and how did you address them?

20 – ماهي القصص اللي حسيتها مثيره للجدل او للجمهور في وقتها؟ وكيف عالجتها؟

21. Did the shows or storylines have a thematic meaning? What were they? What do you think the stories were saying?

21 – هل المسلسلات والقصص كانت تحمل فكره رئيسيه (معنى معين)؟ ماهي؟

22. Is there a specific number of scenes you would rather have in order to engage viewers? (short/long scenes for sophisticated audiences)?

22 – هل تفضل عدد معين من المشاهد خلال الحلقه لجذب الجمهور؟ طويله ام قصيره ولماذا؟

23. Is there a specific order that you prefer to construct storylines in your script? Why so?

23 – هل توجد طريقه تفضل تقسيم القصص او القضايا في السيناريو؟ لماذا؟

24. What strategies do you use when writing with the aim of a rerun/syndication?

24 – هل تستخدم خطه او طريقه كتابيه لهدف جذب الجمهور في حين اعاد المسلسل او عرض بفترات مختلفه؟

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