



In the Morning. Danielle Lurie.

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A Single Note for a Complex Social Tableau

In this short film, we are drawn into the tragedy of a young Turkish woman who is twice victimized, first by a rapist and then by her family elders, who decide that only through her murder can the family's honor be salvaged. Loosely based on the murder of Kadriye Demirel in Diyarbakir in 2003, the film has much to commend it.[1] It is, for one, beautifully and powerfully filmed, interspersing the young woman's rape with the deliberations regarding her murder in a way that both maintains dramatic tension and underlines the betrayal perpetrated by her family. Many of the details of the murder are also true to many honor killings in Turkey: for example, the family elders choose a younger brother to actually commit the murder because minors receive lighter sentences than adults. Powerful though this film is, there are some problems. The first is the unabashed hatred that the elder men of the family express for the girl, her father saying at one point, "the pig will take four bullets in the chest, and then our family will have its honor back." Newspaper reports of honor killings speak to a greater ambiguity in family reactions, with family members simultaneously expressing sympathy for the victim and belief that her murder is, nevertheless, just and necessary.[2] While in the film the only female character is the victim herself, interviews with the female relatives of honor killing victims suggest that they are often supportive of the murder, indicating a more complex social tableau than that provided in the film.[3] Emotionally, this film plays a single note and this is, perhaps, exacerbated by the decision to have the American actors memorize Turkish dialogue in an attempt to create greater "authenticity." In my opinion, the attempt was misguided. While the Turkish is grammatically correct, it is often times so badly

garbled as to be incomprehensible to Turkish speakers. More seriously, the actors seem constrained by the language barrier and I suspect that they would have been able to bring more nuance to their performances had they been able to use their own language. With these reservations in mind, I am of mixed opinion as to this film's utility for the classroom. Its brevity, certainly, is well adapted to classroom discussion, and for some undergraduates it might work well in conjunction with a sound analytical essay on honor killings, such as Dicle Kogacioglu's excellent, "The Tradition Effect: Framing Honor Crimes in Turkey." [4] At the same time, I question whether the additional emotional impact of the film will add much to what is—under any circumstances—an emotionally charged classroom discussion. Regardless of these flaws and reservations, *In the Morning* succeeds in its primary function of calling attention to the continuing tragedy of honor killings and draws us into that tragedy quickly and forcefully. Notes [1]. Demirel's murder received considerable attention, both within Turkey and internationally. Six-months pregnant, Demirel was stabbed and eventually bludgeoned to death by her older brother in November 2003. While reports vary, in most accounts of the case, Demirel was raped by her cousin. According to some reports, the family first tried to force her cousin to marry her. When her cousin refused, her older brother, Ahmet, determined to murder her. As in most cases, the family presented this decision as individually made to preclude others being held accountable for the murder. [2]. See, for example, Elif Korap, "ikinca buyukler iki tokat atar, konu kapanir," ["When He Gets out, the Elders Will Give Him a Couple of Slaps and the Topic Will Be

Closed”] in <cite>Milliyet</cite>, November 25, 2003. <p> [3]. For example, in one interview, Kadriye’s older sister expresses sympathy for her brother and suggests that his decision was a painful, but necessary one. See Korap. <p> [4]. Dicle Kogacioglu, “The Tradition Effect: Framing Honor Crimes in Turkey,” <cite>Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies</cite>, 15, no. 2 (Summer 2004), pp. 118-151.

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