

# ULUSLARARASI SOSYAL ARAŐTIRMALAR DERĐİŐİ THE JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL RESEARCH

Uluslararası Sosyal AraŐtırmalar Dergisi/The Journal of International Social Research

Cilt: 14 Sayı: 79 AĐustos 2021 & Volume: 14 Issue: 79 August 2021

www.sosyalarastirmalar.com Issn: 1307-9581

## *MALE AND FEMALE RELATIONS IN THE 1970s ARABESK MUSIC*

Gülrenk Hayircil Oral\*

### **Abstract**

Music is known to be the most influential form and expression reflecting topics on social norms, economics, ideology, philosophy, politics, and gender issues. Some popular music genres, such as Blues and Arabesk, however, dwelled upon human suffering. Arabesk music was heavily influenced by Egyptian music and the changing socio-economic system of the Turkish Republic. The significance of Arabesk music is the protesting tone of the working class people and emerged to be especially the voice of men. This article focuses on the social development of men and women's equality and the representation of their relationship in Arabesk music lyrics.

**Keywords:** Arabesk, Gender, Music, Suffering, Empowerment.

---

\*American Literary and Media Studies, Essen-Duisburg University, Germany. Email : gulrenkdoga@gmail.com



## 1. INTRODUCTION

When B.B King, one of the greatest blues singers and guitarists, said that the “blues is an expression of anger against shame and humiliation”, he was, in many ways, also defining arabesk music (Ragsdale, 2004, 1). With the emergence of arabesk music, many Turkish people could identify themselves and their daily struggles in the lyrics of these songs. While Blues music was exceedingly studied, scholars were hesitant to look at the Arabesk experience. Some work has been done exploring the history of Arabesk (Özgür, 2006), Arabesk as popular culture (Stokes, 1992), popular identity (Özbek, 2006), national identity (Markoff), social interactions (Bates, 2008), and as a socio-cultural aspect (Güngör, 1990). However, there is still no study analyzing the lyrics of Arabesk music. Especially when we consider how much they point to gender issues, focusing mainly on women who have done wrong. Up to a hundred Arabesk songs and tens of arabesk films presented the woman as unfaithful, deserting, and as a gold digger. This article mainly tries to bring light to the images of women in the so-called men’s music. It explores the representation of women in arabesk music lyrics to show how she is portrayed and the reasons why she is presented in that way. The overall type and the most compelling images that emerge from arabesk lyrics are negative: the unfaithful women, the deserting women, and the gold-digger women. However, the larger implication of this work is the reason why men depict her as evil: it is the wish to control women.

## 2. The Emergence of Arabesk Music

While Arabesk music is inspired by Turkish folk music and Middle Eastern music, the emergence of arabesk coincided with Atatürk’s Reforms after the War of Independence in 1923, a time when Turkey not only went through political and economic changes but also experienced cultural transformations. It was the ideas of Ziya Gökalp about what is “Turkish” that influenced music immensely. Gökalp divided music into three types, such as Eastern music, which is “sick music”; Turkish folk music, which represented “healthy music”, and finally Western music whose techniques should be reconsidered to produce folk music. According to Gökalp, Western music had improved on Greek music and thus developed itself to the modern music of today (Gökalp, 1970, 146). As part of the changes, the old Ottoman schools for music such as Mabeyn Orkestrası, Mızıka-yı Humayün, Tekke, and Zaviye were abruptly closed in 1925. The radio channel was also shut down for months in 1934 and, on re-opening in 1936, faced restrictions. As a result, notes the musicologist Yılmaz Öztuna, “the Turkish folk were forced to switch to the Arabian radio, and found it more familiar than the Western music,” and so, when the new Turkish music, Türk Müzikisi, became more common on the radio, “the arabesk music was already popular and could not be thrown away anymore” (Yılmaz, 1987, 51).

The main influence on arabesk music, however, was Egyptian music, which was introduced through Egyptian films after 1938. The plots of these films involved tragic narratives and crimes of honor. The newly formed Turkish film industry was impressed by the popularity of Egyptian cinema and copied it considerably. The Turkish version used the arabesk singers as the protagonist. With the arabesk film, the arabesk singer was able to advertise his songs. Although of this double success of both film and song, the sophisticated levels of the Turkish society considered arabesk as kitsch. The reason why arabesk music earned a bad reputation as being “kitsch” and in “bad taste” is due to the migrations of poor, village people to the big cities in the 1950s. Timur Selçuk explains that “around the 1950s, artificial, planless and fast-growing cities, the expanding slums around them, fluctuations in industry, agriculture and politics disturbed those who were already living in the cities” (Timur, 1981, 58).

At this time, migrants were characterized as low, or working-class, people who were fond of listening to arabesk. This music chronicled their daily struggles, poverty, and antisociality. Consequently, because it was identified with the low, uneducated class, the Turkish government and music associations did not accept arabesk, declaring that it was not music at all. Meral Özbek argues that “Contrary to being a misfit to the environment, arabesk is a success, as it reflects the rural population adapting itself to the environment and finds a way to survive” (Özbek, 2006, 27).



### 3. The Tone of Arabesk Music

Arabesk is a gloomy or blues type of music as Orhan Gencebay, one of the most popular composers and performers of arabesk music, argues that “An arabesk that is carefree sounds funny to me. There is always something happening in music. There is joy and tragedy” (Güngör, 1990, 54). Similarly, Murat Ersin, a musician in Germany, tries to explain his work by comparing arabesk with blues: “Arabesk is a kind of protest, a music that defines how to dress, how to dance, how to speak. I don’t give any wrong promises of happiness in my songs. It is like the songs of blues musicians: we can hear a tension in the songs even if they are about happiness” (qtd. in Fischer, 2006, 1). Usually, the arabesk man avoids singing about politics and underlines his pitiful state by accusing fate of being the cause of his problems. Indeed, as Martin Stokes points out,

arabesk inculcates the quintessential but double-edged virtues of stoicism and the passive acceptance of fate. The free-market politics of the present government (the Anavatan Party of Turgut Özal) has benefited a wealthy minority at the expense of an increasingly impoverished and alienated majority. But instead of providing a focus for perceptions of exploitation, which would enable the work-force of the city to take effective political action, arabesk presents political and economical power as facts with no explanation other than fate. (Stokes, 1992, 110)

As can be seen, politics does not play a causal role in arabesk music; it is accepted as a part of the background. Both artist and listener have to experience problems and life’s struggles to understand and to feel the music. Orhan Gencebay says in his interview with Özbek:

Singing is a feeling, it isn’t easy to describe, and you can feel the meaning when you really get into that music. A person who has been trained in Western music has a different conception. He needs to interpret not only the words but the feeling, too. (Özbek, 2006, 288)

According to Özbek the “arabesk remained a hybrid musical genre, its form, content, production, reception, patterns, and social significance have changed markedly since the mid–1960s” (Özbek, 1997, 174). Arabesk singers and composers of the 1970s presented subversive originality because they were still safe from the ideological and political mainstream. Orhan Gencebay, a true virtuoso of the bağlama, songwriter, and singer who is considered as the king of Arabesk music: “It was the incorporation of folk music elements into the lush Sayin-style orchestration of Turkish art music that characterized Orhan Gencebay’s work and gave it the locus of its identity” (Özbek, 1997, 174). He explains that his music has nothing to do with the Arabs and the outgrowth of the migrant experience, as a fact, he has created a new mixed-genre addressing the Turks both rural and urban. Another arabesk singer who is called “baba”, the father of Arabesk was Müslüm Gürses. Due to his depressive and bizarre song lyrics, his concerts are mostly remembered with its “slashers”, fans who cut themselves with razor blades during the concert. Gürses later worked with the poet Murathan Mungan on his song lyrics and moved on to more sophisticated listeners. Other leading arabesk singers were Ferdi Tayfur, whose songs and films were more concerned with the inner psyche rather than the external factors; and Ibrahim Tatlıses who was discovered when he worked as a hard had in constructions, and who is a living evidence that dreams can get true.

### 4. Turkish Women and their influence upon Arabesk Lyrics

The gender issue is a popular topic in arabesk music and constructs a complex question. While Orhan Gencebay applied in his songs that suffering is going to end one day, he tightly holds onto his image of the sedate masculine. Ferdi Tayfur was known for his plaintive voice, showed that man can cry in a society where crying men were despised. Ibrahim Tatlıses presented himself as both a ruffian as well as the Arabesk Romeo. Being closely bound to the masculine culture, the arabesk is strongly associated with “mustaches, masculine friendship, and raki-drinking, cigarette-smoking rituals” (223). Özbek argues that this masculine ethos has its ambiguities:



Its bravado hides a sense of self-doubt, of a self devalued under the gaze of a dominant “other” that pushes these men into a vulnerable status in society. Thus, the emotional disposition of a subordinated self positions these men alongside other excluded people and seems to admit, in effect, a crossing of the boundaries of gender and an acceptance of the permeability of identities (Özbek, 2006, 223).

Nevertheless, Özbek is more concerned with the socio-cultural aspect of arabesk rather than proceeding her study with the analyses of these lyrics. This article makes a small attempt to fill the gap of focusing on the lyrics of arabesk men presenting their relationship with the women. Before looking closely at the lyrics, it is important to set the scene for the emotion in male and female relationships of the 1970s in Turkey. It is not my intention to give historical details, it is necessary, however, to be aware of special traditions to realize how men and women perceived each other.

The Turkish women had enjoyed some priorities long before the women in European countries and the USA such as voting, holding a political office, and to bequeath and inheriting wealth in their own right. But being ruled according to the Islamic laws for over five hundred years, during the Ottoman Empire, the society still carries the predominance of patriarchy. Turkish women are subservient in many ways: a religious or traditional Turkish family’s character is that men and women’s roles are clearly defined. While the husband-father is the head of the family, he goes out of the house to deal with the world of business, government, or military. The wife and mother are in charge of the house, staying at home, tending the crops, animals, and the household. Furthermore, female virginity is still valued and often expected for marriage. Although most traditions are not universal anymore, women during the 1960s till 1970s were familiar with them.

With urbanization which preceded industrialization the picture of Turkish women was changing. Like many developing countries, the transition from agriculture to industrialization opened new demands for the workforce. But being handicapped by the lack of opportunities to learn any skills women were unwanted by the economy. However, a study showed that women presented a high degree of self-confidence compared to men. These women started to insist on having a say in the choice of their future husbands. Nermin Abadan Unat notes that these women had certainly encountered many difficulties integrating themselves into the city life, but they “still represent one of the most dynamic innovators in Turkey’s modernization process” (Unat, 1981, 24). The urban middle-class women, although educated, were mostly not employed.<sup>1</sup> Those who were employed worked rather in the public services as in education, in health, in tourism, and in labor relations. A big migration of women was seen when West Germany demanded workers. However, whenever there was a conflict between work and family, the retreat from work was the preference even for women with higher education. The Turkish women’s serious handicap came not from legal restrictions, but rather from structural inequalities. Deniz Kandiyoti argues that the rural change did not intensify the already existing asymmetry between sexes, but rather the social stratification of males (Kandiyoti, 1977, 57). Other studies show that not only do women migrant workers assume the role of the family head, but they also acquire a whole set of new prerogatives, completely absent in their home countries:

The right to choose the type and place of work as well as the permanent domicile; the right to determine the amount of savings, investment and expenditure; the right to decide upon the children’s education; and finally the right to decide upon family size both in terms of children and adhering other members. (Unat, 1981, 28)

As a result, women with their confidence, education, employment, and rights gained power over men and society. Men who were used to the “serve” or “child” type women, who were blindly obeying and doing the wishes of men, struggled to get used to the new social construction. According to Tahire Erman, however, patriarchy reproduced itself through:

<sup>1</sup> According to Unat: “Of all the Moslem countries, Turkey has so far produced the highest number of educated women on all levels. In Turkish universities, women’s share of the academical personnel, long before the Women’s Lib Movements, was far ahead of Europe. This observation is equally true for women occupying high posts in the judiciary” (Unat, 1981, 26).



the local community, which reproduces traditional patriarchal control in the urban context, and through the social construction of female labour within the framework of the ideology of familialism and the housewife ideology in which women's economic contributions are devalued. Furthermore, the labour market, which offers low-level jobs for migrant women, as well as growing concerns about moral corruption in the city, inflated by the media, act to keep women at home and inside their communities under the control of "their men". (Tahire, 2001, 118)

Illegally built up shanties were mainly used as a sleeping place, shared usually with another family, and electricity, running water or sanitation was a missing luxury. Usually, men were unskilled and uneducated which forced them to work in inhuman conditions, low pay, and without any social security or they faced unemployment. Again, women had a better chance to find work as cleaners, housekeepers, or sewing workers in textile factories. Migrant men became not only outsiders, but they represented the "other" also for working-class people who were born and raised in the city (Yurdakul 26). He was both powerless in front of the working woman at home and the women from the inner city who saw him as a kind of Caliban. Being the "other", surrounded by poverty and a life filled with troubles both men and women had a difficult time. Due to restrictions and new social norms, the working-class man could not enjoy his masculinity in a patriarchal society, but they could identify themselves with the men in the lyrics of Arabesk songs. The Arabesk man became the working-class men's voice telling, accusing, and teaching others and as a result, regaining their power status as a patriarch.

## 5. Women who are the cause of pain in Arabesk Lyrics

In Turkish culture, it is an unwritten law that men do not cry. In particular, people from rural areas are strictly tied to the traditional idea of the strong man and delicate woman. Stokes says that "for males, weeping is acknowledged but can only take place in solitude and private space" (147). With arabesk music men express their emotions, and, in particular, "the gloomy facial expressions in the iconography of film posters and cassette box covers and the obsessive reference to tears in arabesk lyrics thus make clear, socially constructed, statements about the nature of the inner and private self" (Stokes, 1992, 147). Although mistreated by society and politics, it is very strange for men in arabesk music to cry, for the most part, because of women. The arabesk singer does not hesitate to address his lover directly to inform her that he is crying and that she is the reason for his emotional state:

Sen aglatansın ben aglayan  
Evvel demistim heves degilsin  
Beni hayata sensin bağlayan  
(Orhan Gencebay, "Sen Hayatsın Ben Ömür,"1974)

[You are the one who makes me cry  
I told you before that you are not a passing desire  
You are the one who binds me to life.]<sup>2</sup>

Almost in all arabesk films, we can see that the arabesk man is reduced to his lowest level, as he cannot protect his honor while trying to assert the gap between "image and reality, isolated self and society, 'Turkish' honour and 'modern' morality, the rural and the urban" (Stokes, 1992, 145). Unfortunately, this gap is unbridgeable, forcing the arabesk man to cry for his lover.

It is apparent that the arabesk man has a problem with women in general. He is not only deserted by one, but by many women. Indeed, it always easier for him to accuse the women than to search for the real reason within himself for their desertion:

<sup>2</sup> If not otherwise stated, all translations are mine.





Geri dönmez artık, giden sevgililer  
Her ümit ufkunda ağlıyor gözler  
Bitmeyen çilenin, derdin sarhosuyum  
Kahredip geçiyor, en güzel günler.  
(Orhan Gencebay, "Kaderimin Oyunu,"1968)

Martin Stokes translates this as,

The loved ones that have gone will not return now.  
On every horizon of hope, eyes are weeping.  
I am a drunkard of endless affliction and torment.  
The most beautiful days pass by in torment.  
(Stokes, 1992, 243)

However, for the arabesk man, there is still a type of woman who is worse than a woman who leaves him alone. While the arabesk man accepts his fate of desertion by a woman, he never forgives a lying woman. For when a woman comes back and apologizes she has the chance to be forgiven, but the arabesk man cannot trust those who have lied to him. A lie means that she is deceitful and uncontrollable at the same time. An arabesk man is powerless against a lying woman, for he can be easily fooled by her:

Bir zamanlar ben de askın sihriine kapılmıştım  
Bir vefasızın beni sevdiğini sanmıştım  
Terk edip de gitti beni ellerim bos kalmıştım  
Yalnızlığın böylesini ben ömrümce tatmamıştım  
Anladım ki bu askta ben aldanmıştım.  
(Orhan Gencebay, "Ben Sevdim De Ne Oldu,"1967)

[Once I was captured by her love charm  
I thought an unfaithful one was in love with me  
When she left me, I was alone  
I never had tasted such loneliness before  
I realized that she lied to me.]

While trying to explain that poverty does not always concern money, but that people who have a corrupted soul are also poor, Orhan Gencebay points to a very common theme in arabesk films and lyrics. In the film 'Yasamak Bu Degil' the audience can easily understand the main message, which is that he has no material goods but he has an honorable character and therefore he is not poor. The "country socio-economic illness", however, according to the higher society, was mostly people of the working-class. Also, Orhan Gencebay, the father of arabesk music, tries to define the meaning of poverty:

I have addressed all people in my country: In the 70s, 61% of the people in the villages, 18% of the people who worked in the factories and 12% of the public servants listened to arabesk music. The capitalist group mostly belonged to the remaining 8%. So 91% of the Turkish republic listened to us. And most of them were poverty-stricken, but not all of them. We were all wretched, and wretched does not always mean poverty. I think that the mind is distinct, the soul is distinct. A person doesn't need any money to be a philosopher. (Hakan 39)<sup>3</sup>

That is why arabesk men have problems with women who are concerned with money. But the arabesk singer does not have a lot of time to philosophize about the meaning of money, for we can see that the woman does not hesitate to leave him for a person who can promise her a better life standard. Sometimes her family decides that she is going to marry a wealthy person:

Baban maaşıma harçlık diyormuş  
Anan on binlerce başlık diyormuş  
Kısacası bu iş olamıyormuş

<sup>3</sup> My translation, but the arithmetic is not mine.



Bir araya gelemeyiz sevdiğim  
(Orhan Gencebay, "Bir Araya Gelemeyiz," 1974)

[I heard your daddy names my salary as pocket money  
Your mammy asks for ten thousand bride prices  
Shortly, it isn't going to happen  
We can't come together, my beloved]

It seems that the woman controls the arabesk man more than otherwise. She has an immense influence over him; even her glance is enough to hurt his heart. But also arabesk films underline the powerlessness of men over women. With well-known actresses, both the protagonist of the film and the male audience become outsiders:

The remote erotic image, often played by the actresses who are well known outside the context of the film from photographs in newspapers and pornographic magazines, thus manipulates and finally excludes not only the protagonist of the "imaginary" drama, but also the male viewer himself. (Stokes, 1992, 145)

The arabesk singer is a romantic sufferer, but to escape the pain the lyrics focus mainly on the consumption of alcohol. All arabesk singers in their songs try to put an end to their suffering by getting drunk. Indeed, alcohol is often portrayed in both song lyrics and films as causing the protagonists' decline:

Neden saçların beyazlamış arkadaş  
Sana da benim gibi çektiren mi var  
Görüyorum ki her gün meyhanedesin  
Yasamaya küstürüp içtiren mi var  
(İbrahim Tatlıses, "Neden Saçların Beyazlamış," 2004)

[Why has your hair become so white my friend?  
Are you suffering like me because of someone?  
I see that you are at the bar every night  
Is there someone who makes you offend life by getting drunk]

The arabesk man is looking for clues as to the woman's infidelity, he accuses her of leaving him, and he is frustrated that she is not subordinate although he gives her money, gifts, and his love. Moreover, there is still the main question about why men choose to sing about these women, even though they are surrounded by various other painful experiences such as poverty, injustice, and criminality.

## 6. Arabesk Men protesting the independence of Women

Men from the far-flung villages in Turkey, who used to get married to a girl approved of by their fathers, became, after they migrated to the big cities, suddenly free to fall in love. The only dilemma was that men always forgot that women enjoyed the same independence. One approach to the depiction of women in blues and arabesk lyrics is that those songs accusing women were protest songs against the well-off and powerful society, the so-called "other". Talking of the blues, Jeff Todd Titon in his book, *Early Downhome Blues* argues that "the songs offer an unwitting allegory in which deception in love signifies treachery in race relations" (Titon, 1994, 188). He goes on to say that perhaps "the boast and bluffs of the singer are sublimations of racial hostility" (188). Richard Wright notes in his foreword to *Blues Fell This Morning* that "a submerged theme of guilt, psychological in nature, seems to run through [blues songs]," and he goes on to ask, "Could this guilt have stemmed from the burden of renounced rebellious impulses?" (qtd. in Oliver, 1994, 9). Paul Oliver observes that in the blues lyrics which are about lost love, the singer

has found, consciously or subconsciously, a vehicle of protest. Neither the blues singer nor his listener is likely to be aware of the function of the songs as a sublimation of frustrated desires. But they sublimate hostility and canalize aggressive instincts against a mythical common enemy, the "cheater". (Oliver, 1994, 258)



In addition, viewed as an artist the arabesk singers play a positive role, and they offer their listeners a representation of life. James Baldwin's account, in *The Struggle*, of the novelist as an artist, serves to indicate the positive function of the blues singer in the black community:

You [the artist] are compelled...into dealing with whatever it is that hurts you...You must find some way of using this to connect you with everyone else alive...You must understand that your pain is trivial except insofar as you can use it to connect with other people's pain; and insofar as you can do that with your pain, you can be released from it. And hopefully it works the other way around, too; insofar as I can tell you what it is like to suffer, perhaps I can help you to suffer less. (qtd. in Titon, 1994, 189)

Indeed, a lot of artists and academicians do not deny the healing power of singing. Robert Switzer says that "Doubtless it is part of the captivating mystery of the blues experience that it feels good to sing the blues, and to listen; that one is feeling bad, but somehow feeling good about it" (Robert, 2001, 1). Arabesk has the same function; it is a music style that keeps painful details alive; it is a personal experience universalized for the audience.

There is still another reason why men depict women as evil: the wish of a man to control his woman. It is interesting that neither blues men nor the arabesk men, either consciously or unconsciously, sing about their mothers or their wives. For the arabesk men, both the wife and the mother figure do not form an irritating concept. While the mother is as good-hearted as a holy being, the wife is also stereotypically considered as a caring person and automatically set up into the mother category. The evil feminine figure appears explicitly when a man is in love with an unapproachable woman. This is why the most popular theme in arabesk films is about the poor man who adores the daughter of a rich businessman. Usually, the rich girl scorns the pure love of the arabesk man until she realizes that she has done wrong and it is too late. Alternatively, the rich girl is interested in the arabesk man but is unable to convince her fierce father to let her marry her beloved. Another unreachable female figure is the girl left behind in the village, while the arabesk man struggles to bring together some money for marriage. Whichever is the case, it is an unalterable play of fate that, in the end, a rich girl pops out from somewhere to perplex the protagonists' mind who, in the beginning, was only thinking about his girl in the village.

Turkish culture of both village and city believed in the romantic idea of bliss in marriage. Even if a man and woman married without any emotional attachment to each other, it was believed that there was a kind of miraculous deed in nuptials. However, unfortunately, Turkish families also hold in esteem the ancient idea that there has to be equality between those who want to marry. This is a similar approach to the English idiom that "birds of a feather flock together", meaning that those who are rich should not marry people from the poor population and vice versa, but which applies also to age, education, and the physical shape. This situation ultimately proclaims the arabesk man as an outsider because he is a migrant from the village, poor and uneducated. Therefore, the subject of love causes him a lot of pain and sorrow. Moreover, due to the Islamic cultural background, the arabesk man is usually unable to experience a sexual relationship with the woman he falls in love with. This is why we can find the arabesk man suffering because of a woman whom he has seen for only a very short time. Unable to flirt or chat with her, the arabesk man starts persistently to think about her and to imagine a kind of love story, although he may well never come across her again. That is why:

the female co-star of the arabesk film is both the perfect symbol and the reality of the aspirations and fears of the urban migrant. Sex provides an idiom of integration and fulfillment. The soft-pornographic character of many arabesk films emphasizes the gap between the viewer and the erotic image on screen in such a way that the viewer's identification with the *gariban* outsider of the film narrative is doubly reinforced. (Stokes, 1992, 144)

Arabesk men try to rationalize why they are unable to control their women. The most common idea is that she is someone who deviates from the general norms of patriarchy. This is when a woman acts unnaturally. Orhan Gencebay sings in "Tövbe", about a woman who acts unnaturally and who, as a result, loses the male protagonist love:





Gördün mü yaptığını  
Yalnız kaldığını  
Pismis asa soguk su  
Nasıl da kattığını  
(Orhan Gencebay, "Tövbe," 1988)

[See what you've done  
And lonely you've become  
How you upset  
The applecart

The woman's guilt is that she threw cold water into the hot meal. This is unusual and means the same as the idiom "to upset the apple-cart": disrupting carefully made plans. Surely, in this understanding, the woman must have done something which, in the end, has made her be on her own. Whether the woman has acted in a right or wrong way, if her action is unpleasant to the male, she is unnatural and therefore uncontrollable.

An extensively approved norm of arabesk men is that of religion. Men are very fond of religious rules that seem to work out only for the men's benefit. When analyzing arabesk lyrics, it can be seen that the woman is usually depicted as an evil being or someone who is yielding and easily tempted to do some evil. It is a very ancient idea that Eve the woman was first tempted by the devil and then, in turn, she beguiled the man, Adam. Whether cunning or beguiling, the woman seems to carry all evil attributes. The woman in arabesk songs is so evil that she makes the arabesk man confuse even the rules of dogma. In the following lyrics, the *Kible* is in the direction of Mecca, Medina is the city in Saudi Arabia where Muhammad was first accepted as the supreme prophet of Allah, and the *Kaaba* is a place in Mecca which has to be visited in order to complete the *Haj*, which means a pilgrimage. Altogether they comprise the most important symbols in Islam. However, the arabesk man does not hesitate to choose his woman's love over the holy symbols of his religion:

Kalp gözünden aldım onmaz darbeyi  
O gün bu gün sasırıyorum kibleyi  
Bilemiyorum Medineyi Kabeyi  
Yar gönlünü Hac eyledim giderim.  
(Cemal Safi "Giderim," 2001)

The man does not object to supporting his ideas of superiority over the woman by justifying himself according to social and religious norms which are based on a patriarchal orthodoxy. There is no doubt that his major nightmare is a woman that he is unable to control.

## 7. Conclusion

Injustice and poverty was a daily reality for both the arabesk men and the arabesk artist. The evil female, however, does not only represent the male singer's absolute enemy but also his "other" as lover. We can find this in the lyrics as an expression of a love-hate relationship. Indeed in all song types analyzed, such as those dealing with unfaithful, deserting, and gold-digging women, we can see that both blues and arabesk men are in love with their women. Especially the arabesk man openly shows his depression, because he still loves the woman who has betrayed him. So as a result a man has to love his "other" in order to create his real "other". The "other" represents a person who is worth singing about, and who affects the singer immensely. The song is therefore not a kind of damnation but a way to ease his pain. His accusation is a kind of apology to conceal his inner conflict; he may still love her, but he cannot tolerate her unmanageable actions. He universalizes his problem by sharing it with his companions and he wants his listener to agree with him that he is a victim. He does not want to see himself as the only one who is deceived and left alone. By sharing his experience, he tries to throw the blame for his problems on others. His negative emotional experience with women not only warns and teaches other men but also helps him to feel relieved. While generalizing his problem, he becomes cleared of blame and declares all other men innocent too. In this way, a man immerses himself in pain and becomes satisfied with himself, his decisions, and his actions. This is the reason why blues and arabesk became so popular; they allow men to regain their power over women. Being at the lowest emotional level, a man comes



up like the phoenix, the legendary Arabian bird which periodically burns itself to death and emerges from the ashes anew. This means that singing and listening to either the blues or arabesk music helps men to recover their power

## REFERENCES

- Bates, Eliot (2008). *Social Interactions, Musical Arrangement, and the Production of Digital Audio in Istanbul Recording Studios*. Ph.D. Dissertation (Ethnomusicology), University of California at Berkeley.
- Erman, Tahire (2001). Rural Migrants and Patriarchy in Turkish Cities. *International Journal of Urban & Regional –Research*. Volume 25, Issue 1, pp. 118-133.
- Fischer, Jonathan (2006). Geht zur Schule! Lernt endlich Deutsch! Muhabbets Statement zur Integrationsdebatte: deutschsprachige Musik mit türkischen Elemente. *Jetzt*.  
<<http://jetzt.sueddeutsche.de/texte/anzeigen/305500>>
- Gökalp, Ziya (1970). *Türkçülüğün Esasları*. Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi.
- Güngör, Nazife (1990). *Sosyokültürel Açından Arabesk Müzik*. Ankara: Bilgi Yayınları.
- Kandiyoti, Deniz (1977). Women and National Development: The Complexities of Change. *Jstor*. Volume 3, Issue 1, pp. 57-73.
- Ragsdale, Rhonda (2004). What Makes It Blue, *Raydavisblues*.  
<<http://www.raydavisblues.com/articles.htm#wmb>>
- Selçuk, Timur (1981). *Dünyanın Batık Kısmından Su Seviyesi Kısmına Çıkmayı Amaçlayan Kesimin Müsiki*. 2th ed. Ankara: Bilim ve Sanat.
- Stokes, Martin (1992). *The Arabesk Debate, Music and Musicians in Modern Turkey*. New York and Oxford: Clarendon P.
- Switzer, Robert (2001). Signifying the Blues. *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*.  
<<http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst?docId=5002434174>>
- Titon, Jeff Todd (1994). *Early Downhome Blues: A Musical & Cultural Analysis*. 2nd ed. Chapel Hill: The U of North Carolina P.
- Özbek, Meral (2006). *Popüler Kültür ve Orhan Gencebay Arabeski*. 7th ed. Istanbul: İletisim Yayınları.
- . "Arabesk Culture: A Case of Modernization and Popular Identity." *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, U of Washington P: 1997.
- Özgür, İren (2006). Arabesk Music in Turkey in the 1990s and Changes in National Demography, Politics, and Identity. *Turkish Studies*. Volume 7, Issue 2, pp. 175-190.
- Öztuna, Yılmaz (1987). *Türk Müzikisi Teknik ve Tarihi*. Istanbul: Türk Petrol Vakfı Lale Mecmuası.
- Oliver, Paul (1994). *Blues Fell This Morning: Meaning in Blues*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Unat, Nermin Abadan (1981). Social Change and Turkish Women. *Women in Turkish Society*. Leiden: Brill.
- Yurdakul, Yasemin (2006). *Blues and Arabesk-A Comparative Study*. MA Dissertation, Kadir Has University.



## DISCOGRAPHY

*This discography contains a list of musical information cited in the article. It attempts to provide the singer, song and the first date of recording of the lyrics cited in the article.*

Cemal Safi "Giderim," 2001.

Ibrahim Tatlıses, "Neden Saçların Beyazlamıs," 2004.

Orhan Gencebay, "Sen Hayatsın Ben Ömür," 1974.

---. "Kaderimin Oyunu," 1968.

---. "Ben Sevdim De Ne Oldu," 1967.

---. "Bir Araya Gelemeyiz," 1974.

---. "Tövbe," 1988.