

REPRESENTATIONS OF SOCIAL CLASSES IN ARABESK FILMS

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY**

BY

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**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

AUGUST 2004

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

REPRESENTATIONS OF SOCIAL CLASSES IN ARABESK FILMS

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August 2004, 248 pages

This thesis is an attempt to analyze the narrative structure of arabesk films which were made in the 1970s and the 1980s. Based on the idea that it is the poor/rich dichotomy which is foregrounded as the primary paradigm in arabesk films, this study tries to show how socio-cultural hierarchies are encoded in these films and how their narrative structure motivates the audience to perceive the films from a class perspective. On the basis of a generic background regarding melodramatic texts as well as a historical background as regards how the Turkish melodramas developed in relation to the modernization process in Turkey, this thesis focuses on syntagmatic and paradigmatic structures of arabesk films and offers that these films are primarily, if not exclusively, nourished by and address to a class-based 'affect' (*hissiyât*).

Keywords: Arabesk films, melodrama, representation of class, syntagmatic, paradigmatic.

ÖZ

ARABESK FİMLERDE TOPLUMSAL SINIFLARIN TEMSİLLERİ

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Yüksek Lisans, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi

Tez Yöneticisi: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Necmi Erdoğan

Ağustos 2004, 248 sayfa

Bu çalışma, 1970'ler ve 1980'lerde çekilmiş olan arabesk filmlerin anlatı yapısını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Arabesk filmlerde zengin/yoksul ikiliğinin başat paradigma olarak öne çıktığı düşüncesinden hareketle, bu filmlerde toplumsal-kültürel hiyerarşilerin ne şekilde kodlandıkları ve arabesk filmlerin algılanmasında, anlatı yapılarının nasıl sınıfsal bir çerçeveyi ön plana çıkardıkları üzerinde durulacaktır. Bu çalışma, melodramatik metinlerin türsel özelliklerine bakmanın yanı sıra, Türkiye'nin modernleşme süreci içinde yerli melodramların gelişimine dair toplumsal-tarihsel dinamikler gözönüne alınarak yapılan bir inceleme temelinde, arabesk filmlerin sintagmatik ve paradigmatik yapısı üzerinde yoğunlaşmakta ve bu filmlerin, 'sadece' değilse bile 'öncelikli olarak' sınıf temelli bir hissiyâttan beslendiklerini ve böyle bir hissiyâta hitap ettiklerini önermektedir.

Keywords: Arabesk filmler, melodram, sınıfın temsili, sintagmatik, paradigmatik.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Assist. Prof. Dr. Necmi Erdoğan, not only because he provided me with his wholehearted support and guidance throughout this study, but also because his studies and his courses have motivated me so much since the very beginning of my graduate years. I am also grateful to Instructor Dr. Barış Çakmur and Instructor Dr. Mustafa Şen for their invaluable suggestions and comments.

I think I could never accomplish this study, if Elif Öztapak Avcı were not with me, did not help and believe in me that much. This study belongs to her as much as it does to me.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an attempt to analyze the narrative structure of arabesk films. Arabesk songs and the films following them became popular in a specific historical period (especially in the 1970s), which was marked economically by the development of capitalism, socially by the migration of a massive labour-force from rural to urban areas as well as sharpening of class differences, and culturally by intermingling of modern-urban and traditional-rural ways of life, because these cultural products touched on a popular 'affect' (*hissiyât*) which flourished primarily among the urban lower-classes as a result of these traumatic social consequences of modernization process they experienced in their everyday lives in this period. In other words, these cultural products were nourished by this popular 'affect'. Therefore, the ambivalent response of these people to the modernization process in Turkey, who, on the one hand, primarily suffered from and, in one way or another, reacted to the economic and cultural inequalities inherent in a class society and, on the other hand, tried to cope with the conditions of life that they were subject to, found its expression mostly in arabesk-culture products after the 1960s. As Özbek remarks "arabesk music created a specific 'affective/moral vocabulary' for the urban popular masses who engaged daily in a struggle to survive, resist and be recognized" (1997: 217). Using such an approach to arabesk films, and arabesk culture in general, as a departure point, I will try to examine how class oppositions are encoded in the narrative structure of these

films. I will specifically argue that the poor/rich paradigm that was recurrently used in many arabesk films stands at the center of the narrative, which is indicative of the fact that the filmic narrative operates mainly on the basis of class opposition and motivates the audience to watch the film from a class-based perspective.

The term 'arabesk' was firstly used at the end of the 1960s as a name given to a kind of music peculiar to Turkey. "In 1968, a journalist [Vehmi Ayyıldız] used this term for the first time in order to refer to the music of Orhan Gencebay" (Ok, 2001: 54, my translation). Orhan Gencebay is accepted to be the founding father of arabesk music as well as arabesk cinema. The first arabesk song, *Deryada Bir Salım Yok*, was composed by Gencebay in 1966. "In 1968, [he] wrote and performed 'Bir Teselli Ver', and then 'Hatasız Kul Olmaz' which made a breakthrough as something more than just music" (Özbek, 1997: 215). Moreover, it was again Gencebay who acted in *Bir Teselli Ver*, which is considered by Ağâh Özgüç the first example of arabesk films (1985: 14). Although Scognamillo calls two films by Atıf Yılmaz Batıbeki, *Kanlı Feryat* and *Mezarımı Taştan Oyun*, both of which were made in the early 1950s, 'arabesk' (1998: 169), we can still accept Orhan Gencebay's films as the first examples of arabesk films because his music gave birth to this term. Orhan Gencebay is still the first name that comes to our minds while dealing with the issue of arabesk. However, in the 1970s, new arabesk stars such as Ferdi Tayfur, Müslüm Gürses, Hakkı Bulut and İbrahim Tatlıses appeared, as well. In the 1980s and the 1990s, many others followed them (such as (Küçük) Emrah, (Küçük) Ceylan, Burhan Çaçan and recently Mahzun Kırmızıgül, Alişan and so forth) Throughout these years, some people gave different names to the music by different arabesk singers such as 'fantasia music' (Coşkun Sabah, Cengiz Kurtoğlu etc.), 'folk arabesk' (İbrahim Tatlıses etc.), 'revolutionary arabesk' (Ahmet Kaya) or 'pop-arabesk' (Özcan Deniz etc.); however, the term 'arabesk' still functions as an all-

encompassing term to refer to these names and their music. In the middle of the 1970s when the Turkish cinema was going through a financial crisis, the producers tried to overcome this problem by making erotic films as well as melodramatic films in which arabesk singers acted. Between 1971 and 1984, 245 arabesk films were made (Özgüç, 1985: 14). I could not reach the exact number of arabesk films that were shot until 1990, however, in an article by Güzel & Çelikcan, it is stated that between 1985 and 1990, 440 melodramatic films were made in Turkey (1996: 228) and a significant portion of these films were probably arabesk melodramas. In the 1980s, arabesk films were started to be made for video instead of cinema. After the 1980s, arabesk stars did not make cinema or video films anymore; instead, they acted in TV serials. Until recently, such serials have been broadcasted in different private TV channels.

Arabesk films are melodramatic texts. That is why some call them arabesk melodramas. Undoubtedly, the first criterion on the basis of which ‘arabesk films’ are grouped together and separated from other melodramatic films in the Turkish popular cinema – what I referred to as the Yeşilçam melodramas in this study – is the songs used in these films. In other words, these films are called ‘arabesk’ because ‘arabesk singers’ act and ‘arabesk songs’ are used in them. Although there are also some other divergences between arabesk films and the Yeşilçam melodramas of the 1960s¹, the narrative structure of both groups of films are quite similar to each other. So, a survey on the generic features of melodrama and particularly those of the Yeşilçam melodramas seems essential in order to carry out an analysis regarding arabesk films. Unfortunately, there are very few academic studies on the Yeşilçam melodramas which can be used as illuminating sources for such an analysis. Therefore, in the second chapter, I will dwell on melodrama as a genre or style firstly by making use of the studies of

¹ I will dwell on these divergences in the following chapters.

Western critics on this issue and then I will discuss the generic features of the Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films in light of these arguments by trying to construct a link between them and the studies on the Turkish melodramas that are quite limited in number as well as scope.

The genre study is quite significant for socio-cultural history because genres are not determined only by the producers of the cultural products but they serve a reciprocal function between the producers and the consumers of these products. Thus, generic features of popular texts can be regarded as valuable sources of information about how the world was given meanings by 'the people' in a certain historical period. As in the West, in our country, too, melodramas are not taken into account seriously. They have always been subjected to the modernist approaches, according to which melodramatic texts are not worthy of serious consideration because they are banal and vulgar. Furthermore, melodramas are ideologically criticized on the basis of the idea that the dream-like world, the personalization of social conflicts, the extremely emotional atmosphere and the emphasis on the moral and spiritual values in melodramas distort the reality or take the audience away from the reality so as to impose on them escapist and conformist attitudes towards the social conflicts. Therefore, melodramatic texts are crudely regarded as the ideological tools used by the bourgeoisie to manipulate the masses. Öztürk's following remarks provide a typical summary of such approaches not only towards arabesk films, but towards the Yeşilçam melodramas, as well:

Arabesk films and songs have an affirmative character. The suffering in these films is only personal and when the anguish of the hero is over, life becomes beautiful. Arabesk, in which the powerful oppress the weak, is a typical political maneuver which manipulates the audience and listeners. (2002: 340, my translation)

As opposed to these flimsy ideas, I will firstly suggest that popular culture is not an arena through which the dominant ideology can totally manipulate the masses, but it has an ambivalent character where contending discourses simultaneously exist; therefore, it is made up of not only submissive but also resisting ideas or attitudes. Moreover, melodrama has a metaphorical language through which a popular response regarding the social conflicts is refracted. Although arabesk films do not manifest a conscious opposition of the lower classes to the capitalist social order, they do not totally affirm it, either.

One way of thinking about arabesk is to see it as a metaphor for popular identity – for the responses of the urbanizing popular classes to the capitalist modernization process in Turkey. . . . [Arabesk] was specifically the spontaneous popular response that simultaneously opposed and affirmed the modernizing practices that gave arabesk its hybrid form and its original, potent energy. (Özbek, 1997: 212)

Therefore arabesk-culture products provide us with some clues about how popular imagination is characterized by an empirical consciousness, which is shaped through the personal, real-life experiences (everyday problems, conflicts or feelings) of the lower-class people. At the end of this chapter, I will compare Hollywood melodramas with the Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films in terms of the dominant paradigms in these films and argue that through the extensive use of the poor/rich paradigm, Turkish melodramas focus more on the class conflict unlike the gender oriented paradigmatic structure of the mainstream (Hollywood) melodramas.

In the third chapter, I will discuss how the modernization process in Turkey affected the popular culture in general and the rise of arabesk culture in particular. Furthermore, I will try to underline the socio-economic developments lying behind the emergence of the poor/rich paradigm that symbolized the Turkish popular cinema after the 1950s. I will especially argue that class positions have always functioned as a

significant factor and affected the attitudes of different classes towards the modernization process. Accordingly, arabesk, which will be regarded as a response given by the lower-class people to the traumatic consequences of this social transformation process, has an undeniable class character. In this study, I find it especially important to emphasize class as a significant dimension of arabesk culture because most of the intellectuals, including the leftist ones, read these cultural products on the basis of a modernist-culturalist perspective that foregrounds the East/West opposition as the major (if not the only) paradigm lying behind arabesk phenomenon. As Ercan remarks, from the very beginnings of the Republican period on, this opposition “has become one of the determinants of escaping from the concept of class” (2003: 635, my translation). In Turkey, not only the official ideology, but seemingly counter-hegemonic movements have also generally ignored the class character of the domain of popular culture. I do not consider arabesk a working-class culture because it has a wider class appeal and also articulates such cultural paradigms as the modern vs. traditional or urban vs. rural that cannot be reduced to class. However, while these paradigms have been foregrounded in the discussions concerning arabesk, class dimension of this socio-cultural phenomenon has generally been ignored. As a result, arabesk has been reduced to a cultural problem stemming from the inharmonious co-existence of modern and traditional ways of life. As opposed to the dominant ‘modernist’ arguments which foresee a linear conception of social changes – from ‘the traditional’ to ‘the modern’ –, I would argue that the attitudes of the lower classes towards the modernization process are indicative of a non-linear and contradictory experience which cannot be fully grasped by the modern/traditional dichotomy. The popular response to the modernization reveals an ambivalent character in which modernist and traditionalist, progressive and reactionary, or approving and opposing attitudes can coexist. Most importantly, the traumatic

experience of the modernization process in Turkey by the lower classes can be regarded not only as a national identity crisis that stems from the conflicts between the Western and the Eastern social values, but it also bears the signs of how the class opposition, which gradually increased throughout the modernization process, plays a significant role in the representations of their social identities.

The fourth and fifth chapters will be devoted to the analysis of the narrative structure of thirty arabesk films that have been selected for this study². While choosing the films, I have paid special attention to two points: Firstly, I have tried to select the films by the most popular arabesk artists because they were probably watched more than some other arabesk artists' films. Secondly, I have chosen the same number of films from the 1970s and the 1980s so as to see whether there are any significant differences between them. Agâh Özgüç states that *Bir Teselli Ver* is the first arabesk film, *Batsın Bu Dünya* the first arabesk film that gained a big popularity among the audience, and *Son Sabah* the mostly watched film in 1978 (1985: 14). I have also taken into account such information before deciding on the films that I will use in my analysis. I have to add that, on the basis of such information, I especially wanted to include some other arabesk films, such as *Derdim Dünyadan Büyük* by Orhan Gencebay, in my analysis, however I could not reach them despite my efforts.

In this study, I will try to carry out a syntagmatic as well as a paradigmatic analysis of arabesk films. Syntagmatic analysis is a structuralist method of analyzing verbal and visual narratives. It basically seeks to discover whether there are any rules of combination according to which the elements of a group of narratives are brought together. The primary aim of syntagmatic analysis is to find out *how* the meaning of a narrative is constructed instead of discovering *what* that meaning can be. Vladimir Propp's analysis of the Russian folktales is

² The film list is provided in Appendix B together with a short summary of each film.

regarded as the most well-known work of that type. While classifying fairy tales, Propp separated some constant elements that can be found in every fairy tale from variable ones and called these elements 'functions'. Likewise, I will try to define the constant elements, i.e. functions, of arabesk films. I will suggest that most of arabesk films are composed of nine basic functions, what I call *exposition, love, trouble, conflict, determination, concealment and revelation, blow, dénouement, and arabesk songs*. I will clarify why I have regarded each function as a constant element in arabesk films. I will especially try to explain the role each function plays in the construction of the narrative as well as how each function and combination of them with one another may affect the perception of the films by the audience.

Paradigmatic analysis is a way of analyzing texts on the basis of discovering which "signs are organized into codes" (Fiske, 1990: 56), i.e., which particular signs are selected from a set of signs instead of others and/or which signs are considered as superior to the others. Paradigmatic relationships foster the preferred reading because the elements of a binary opposition are not equally weighted. In other words, it is through these binary oppositions, which construct the hidden (or one can say 'ideological') meanings of the narratives, that the readers /audiences are positioned "to privilege one set of values and meanings over the other" (Chandler, 2003: 108). Melodramatic attitude always preserves afflictions caused by a social problem or conflict which reveals itself in its 'myth-making function', through the layered pairs of opposites. As Berger avers

a myth orders the everyday experiences of its hearers (or viewers) and communicates this order through a formal structure that is understood like language. . . . Myths work by setting up bipolar oppositions that reflect and reinforce social understandings. They are . . . allegories for social action. (1997: 154-155)

The binary oppositions in narratives – be it a book or a film, etc. – might be used as they are, not necessarily because the authors/directors are fully aware of their ideological connotations and deliberately attempt to create a ‘myth’, but because ‘myth’ maintains in itself the symbolic representation of social dilemmas which are experienced not only by the reader but also by the author/director. In other words, consciously or not, social dilemmas or conflicts which affect how the readers/audiences give meaning to the binary oppositions in a narrative, affect also the authors'/directors' choice of which signifiers would be paired as opposites. Therefore, the myth of ‘poor *so*³ humane’ hero struggling against ‘rich *so* cruel’ villain, is not used arbitrarily in most of arabesk films, but it indicates a popular understanding of the social dilemmas with which the producers of these cultural products are also familiar; then, it would be of great importance to analyze this central opposition together with other layered opposites attached to it, as they are encoded in these films, in order to understand which social conflicts stand “at the heart of [such a] myth”. Arabesk films, which are generally accepted to be melodramatic, then are expected to be loaded with these layered binary oppositions. What are these binary oppositions? Is there a central opposition? Which elements of the pairs of opposites are chosen for the representation of different characters and events in a given situation? What other elements could be chosen? Which elements from the same paradigm set are noticeably absent? Are there any regularities in terms of establishing the same paradigmatic relationship between identical characters and events in each of these narratives? How does the paradigmatic relationship between the elements of binary oppositions affect the meaning? These

³ Replacing this ‘so’ with ‘and’ or ‘but’ makes a big difference. Using ‘and’ instead of ‘so’ here erases the ‘necessary’ relationship between the first and the second term; ‘but’, on the other hand, accepts and thus reproduces the negative (as in ‘poor’) or positive (as in ‘rich’) connotative meanings of the first terms, though the second terms contradict these meanings, whereas ‘so’ naturalizes the relationship between the two terms.

are the questions that I would consider regarding the paradigmatic structure of arabesk films.

I will try to analyze arabesk films by taking into account three levels of the narrative. Drawing on Gerard Genette, Rimmon-Kenan holds that there are three aspects or levels of the narrative: story, text, and narration. 'Story' refers to "the narrated events, abstracted from their disposition in the text and reconstructed in their chronological order" (1989: 3). The same story, can be re-told through different media and in different forms (1989: 7), and this aspect of the narrative, which she calls 'text', is the only directly available one to the reader/audience. In 'text', "the events do not necessarily appear in chronological order, the characteristics of the participants are dispersed throughout, and all the items of the narrative content are filtered through some prism or perspective" (1989: 3). The third level of the narrative, 'narration', is defined as the act or process of producing the text (1989: 3). 'Narration' seems especially important to me due to a critical term Rimmon-Kenan points out: 'implied reader', to whom the text is narrated. She states that the implied reader is "encoded in the text 'in the very rhetoric through which [implied reader] is required to make sense of the content or reconstruct it 'as a world'" (1989: 119); and the implied reader needs not be identical with the real reader (1989: 87). The implied reader can be regarded as a '*normative* construction'. This term is of crucial importance to me because the normative character of implied reader can help determine the positions (as regards class, race, gender etc.) of the addressee when the socio-historical context is also taken into account within which the narrative is produced. For instance, although we cannot definitely determine the class character of the real audience of arabesk films, we can see what kind of an audience arabesk films address to by analyzing the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic structure of these narratives. It should be noted that these three aspects of a narrative – story, text, narration – are analytical levels, which actually

exist in a narrative one inside the other. Going back to Propp, we can say that while determining the functions in fairy tales, he considers only one aspect of the narrative, which is 'story'. As Chandler suggests, Propp "schematized the various 'functions' within the *story*" (2003: 92). However, in my attempt to understand the syntagmatic and paradigmatic structures in arabesk films, I will not confine my analysis to the 'story', but I will also consider textual and narrational aspects of the films.

My aim in this study is not to apply Propp's functions directly to arabesk films. Rather, by using Propp's analysis as a model, I will try to define the fundamental elements (what Propp calls 'functions' in fairy tales) of arabesk films, through which we can see whether there is a common syntagmatic structure in these films and examine the possible meanings that can be derived from it. This study, which makes use of structuralist methods of analyzing texts, aims to go beyond strict structuralist concern of analyzing the internal relationships of the elements of a text that is considered a self-contained system, and takes into account the specific socio-historical context while making interpretations on the use of signs. Therefore, my approach can be considered within what is called 'social semiotics'. While discussing "a social semiotic theory of representation", Kress and van Leeuwen make following remarks:

[W]e see signs as *motivated* conjunctions of signifiers (forms) and signifieds (meanings). In 'semiology' motivation is usually not related to the act of sign-making, but defined in terms of an intrinsic relation between the signifier and the signified. . . . In our view [, however,] signs are never arbitrary, and 'motivation' should be formulated in relation to the sign-maker and the [cultural, social and psychological] context in which the sign is produced, and not in isolation from the act of producing analogies and classifications. Sign-makers use the forms they consider apt for the expression of their meaning, in any medium in which they can make signs. (2003: 7)

Throughout my analysis, I will try to reveal the 'motivated' meanings derived from the regular usage of some elements in arabesk films. In other words, rather than speculating about the reception of the messages by the audience, I will basically focus on the texts and try to find out, as Kress and van Leeuwen suggest, how the possible meanings are 'motivated' by the makers (i.e., all figures included in the production process of the films, such as director, scriptwriter, actors etc.) of the textual elements. I suppose my analysis does not contradict the fact that 'the message' is not 'decoded' by the receiver in the way that is 'encoded' by the sender, because when I talk about 'meaning' in my analysis, I do not mean '*the* meaning' that is conveyed through arabesk films. Kress and van Leeuwen aver that

Interest guides the selection of what is seen as the criterial aspects of the object, and this criterial aspect is then regarded as adequately or sufficiently representative of the object in the given context. In other words, it is never the 'whole object' but only ever its criterial aspects which are represented. (2003: 6)

So, my aim is to understand the syntagmatic and paradigmatic structure of arabesk films as they are provided by the makers of these films; because, obviously, the sender of a message is as much responsible for the interpretation on the part of the receiver as the receiver himself/herself.

CHAPTER II

MELODRAMA AND ITS SOCIO-CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

In analyzing a text, the first step is most of the time defining it (a book, a picture, a film etc.) in terms of its certain features which are also shared by some other texts. In other words, the text is placed into a pre-established category which is characterized by these conventional features. These categories are called genres. If defining a text in terms of its genre is an inescapable part of analyzing it, at the beginning of any textual analysis, to be clear about why genres are an essential part of writing (or directing, painting etc.) as well as reading (or watching, seeing etc.) of any kind of narrative seems essential. Therefore, in the first part of this chapter, some basic arguments about the concept of genre will be mentioned without going into the details of the long-lasting discussions within genre theories. Then, the different conceptions of 'popular culture' and the significance of genre study especially for the popular-culture products will be discussed. Arabesk films are generally referred to as 'arabesk melodramas'. Undoubtedly, there are certain divergences in arabesk films which creates a necessity for them to be analyzed as a special category; yet, these divergences do not push these films out of the genre, melodrama. Therefore, to examine the generic features of melodrama will probably be highly illuminating for our further analysis on 'arabesk films'. For this purpose, the rest of the chapter will be devoted to the examination of generic features of melodrama and the social dynamics lying behind the emergence and evolution of melodramatic conventions in the West in light of different

approaches to these texts by Western critics; to what extent the Turkish melodramas include these generic features will be mentioned and different paradigmatic structures of mainstream (Hollywood) and Turkish melodramas will be pointed out.

2.1 The Significance of Genre Study

Jacques Derrida argues that “there is no genreless text” (qtd. in Kent, 1986: 150). The differences between the various conceptualizations of the term ‘genre’ is beyond the scope of this study, but when it comes to the question whether there is a genreless text or not, most theorists reach a consensus on the idea that each and every text somehow belongs to (a) genre(s). Although ‘classical’ genre theory had a prescriptive nature, which was based on clear-cut classifications of texts, the modern genre theory is descriptive; it acknowledges the affinities between genres. Its emphasis is not upon classification but rather on the identification of generic relationships. As Alastair Fowler puts it, modern genre theory regards ‘genre’ as “much less of a pigeonhole than a pigeon” (1982: 37). Fowler argues that genres have very little taxonomic potential and thus they are of little value in classification. He asserts how vain an effort it is to attempt to construct a system of genres – particularly, to construct generic maps. Most of these attempts fail, according to Fowler, simply because “[they] have been constructed with the aim of arriving at a taxonomy of literature – as if literary genres were fixed classes that could be ordered permanently” (1982: 235). Thus, arriving at the futility of the classificatory-approach to genre, Fowler asks what then is genre good for if it is not an instrument of classification. His response is as follows: Genres are “for the use of writers in writing, and readers and critics in reading and interpreting” (1982: 256). In other words, genres, composed of formal or content-based signals or markers, serve as

mediators between the author/director and the reader/audience. What Fowler emphasizes here is the communicative function of genres. Another theorist who underlines the critical role of genres in communication is M.M. Bakhtin. If genres did not exist, he asserts, communication would be impossible. 'Genre' in Bakhtin's eyes, is not a term that is peculiar to literary works. 'Genre' or to put it in his terms 'speech genres' comprise each and every kind of utterance be it a daily dialogue or a novel, a military command or a business document (1986: 60). The only difference between these utterances is that some of them are grouped as 'primary' (simple) speech genres and some are as 'secondary' (complex) speech genres. And in this division, literary works fit into the latter category. Thus, according to Bakhtin, a play, or a novel, for instance, is defined as an utterance, though a very complex one. Therefore the following quotation from Bakhtin which literally describes a speaking process can also be read as the description of a reading process:

When hearing others' speech, we guess its genre from the very first words; we predict a certain length and a certain compositional structure; we foresee the end; that is from the very beginning we have a sense of the speechwhole, which is only later differentiated during the speech process. (1986: 79)

Bakhtin claims that the reader's generic perception gives birth to certain expectations, which in turn enable the reader to enter into a relationship with a text. This relationship can be defined, for Bakhtin, not as a passive give-and-take relationship between the author and the reader whose sole aim is to grasp the meaning of the former, but rather, the relationship between the author and the reader is dialogical; the former's utterance is oriented towards the latter's responsive understanding. As Landy remarks,

[i]n general, the study of film genres has done much to redeem [melodramatic] texts from the charge of superficiality. Genre study has called attention to the

reciprocal function of texts, that they are a contract between the audience and the film, thus challenging the notion that audiences are totally passive victims manipulated by the culture industry. (1991: 20)

In Bakhtin's view, the more competent the reader/audience in identifying generic signals/connotations the more capable s/he becomes in using them:

The better our command of genres, the more freely we employ them, the more fully and clearly we reveal our own individuality in them (where this possible and necessary), the more flexibly and precisely we reflect the unrepeatable situation of communication – in a word, the more perfectly we implement our speech plan. (1986: 80)

Thus, although mastering generic signals is not a must to make any sense out of what we are reading, the ability to recognize generic signals enables the reader to make more sense out of what s/he is reading.

2.2 Genre Study and Popular Culture

The generic signals in a text create 'redundancy', defined as "that which is predictable and conventional in a message" (Fiske, 1990: 10). According to Fiske, redundancy is "not merely useful in communication, it is absolutely vital" (1990: 10) because redundancies in form and content of a text establish the channels between the writer and the readers through which "the efficiency of communication and the overcoming of communication problems" (1990: 13) become possible. These communication channels, which may differ from one genre or historical period to the other, are the products of a common, or 'popular' culture in a society. In Fiske's view, "[t]he more popular and widely accessible a work of art is, the more it will contain redundancies in form and content" (1990: 13). Therefore, to point out the generic features by which the products of popular culture in a given historical period are

characterized, to see the redundancies (predictable, shared or common points) in them, and to question why they are recurrently used in these texts can provide a valuable source of information in understanding the relationship between the social developments or problems and their cultural representations. For the purposes of this study, for instance, to examine why the theme of 'poor-rich love' which was used again and again in the Yeşilçam melodramas of the 1960s necessitates looking at the social transformations that occurred in this period because this theme, which is a highly predictable, i.e. redundant, part of the story in these films and quite peculiar to the Turkish melodramas, tells us something about how the social relationships and the conflicts arising out of them are articulated through a popular, melodramatic language.

To regard the generic signals of melodramatic texts as the products of 'popular culture', which serve for an easy communication between authors and readers, necessitates to confront the question of who are included in this shared cultural arena. In that sense, popular culture seems to be a problematic concept. The confusion starts with the general acceptance that popular culture belongs to 'people' which, in Peter Burke's words, is an ambiguous term. To whom do we refer by saying 'people': to everyone in a society (a point of view stemming from the nationalist ideology) or to "the members of subordinates as opposed to the ruling classes" (Burke, 1992: 293)? According to Burke, the second concept of 'people' can be associated with left-wing thinkers and scholars who perceive society from a basically Marxist point of view as something composed of social classes and who accept, in most general terms, the class struggle as the core dynamic of a society. And what is behind the emergence and the ascendancy of 'popular culture' as a field of study in the twentieth century is, perhaps, this Marxist perception of society. In this study, my approach to 'popular culture' is generally based on this Marxist point of view. While making this generalization about the conceptualization of popular culture through a

Marxist line of thought, however, we face two main drawbacks. One is the fact that not all Marxist thinkers, sociologists or scholars treat popular culture positively. According to Theodor W. Adorno, for example, the popular-mass culture which belongs, as generally accepted, to the dominated, lower classes is totally shaped by the culture industry in which “the consumers are the workers and employees, the farmers and lower middle class. Capitalist production so confines them, body and soul, that they fall helpless victims to what is offered them” (1979: 133). On the other hand, the terrain of popular culture and generally the cultural domain of the society as a whole are seen by some as a realm where identities of resistance against the formations of dominant ideology are constituted.

Despite his fears about modern culture, Gramsci was, [for instance], less peremptory and dismissive than Adorno and in some ways closer to Walter Benjamin, who characteristically recognized the importance of addressing mass culture as affirming but also as oppositional, not as an issue subsidiary to economic transformation but as a central facet of modern life that needs to be addressed if change is possible at all. (Landy, 1994: 4)

In this study, the generic features of arabesk films will be analyzed on the basis of such a perspective. As for the second drawback of the afore-mentioned generalization, when we say ‘class struggle’ do we automatically accept the existence of totally separate classes and the conflicts between their mutually exclusive world-views or do we regard the formation of social classes and the struggle between them as a more hybrid and complex process in which contradictory forces meet, amalgamate and fight one another in the cultural domain? To argue that popular culture belongs to the ‘working-class’ becomes problematic if it is accepted that there is not a ‘working-class’ in society which can be easily separated from other social groups in terms of its economic, political and cultural peculiarities. To draw a thick line between classes, to clearly separate them from one another is almost impossible

because, especially in the cultural domain, the class borders are imprecise; class positions are always in a state of 'making' rather than of 'being'. Therefore, I will prefer using more inclusive terms such as 'the lower, popular, or subaltern classes' in order to avoid the strictness of the term 'the working class' in conceptualizing the class character of the popular culture as an arena through which subordinate groups express their ambivalent positions that may contain neither pure submission to nor pure resistance against the authority. Behind the idea that "there is no separate, autonomous, 'authentic' layer of working class culture to be found" (Hall, 1981: 232) shared by Stuart Hall and many other scholars within the field of 'cultural studies', there is a great impact of Antonio Gramsci. As Nicholas Abercrombie puts it,

In [Gramscian] view, popular culture cannot be seen as a simple imposition of dominant ideology on subordinate classes. While cultural relations have to be understood in terms of the antagonistic relationships between the bourgeoisie and the working classes, bourgeois culture is not simply dominant. One cannot speak of domination here but rather the struggle for hegemony – that is, moral, cultural and political leadership Dominant cultures have power because they can organize, in their own terms, the values of subordinate cultures This means, in turn, that there is no pure bourgeois culture or, for that matter, working class culture. Each is transformed by other (1990: 201).

The contributions of Gramsci to the later studies of popular culture can be summarized as follows: Firstly, contrary to the 'Dominant Ideology Thesis', he does not agree upon the total manipulation of popular culture by the dominant ideology of upper classes, thus, while preserving, from a Marxist point of view, the idea of struggle between social classes, he generates an optimistic attitude towards popular culture; secondly, and as a continuation of the first one, in spite of the traces of a kind of class reductionism in it, his views replace the primacy of the class struggle with the notion of a variety of forms of resistance "in the movement towards a less determinist, more conjunctural way of

understanding the ‘repertoires of resistance’ ” (Hall, 1996: 295) and this view bears signs of a hybrid, complex, mixed and even ambivalent conceptualization of cultural domain which cannot be simply grasped by the classical high/low dichotomies; thirdly, his last, and maybe the most important contribution, is “the centrality [the Gramscian notion of ‘repertoires of resistance’] gave to the symbolic dimension” (Hall, 1996: 295). In my analysis of the Turkish melodramas, and particularly arabesk films, the Gramscian conception of popular culture provides the general framework, by the help of which I will consider the generic features of these films to be throwing light on how the lower classes perceive and respond to the social conflicts or problems in a symbolic way. Being the products of the Turkish popular culture in which different and contradictory meanings can coincide with one another, the Yeşilçam melodramas as well as arabesk films contain the ambivalent class positions through which we can see the complex interrelationship between ‘the social’ and ‘the cultural’; and, because the generic features of these melodramatic texts can be regarded as the products of a common, conventional way of conceptualizing this complex relationship, they provide us with the ability of making generalizations about the common social problems which the lower classes confronted throughout a certain historical period.

2.3 The Generic Features of Melodrama

Whether melodrama is a ‘genre’ or a ‘style’ is a disputatious issue. “On the one hand, melodrama cuts across genres, appearing in different forms of narratives, thus suggesting that it is more akin to a worldview, a specific and pervasive mode of confronting social conflict” (Landy, 1991: 22). In that sense, melodrama appears more as a style rather than a distinct genre, which can be discussed on the basis of social crisis inherent in its content. As Elsaesser puts it, melodrama can

be understood “as a form which [has] carried its own values and already embodied its own significant content: it [has] served as the literary equivalent of a particular, historically and socially conditioned *mode of experience*” (1991: 74). The comprehension of melodrama as a distinct genre has become even more difficult when melodramatic elements were incorporated into the cinema:

The development of a melodramatic tradition would seem to coincide, in fact, with the evolution of many popular narrative forms, including that of the cinema. . . . The problem of melodramatic ‘specificity’ was then further complicated through its incorporation by a new narrative form which, in its turn, blossomed into a variety of styles and genres; Warner’s social melodramas, Capra’s ‘populist’ melodramas, and so on were themselves engaged in patterns of cross-fertilization. Thus, even well-defined genres like the western and gangster film were heavily determined by their melodramatic content. (Rodowick, 1991: 237)

On the other hand, however “it is possible to identify specific melodramatic genres with their own stylistic properties” (Landy, 1991: 22). In that sense, to point out some generic features of melodrama, which are endemic to all melodramatic texts and, thus, label them ‘melodramatic’ – be it a “pure” (Durgnat, 1991:139), “classic” or “conventional” (Gerould, 1994: 187) melodrama, or any other type of melodrama like “gothic, brigandish, exotic, military, naval, domestic, regional, historical, romantic, criminal, urban and plain posh (Of course [these] categories overlap)” (Smith, 1973: 39) – is quite possible.

James L. Smith asks at the very beginning of his book, *Melodrama*, “What is melodrama?” His immediate response to this question is that even “really intellectual people” did not appear “to be certain” about it (1973: 1). The reason behind

the difficulty with submitting the term melodrama to a conclusive, critical definition is that it is such a historically complex phenomenon. Moreover, this problem is complicated by the apparent ease with which it is possible to point out melodramatic situations and conventions in a

wide variety of dramatic and literary media of different historical and cultural situations. (Rodowick, 1991: 237)

In order to get into this “historically complex phenomenon,” we can begin with a survey on the generic characteristics of melodrama.

“The connotations of the word [melodrama],” according to Peter Brooks,

are probably similar for us all. They include: the indulgence of strong emotionalism; moral polarization and schematization; extreme states of being, situations, actions; overt villainy, persecution of the good, and final reward of virtue; inflated and extravagant expression; dark plottings, suspense, breathtaking peripety. (1976: 11-12)

These generic features of melodrama are provided by William Paul Steele in a more systematic manner. In his view, the first essential characteristic of melodrama is that it “consists of four principal stock characters: the villain, the hero, the virtuous woman and the comic character or fool” (1968: 4). Sometimes, the number of main characters in melodrama is accepted to be three, not including the comic character (Smith, 1973: 18). According to Smith, the villain “provides melodrama with its motor power” (1973: 20). He has all the evil that a man can do, and above all his heart is extremely cold, which underlines his incorrigible lack of sensibility. “He sometimes repents of his crimes, but only when his doom is near, and we doubt the sincerity of his repentance” (Steele, 1968: 4). We, as audiences, must not feel pity for him, because “[when] villains are pitiable delinquents, . . . melodrama is dead” (Smith, 1973: 46). As I will mention later on in this chapter, the villain is often a member of upper classes in society (Steele, 1968: 4). The hero and the virtuous woman or heroine are the complete opposites of the villain, who are sensible and good. Most of the time the victim is the heroine, and it is the duty of the hero to rescue her from “the villain’s misdeeds and finally to completely defeat the schemes of the villain” (Steele, 1968: 4-5). Steele also mentions, however, that the

role of hero and heroine may sometimes be interchanged. As “melodrama traverses a number of genres – romances, narratives of crime and espionage, thrillers, and historical narratives,” Landy holds,

the protagonists of melodrama vary [as well]. In the women’s narratives such as the women’s novel and film, as well as the soap opera, the protagonists are females, and the conflicts are often seen from a woman’s vantage point. In other genres ranging from the action-oriented westerns to the family melodramas, the perspective is more likely to be associated with conflicts involving male identity and power. (1991: 15)

Yet, in all cases, the fixed characteristics of the hero/heroine and the villain, and the dichotomized world of melodrama between good and evil are preserved. Quoting Alexander Lacey, Steele states that all characters of melodrama are nothing but puppets acting as parts of a machine that carries the plot along: “Strictly speaking, there are no characters in melodrama, there are only types, easily recognized and constantly recurring” (1968: 4). Contrary to the “divided” characters in tragedy who do not need ‘a villain’ other than his/her inner conflicts, imperatives and desires to struggle against, melodramatic characters are

essentially ‘whole’ the evil man who is wholly evil is prevented by his wholeness from the self-understanding that might curb his villainy, and the wholly good man who looks inward has nothing to contemplate but his own virtuous perfection. It follows that the undivided protagonist of melodrama has only external pressures to fight against: an evil man, a social group, a hostile ideology, a natural force, an accident or chance, an obdurate fate or a malign deity. It is this total dependence upon external adversaries which finally separates melodrama from all other serious dramatic forms. (Smith, 1973: 7-8)

Because the internally undivided protagonist and antagonist of melodrama never contradict their typical traits of being good or evil, the conflict in melodrama is always external. So, “dichotomizing of the

world” or “Manicheanism” is within the constitutional strategies of melodrama (Landy, 1991: 15). The suggestion that melodramatic figures are in fact ‘types’ rather than ‘characters’, who cannot act “in a way that could shape the events and influence the emotional environment, let alone change the stifling social milieu” but “are acted upon” (Elsaesser, 1991: 79) in this strictly defined world of antagonistic forces seems important to keep in mind for upcoming discussions. The ‘manichaeism’ underlying the world of melodrama, which positions the characters to act within strictly defined roles of being good or evil, is based on a moral order. In other words, in melodrama, “the conflict of good and evil [is] played out under the surface of things”, which resides in “the ‘moral occult’, the domain of operative spiritual values which is both indicated within and masked by the surface of reality. . . . The melodramatic mode in large measure exists to locate and to articulate the moral occult” (Brooks, 1976: 5). As Cawelti puts it, although “the moral ideals [in melodrama] that define what is right and significant in life” change depending on social developments, the moral tone has remained to be one of the “basic continuities of theme and structure” in melodrama (1991: 47).

Steele pinpoints the second essential characteristic of melodrama as follows: “At the end of a melodrama the good are always rewarded and the evil are always punished” (1968: 6). This characteristic of melodrama is called ‘poetic justice’ according to which the wicked are punished and the virtuous are rewarded “when all . . . thrills and tears and jokes have been exhausted” (Smith, 1973: 34). However, as regards the ending of melodramas, Smith contradicts Steele by arguing that melodramas may end in two ways: either in ‘triumph’ or in ‘defeat’. “[S]ince no compromise is possible between . . . mighty opposites [of Right/Good and Wrong/Evil], [melo]drama always ends in triumph or defeat” (Smith, 1973: 72). For him, only in “the popular melodrama of triumph there is no paltering with poetic justice”

(1973: 37). As in the melodrama of triumph, in the melodrama of defeat, too, “a blameless hero [/heroine] fights against external forces but this time they succeed and he [/she] goes under, leaving an audience to pity his [/her] distresses or admire the fortitude with which he [/she] bears them” (Smith, 1973: 56). Regardless of ending in triumph or defeat, however, in all melodramas, audiences/readers always expect for the realization of ‘poetic justice’, because, as Smith himself states, melodrama has appealed to audiences through “offering [them] the fulfillment and satisfaction found only in dreams” (1973: 17). Similarly, Cawelti holds that “[m]elodrama would be impossible without some vision of poetic justice shaping the development of the story” (1991: 44). The expectation of poetic justice in melodrama signals the struggle between the protagonist and the antagonist, which is perceived by the audience as a matter of life or death.

In melodrama, the conflict between the good and the evil is always resolved. According to Steele, this resolution “is achieved . . . by neutralizing or destroying the power of the villain” (1968: 6). Thus, he holds, as the third characteristic of melodrama, it “deals with an action that is temporarily serious” (1968: 6). Whether the villain would be beaten by the hero or not constitutes the climactic point in melodrama. In fact, the construction of the whole story in melodrama depends on “the machinations of the villain” and the hero’s/heroine’s reaction to his actions. This is the fourth characteristic of melodrama in Steele’s view (1968: 7). So, we reach another important strategy of melodramatic texts: “its inflation of personal conflicts, and its internalization of external social conflicts” (Landy, 1991: 16). The conflict in melodrama is ‘personalized’ and ‘internalized’ as if the sole source of persecution was the villainous character and as if it was only the blameless hero/heroine who suffers from and reacts against unjust actions of him.

According to Steele, the fifth characteristic of melodrama is that it “contains sensational elements” (1968: 7). These “sensational

elements,” he adds, are composed of striking visual effects, multiplicity of plot elements – many exciting and surprising incidents the progress of which is based on accidents, unexpected developments or coincidences – and physical violence. Similarly, Cawelti argues that “suspenseful excitement” and “seemingly miraculous coincidence” are among the essentials of melodramatic incident (1991: 37). Mostly because of this characteristic, melodrama becomes open to some criticisms which claim that it takes an escapist and/or conformist attitude towards life and hence the social system by distorting ‘reality’.

The last important characteristic of melodrama, for Steele, is that it “contains elements of pathos and sentiment” (1968: 8). Exaggerating or “dwelling-upon” the emotions is one of the essential strategies of melodrama “which makes its appeal to audiences that delight in strong emotional stimuli” (Steele, 1968: 9). As Len Ang emphasizes, this is probably the defining characteristic of melodrama: “There is a name for cultural genres whose main effect is the stirring up of the emotions: melodrama” (1991: 479). Emotions serve for making audiences identify with the problems of the protagonist. It is mainly through sensational elements that melodrama provokes the emotions of audiences/readers at the end of which

[o]ur imitation of the emotions which we see expressed brings vividness and affective tone into our grasping of the play’s action. We sympathize with the sufferer and that means that the pain which he expresses becomes our own pain. (Affron, 1991: 103)

Melodrama that creates “an overtly emotional response” in a wide group of readers/audiences has been considered inferior to the

[art works] that engage and inspire the refined critical, intellectual activities of a selective [reading/seeing]. . . . It is argued that blatantly emotional films cheapen and banalize emotion *because* they are blatant. Their promptness to elicit feeling offends those who consider being easily moved equivalent to being manipulated,

victimized, deprived of critical distance. (Affron, 1991: 98-99)

This position itself, however, as I will mention later on in this chapter, has been subject to counter-criticisms on several grounds.

According to modern genre theory, a text does not belong to one particular genre, but it participates in several different genres. Therefore, the generic features of a text cannot help classify it within only one genre, but they are conventions shared by both the writer and the readers of the text, which serve a communicative function between the parties being involved in this dialogical process. The basic generic features of melodrama which have been outlined above can be used to pinpoint melodramatic qualities of a text, rather than to classify the text as a melodrama or not. Besides the texts which are called 'pure' or 'classical' melodrama that are supposed to fit exactly into the melodramatic formula, there are also many texts which not only contain melodramatic elements but also diverge from it. Arabesk films, which I will analyze in detail in this study, for instance, generally possess these generic features of melodrama; however, in certain respects, they also diverge from the Yeşilçam melodramas, which are accepted to be the examples of 'classical' melodramas in Turkish cinema. I will touch upon some divergences between classical Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films while analyzing the latter. The important point here is that, in spite of some divergences, arabesk films generally contain the generic features of melodrama mentioned above.

2.4 Melodrama and Bourgeois Morality

As a western form, melodrama is generally associated with bourgeoisie. Both Thomas Elsaesser and Peter Brooks, whose works have been quite influential on recent studies about melodrama, agree upon the idea that the emergence of melodrama as a modern form in

the nineteenth century coincided with the germination of bourgeoisie in the West. For Elsaesser, “melodrama is the representation of the subjectivity of the European bourgeoisie in its struggle against the authority of a declining feudal system” (qtd. in Browne, 1994: 167). He claims that the novel and “certain types of ‘entertainment’ drama,” which differ from country to country, such as the novel and literary gothic in England, the costume drama and historical novel in France, ‘high’ drama and the ballad in Germany, and the opera in Italy, are the antecedents of melodrama (69). The use of melodramatic situations in some literary and theatrical forms at the dawn of the nineteenth century, clearly indicates the emergence of a new form of representation, melodrama, which, according to him, arose out of the class struggle between newly grown bourgeoisie and old feudalism. For Brooks, too, melodrama is a form of bourgeois age that “seeks within the confining and largely recalcitrant parameters of the old society to restore and recentre the ethical imperatives required” (Browne, 1994: 168) of that age. He considers melodrama a modern form. He states that even if melodrama might be considered “as a constant of the imagination and a constant among literary modes” which “could be . . . detectable at all epochs,” it

appears to be a peculiarly modern form, and there is a specific relevance in the genre labeled melodrama as it comes into being in an historical context. The origins of melodrama can be accurately located within the context of the French Revolution and its aftermath. (1976: 14)

According to Brooks, melodrama arose out of the need for a morality in a new social order which succeeded

the final liquidation of the traditional Sacred and its representative institutions (Church and Monarch), the shattering of the myth of Christendom, the dissolution of an organic and hierarchically cohesive society, and the invalidation of the literary forms –tragedy, comedy of manners– that depended on such a society. (1976: 15)

Thus, melodrama, in the beginning, was the expression of a need for a moral system in an enlightened world which would compensate worn-out values of the old society. Brooks states that the narrator of melodrama in the nineteenth century uses “the things and gestures of the real world, of social life, as kinds of metaphors that refer us to the realm of spiritual reality and latent moral meanings” (1976: 9). These metaphors, according to Brooks, reflect the morality of the French Revolution. Melodrama “is the genre, and the speech of revolutionary moralism”, and it states, enacts and imposes the moral messages of this bourgeois revolution: “the humble of the earth stand up to overbearing tyrants and express home truths, about the value of the good heart, the sanctity of the domestic health, the essential moral equality of all” (Brooks, 1994:16).

John Cawelti, in his article, analyzes the development of melodrama throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Melodrama, in his view, has always been a bourgeois genre the moral core of which is composed of the middle-class values. He argues that throughout the nineteenth century, melodrama affirms “the middle-class values of love, domesticity, social respectability, masculine dominance and feminine purity” (1991: 35). Although the nineteenth century was an era when the increasing tension between traditional Christian views of the world and the secular values of a rapidly changing society was becoming more apparent, melodrama attempted to resolve, in Cawelti’s view,

the tension between religion and the values of mobility and success by making its virtuous protagonists examples of both and by asserting a fundamental unity between the operation of God’s providence and the creation of happy, prosperous, and respectable middle-class families. (1991: 39)

Thus, the religious faith in the divine governance of the world constituted another major part of the melodramatic formula in this

period. Despite the fact that it was based on the revolutionary principles of bourgeois emancipation from the feudal social values, in Brooks view, “the melodrama cannot figure the birth of a new society. . . . A form for secularized times, it offers the *nearest* approach to sacred and cosmic values in a world where they no longer have any certain ontology or epistemology” (1976: 205). This ‘ontological’ and ‘epistemological’ gap between the de-sacralized modern society and the need for a unifying moral basis to justify the new social order, according to Cawelti, was filled, in melodramas, mostly through incorporating the bourgeois values within a religious vision. Cawelti pinpoints that melodrama has always been subject to changes in relation to new socio-cultural tensions. In the 1960s, for instance, the religious concerns which were so prominent in earlier periods became totally absent from melodramas. “Despite considerable changes” in the formula of melodrama, however, he adds,

there are certain basic continuities of theme and structure such as the emphasis on romantic love as an ultimate value, the defense of monogamous, family-oriented relationships between men and women, and the attempt to define true and false conceptions of success and status. (1991: 47)

The preservation of these themes in melodramatic formula since the very beginning of the genre, for Cawelti, leads to the idea that melodrama is primarily a genre of the well-established middle class for whom these particular values are of most importance. “If this speculation is correct, then the essential social-psychological dynamic of melodrama is one of continually integrating new social circumstances and ideas to the developing middle-class sense of social value” (1991: 47).

Since the nineteenth-century Ottoman novel, some of which had an “almost protestant ethic” that is composed of “thrift, avoidance of conspicuous consumption, honesty [as well as abstemiousness and

hard work]” (Mardin, 1974: 415), a kind of bourgeois morality has become a part of the Turkish melodramas. The melodramas of the Republican period, which took their raw material, according to Türkeş, from the Ottoman novel (2001: 137), can also be regarded as idealizing a middle-class way of life. We can see the sublimation of such a life in almost all of the Yeşilçam melodramas, as well. Similar to the western examples of the genre, the Yeşilçam melodramas, too, hold middle-class values such as ‘romantic love’, ‘monogamous family’, ‘honour’, ‘hard work’ etc. There are many protagonists in these films who have a yearning for ‘true love’ and honour. In these stories, the hero and heroine often dream of having a sufficient income for an ordinary life-standard and a small house, in which they and their children can lead a modest but happy life. In short, they want to have a middle-class life. Arabesk films, however, are different from the classical Yeşilçam melodramas in that respect. In none of the thirty arabesk films analyzed in this study is a scene in which the hero and the heroine dream of having a happy home, healthy and happy children etc. in the future. These films, compared to the Yeşilçam melodramas, focus on the social conflicts between the hero-the heroine and the villain(s) so much that it seems almost impossible for the characters to dream about having even ‘a moderate but happy life’. In arabesk films, too, ‘romantic love’, ‘monogamous family’, ‘honour’ etc. are emphasized as the moral values, but these films are more hopeless in terms of the possibility of reaching or maintaining them.

2.5 Melodrama: The “Democratic” Art of the Modern Society

Gripsrud states that “Peter Brooks calls melodrama ‘democratic art’, because it provided its mass audiences with a substitute for the traditional religious understanding of life which got lost in the chaos of modernity” (2000: 88). The process of desacralization, the

abandonment of the Sacred with all its socio-political institutions and cultural representations, “the convulsive last act” of which was the French Revolution, was a revolutionary process. Ultimately, however, the need for a new form emerged in this new era which would compensate the lost Sacred:

Melodrama does not simply represent a ‘fall’ from tragedy, but a response to the loss of the tragic vision. It comes into being in a world where the traditional imperatives of truth and ethics have been violently thrown into question, yet where the promulgation of truth and ethics, their instauration as a way of life, is of immediate, daily, political concern. (Brooks, 1976: 15)

Since its very beginning, therefore, melodrama has consisted of both revolutionary and conservative implications; but, Brooks holds, melodrama is in all cases radically democratic, striving to make its representations clear and legible to everyone. “We may legitimately claim that melodrama becomes the principal mode for uncovering, demonstrating, and making operative the essential moral universe in a post-sacred era” (1976: 15). In such a desacralized and enlightened world where holy forces are no longer “the source and guarantor of ethics” (Brooks, 1976: 18), melodrama depicts a world in which individuals are acted out to preserve or to destroy moral imperatives. “Melodrama represents both the urge toward resacralization and the impossibility of conceiving sacralization other than in personal terms” (Brooks, 1976: 16). So, melodramatic conflict, which is represented through struggle between personalized ‘good’ and personalized ‘evil’, stems from the need to preserve ‘a moral occult’ and suggests that the evil must be recognized, confronted, fought against and beaten “to purge the social order” (Brooks, 1976: 13). So, melodrama is ‘democratic’, in Brooks terminology, because it brings down the Sacred to the earth, it sets up the moral universe among the people, in their worldly relationships, it represents a world of simple, clear-cut moral

conflicts between clearly identified opponents, which all add to its legibility.

Melodrama has always been a popular art. Its generic features make it quite legible and appealing for popular audiences: its simple plot and two-dimensional characters are easy to keep up with, its emotional structure paves the way for a strong identification with the protagonist(s), its sensational elements attract the attention of the audiences, and, contrary to 'high literature' (tragedy, for instance), it deals with the ordinary people and their stories. In the nineteenth century, Smith remarks, audiences of melodrama were generally composed of new urban workers for whom theatre was the most widely available entertainment; and, the melodramatic formula full of pathos and sentiment has been devised for meeting the expectations of such an audience: "a dream world, inhabited by dream people and dream justice, offering audiences the fulfilment and satisfaction found only in dreams" (1973: 17). He argues that presenting an innocent man and a defenceless woman who are wholly admirable and free from fault, and who are persecuted by the villain and dogged by ill-luck in a hostile world is the simplest formula to make audiences identify themselves with the hero and heroine. Contrary to the complex personalities of tragic characters, melodramatic characters are all two-dimensional stereotypes who "can be guaranteed to think, speak and act exactly you would expect," and thus who "afford an audience the pleasure of instant and complete identification" (Smith, 1973: 18). In the identification process, both a semblance of everyday life in the text (human beings, environment etc.), and narrative's sentimental appeal play an important role:

Viewers respond to the medium when its conditions echo something of their feeling and their experience; viewers become involved in the image as image when that image engages them in its workings, when its constitution becomes a field as rich and inviting as those that effect involvement in life. (Affron, 1991: 99)

Melodrama has an apparent semblance of everyday life. Unlike the tragic hero, its protagonists are ordinary people like audiences themselves. And instead of complex situations that a tragic hero confronts in his/her journey from happiness to misery, the characters in melodrama involve in everyday situations that audiences are already familiar with in their lives.

2.6 Critiques of Melodrama

Melodrama is a cultural form that has been popular since the beginning of the nineteenth century, especially among the 'popular classes'; therefore, it has always had an inferior status among cultural products. Being a popular form, melodrama has always been exposed to the negative treatments which the term 'popular' implies: cliché-ridden, banal, cheap, nasty, blatant etc. According to Landy, there have been very few studies about melodrama until recently because of its identification with mass or 'low' culture: "Low culture has been identified with escapism, vulgarity, sensationalism, excess, and exaggeration, regarded as corrupting by critics who have upheld the values of high seriousness, universality, timelessness, and especially realism" (1991: 16).

Although melodrama is concerned with everyday reality, its depiction of 'the reality' is not 'realistic'. This is because, according to Brooks, melodrama basically deals with what is hidden underneath the reality, the unconscious, something more real than what the reality looks like:

The melodramatic imagination needs both document and vision, and it is centrally concerned with the extrapolation from one to another. . . . Things cease to be merely themselves, gestures cease to be merely tokens of social intercourse whose meaning is assigned by a social code;

they become the vehicles of metaphors whose tenor suggests another kind of reality. (1976: 9)

The diffusion of 'supernatural' vision into the reality in melodramatic imagination makes it a dream world. Exaggerating the emotional situations, extreme conflicts ending either in triumph or in defeat, extreme villainy or extreme virtue, highly exaggerated sensational elements, unexpected occurrences, extremely improbable coincidences etc. are all characteristics of this dream world. According to Len Ang, behind the contradiction between the reality and its representation in melodrama, there is the impossibility of reconciling 'desire' with 'reality'.

Melodrama recognizes this gap by raising problems, known and recognizable, and offering a personal escape similar to that of a daydream: a chance to work through inescapable frustrations by positing an alternative ideal never seen as more than a momentary illusion. (1991: 486)

Some critics argue that by distorting the reality melodrama provokes escapism. According to this argument, melodrama reduces the complexities of real life into simple encounters between good and evil; thus, it makes readers/audiences misunderstand what actually the reality is. Because readers/audiences get deeply involved in the distorted, dream-like 'reality' of melodramatic world, they cannot preserve the critical distance between the text and themselves, which is necessary for reading/watching it with a critical eye. As Ang avers,

[i]t is difficult to persuade people to take melodrama seriously as a cultural form which is a significant expression of a lived reality, because, according to current notions, it plays on the emotions of the public in a false way: emotional straining after effect is seen as its sole aim. . . . the plot is so exaggerated and overdone that the story becomes ridiculous and bereft of any credibility and sensibility. The characters in a melodrama seem to be so taken up with their own violent emotions that there is no scope for reflection, intellectual distancing and relativizing. (1991: 480)

The history of the negative approaches towards melodrama and its popular/mass audience, argues Smith, is nearly as old as the genre itself: "Melodrama, said the *Theatrical Inquisitor* in 1818, appeals to those who 'wish to be amused without the slightest exertion on their own parts, or any exercise whatever of their intellectual powers.' Times have not changed" (1973: 50). However, knowing that melodrama presents a world of dreams, how can some critics argue that "[t]he melodrama springs from reality, and reality informs the melodrama" (Durgnat, 1991: 144)? In Brook's view, "the effort to make the 'real' and the 'ordinary' and the 'private life' interesting through heightened dramatic utterance and gesture" is not peculiar to melodrama but it is a characteristic of modern aesthetic (1976: 14). Melodramatic 'reality' is heightened, exaggerated and stereotyped in such a way that it becomes a symbol or a metaphor of emphasizing 'itself':

Exaggerated plots can be regarded as the symbolic lumping together of the diffuse and hard-to-describe notion of 'life's torments' which occur at times in every individual life. They function as metaphors for these 'life's torments'. . . . [Such] plots and situations are dominant and generally current as metaphors for 'life's torments', . . . speaking directly to the imagination of the public. (Ang: 480-481)

Elsaesser points out the metaphoric nature of melodramatic imagination as follows:

Just as in dreams certain gestures and incidents mean something by their structure and sequence, rather than by what they literally represent, the melodrama often works. . . . by a displaced emphasis by substitute acts, by parallel situations and metaphoric connections. (1991: 82)

Melodrama presents situations "which are structurally similar to those we emotionally experience in life" (Kleinhans, 1991: 200), and it fills the gap, though temporarily, between the desires of audiences and the real life experiences. In other words, "the heightened plot and the exaggerated emotions" in melodrama, which are disregarded by 'high'

culture “as a simplistic and easy-going penchant for the sensational, can in its structure constitute the strength of the genre” (Ang: 480) According to Landy, most of the criticisms against popular culture and especially against melodrama, which has been high on the list of escapist works, has the tendency to use the term ‘dream’ in a “a pejorative rather than a Freudian sense” (1991: 17). Popular culture in the twentieth century has been accused of reproducing the “meaningless consumption [obsession] of capitalist society” because, according to this idea, distorted ‘reality’ in popular culture removes the masses from their actual needs, desires or struggles. In Landy’s view, however, these arguments can be regarded as ‘judgements’, stemming from the prejudiced attitude towards ‘low’ culture, rather than ‘analysis’. Landy avers that the audiences of popular cultural forms are not merely passive consumers, but these texts, “by virtue of their longevity and phenomenal success, make contact with the audience and, as such, with immediate and everyday problems” (1991: 17). Therefore, the fantasies of melodrama do have a substance, i.e., they are based on a desire or need coming from real life experiences of audiences. As Fredric Jameson remarks, these texts may have, “as their underlying impulse – albeit in what is often distorted and repressed, unconscious form – our deepest fantasies about the nature of social life; both as we live it now, and as we feel in our bones that it ought rather to be lived” (qtd. in Landy, 1991: 17). The dream world of melodrama does not contradict reality, but it is constituted within it. It is not argued here that the melodramatic texts can never be manipulative at all, but it is rather argued that “they are not total distortions of human needs and desires” (Landy, 1991: 17). Moreover, while commenting on the criticisms by Italian neorealists who associate melodramatic cinema with fascism in the post-World War II period, Landy remarks that melodrama, ironically in a sense, “often came closer to dramatizing the contradictions of immediate life under fascism than many realist texts” (1991: 20).

Personalization of conflicts in melodrama, according to some critics, is another point which is responsible for its escapism. However, the world of melodrama has an ambiguous structure in that respect. Although the plot is all about the personal story of the hero and/or heroine, melodramatic characters do not have any power in determining their actions. As mentioned before, they do not act but 'acted out'. Therefore, personalization in melodrama is not the same as individualization. Melodramatic characters can even be regarded as mere 'bodies' that are acted out as the most important signifier in melodrama:

Melodrama constantly reminds us of the psychoanalytic concept of 'acting out': the use of the body itself, its actions, gestures, its sites of irritation and excitation, to represent meanings that might otherwise be unavailable to representation because they are somehow under the bar of repression. (Brooks, 1994: 19)

The embodiment of melodramatic situations through presenting the conflict between personalized 'good' and personalized 'evil', on the one hand, stems from, as stated previously, "the impossibility of conceiving sacralization other than in personal terms" in the modern, enlightened world; but on the other hand, it can be regarded as a popular reaction which reveals the refusal

to understand social change in other than private contexts and emotional terms. In this, there is obviously a healthy distrust of intellectualization and abstract social theory – insisting that other structures of experience (those of suffering, for instance) are more in keeping with reality. (Elsaesser, 1991: 72)

In private contexts, the danger of ignoring "the properly social and political dimensions" of the social crisis and their causality should always be kept in mind; however, melodramatic imagination does not actually present an individualized vision of life to the audience/reader. As Elsaesser points out, melodrama does not pursue representing the

unique experience of an individual, but one of its characteristic features is

the non-psychological conception of the *dramatis personae*, who figure less as autonomous individuals than to transmit the action and link the various locales within a total constellation. In this respect, melodramas have a myth-making function, insofar as their significance lies in the structure and articulation of the action, not in any psychologically motivated correspondence with individualized experience. (1991: 69)

So, melodramatic characters do not act according to the individual psychological situations they are in, but they are acted out to magnify the emotional effects of the melodramatic situation as much as possible. The emotional effects on the audience can be achieved, in Ang's view, because these imagined situations are socially and culturally surrounded by myths and fantasies which endow them with a strongly emotional appeal. "That appeal draws less on the bare facts of those [personal] situations than on the metaphorical role they play in the popular imagination" (1991: 481).

The Yeşilçam melodramas and especially arabesk films, too, are often criticized for having an escapist character because of their melodramatic features such as personalization of the social conflicts, the role of fate, coincidences or miraculous incidents in the development of the events etc. It is obvious that these films do not have an overtly political attitude towards the social problems. The problems and their solutions take place at the personal level. However, the protagonists and antagonists of these films are 'types' who seem to be representing a social group rather than being individual characters. Therefore, conflicts are not perceived as only personal problems. Moreover, although fatalism is an unavoidable aspect of arabesk culture, these films nonetheless "present fundamental social evils" (Elsaesser, 1991: 71), who are, most of the time, identified through their richness. Thus, especially arabesk films, as I will mention again while

analyzing them, provoke the feelings of discomfort and anger, rather than an escapist attitude, towards these 'social evils' represented by 'rich' villains.

Melodrama is also criticized on the basis of the idea that it drives the audience into passivity, and hence into conformism to the bourgeois social values. The passivity partly stems from the identification of the audience with the melodramatic protagonists. According to Smith, we see most of the serious conflicts and crises of our everyday lives in melodramatic, rather than tragic terms. "[Melodrama] is the dramatic form which expresses the reality of the human condition as we all experience it most of the time" (1973: 10-11). In tragedy, being identified with the hero leads audiences to feeling pity for the hero. In melodrama, however, pity for the protagonist with whom audiences are completely identified converges automatically into pity for themselves. Brooks argues that melodrama allows the audience "the pleasure of self-pity and the experience of wholeness brought by the identification with 'monopathic' emotion" (1976: 12). Departing from this feature of melodramatic texts, it has been argued, by some critics, that

the melodrama has served as an ideological instrument of the bourgeoisie. The function of this ideology, as defined by Robin Wood, has been 'to naturalize as eternal truths assumptions that are in fact cultural/historical; [and] to render it impossible to imagine radical alternatives.' Thus the manifest content of melodrama in Western culture works to naturalize the assumptions of the inviolability of capitalism. (Orr, 1991: 381)

Accordingly, Noël Carroll argues that melodramas generally are 'ideological' texts, because they naturalize the nuclear family which is the basic social unit of the bourgeois society. In spite of the fact that "melodrama has at times provided a vehicle for social criticism," he insists on emphasizing the conformist tendency of the genre, which "project[s] and unquestioningly endorse[s] the family as the right structure for human relations" (1991: 186). For him, ideological function

of melodrama operates on the strong causal interdependency between a fundamental moral order and everyday events:

The moral order, or at least the moral order being valorized, is presented as part and parcel of the nature of things as a causal force or as a regulatory force with causal efficacy. In this respect, the particular moral order is represented as natural, namely, as part of the nature of things. (1991: 189)

As he makes clear in his article, this moral order is of bourgeoisie. Thus, melodrama's conformism, according to him, imposes the bourgeois values upon its audiences.

Instead of directly linking melodrama with conformism, some critics accept the idea that extremely emotional language (including gestures, iconography and music) of melodramatic texts is in fact a challenge to *status quo*; it is "a register to articulate profound personal and social conflicts" (Landy, 1991: 93). The basic premise of this position is that moral, emotional and personalized structure of melodramatic texts, which appears to be reinforcing the dominant values of the social order, also constitutes "an important source of pleasure, learning, and even resistance to prevailing social attitudes" (Landy, 1991: 15). As a characteristic of popular culture, melodramatic texts are not monolithic, but they are composed of contradictions or they reveal contradictions. As Landy puts it "[i]nvariably, contradictions surface in the texts' attempts to reconcile irreconcilable conflicts". Because the conflicts in melodrama that are attempted to be reconciled are actually irreconcilable in real life, these texts become not only "a laboratory for examining the persistence of dominant . . . values" but also "the locus for resistance to the *status quo*. Hence, forms of representation are not only the source of repetition, they are also the story of change, resistance and even subversion" (1991: 17). Jacky Bratton expresses the ambivalent structure of melodrama by characterizing it as 'heteroglot'. According to him, melodrama is

composed of contending (extra-literary) languages which “operate not only in the [text’s] literary form but in its social being” (1994: 39). ‘Heteroglossia’ is a term coined by M.M.Bakhtin which refers to “a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices” used in the novel (1994: 114). However, it should not be confused with a simple celebration of linguistic diversity, because the term suggests not only to the co-existence of ‘different languages’ within a genre, but their co-existence in a state of tension and competition. As he avers, “each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships” (1994: 114). Accordingly, melodramatic texts are heteroglot because we see a complex, contradictory or contending co-existence of different discourses in them. In other words, melodrama cannot be confined to only one discourse, but it appears to be a battle ground of contending discourses. Like other cultural forms, melodrama has an ambivalent quality:

Cultural works are not monolithic, . . . and it is necessary to identify the nature of the mass [popular] culture in order to understand the ways that ideology, or common sense [as Gramsci calls it], is a pastiche of contradictory attitudes, geared toward survival. Cultural artifacts contain the marks of dominance and subordination in their strategies of containment, but they also provide the clues to opposition. (Landy, 1991: 18)

Comprehension of melodrama as a style, which is used to express, though in a metaphorical or symbolic way, ‘a historically or socially conditioned *mode of experience*’ leads to the idea that it contains the complexities and contradictions in the mental and emotional world of the lower classes; therefore, it cannot be fully grasped by simple formulas which are based on its passive, escapist and conformist messages. Departing from such an idea, in this study, I will try to show how the class conflict is transformed into and expressed through a

melodramatic language, and becomes a constructive part of the narrative in arabesk films.

2.7 Melodrama and the Representation of Social Conflicts

Elsaesser's approach to melodrama is based upon the examination of how social conflicts are represented through a metaphorical or symbolic way in this genre. He pinpoints the potential for opposition endemic in the structure of melodramatic style by stating that the depiction of various social problems, such as the living conditions of the urban poor, by some nineteenth-century novelists, "while remaining within the popular idiom" became possible owing to the melodrama (1991: 72). While Brooks regards melodrama as a 'democratic' form in the sense that it brings down the 'moral occult' to the earth, to everyday life of ordinary people and it proclaims the equality of all people in front of the moral law regardless of their rank in the society, in Elsaesser's account of melodrama, the class conflict between aristocracy and bourgeoisie is emphasized as the source of this democratic aspiration:

The villains (often of noble birth) demonstrate their superior political and economic power invariably by sexual aggression and attempted rape, leaving the heroine no other way than to commit suicide or take poison in the company of her lover. The ideological 'message' [of these melodramatic elements] is transparent: they record the struggle of a morally and emotionally emancipated bourgeois consciousness against the remnants of feudalism. They pose the problem in political terms and concentrate on the complex interplay of ethical principles, religious-metaphysical polarities and the idealist aspirations typical of the bourgeoisie *in its militant phase* (my emphasis). (1991: 70)

The stereotype-characters of melodramas of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century when bourgeoisie was still in its 'militant phase' show how the class opposition is incorporated into these texts.

Elsaesser states that “even if the form might act to reinforce attitudes of submission, the actual working out of the scenes could nonetheless present fundamental social evils” (1991: 71). “[In] the popular moral vision of early nineteenth century [melodramas],” the virtuous heroine was “threatened with a fate worse than death by an upper-class [aristocrat] villain,” and then she “settled into happy domesticity with a solidly respectable young man, with whom she also, coincidentally, was in love, thus neatly affirming the nineteenth-century middle-class values” (Cawelti, 1991: 34-35). So, the villain, the worldly enemy of the ‘divinely appointed moral order’ of melodrama, is from the upper-class, which was aristocracy in that period. The hero and heroine were, on the other hand, respectable and virtuous middle-class members, i.e., bourgeoisie. As Grimsted puts it there is always an inverse relationship between class and virtue in melodrama (1994: 206); that is, the antagonist, the evil-doer is from the upper-class in society, whereas the virtuous hero and/or heroine’s rank in the social order is lower. Prior to the triumph of bourgeoisie, the typical melodramatic villain was an aristocrat. In the early twentieth century melodramas, however, “the aristocratic seducer was transformed into the figure of the selfish capitalist” (Cawelti, 1991: 41). This can be regarded as a notable point which pinpoints how changes in class positions due to the social transformations influence melodramatic imagination: the class conflict between aristocrats and lower classes in pre-capitalist period transforms into the conflict between new classes shaped under the social conditions of the capitalist era. While commenting on the heteroglot language of melodrama, Bratton states that heteroglossia of the genre was inevitable because these texts (mostly plays), which were based on a middle-class morality in the nineteenth century, were seen mostly by “a pleasure seeking,” “predominantly working-class audience” (1994: 44). As a result of the expectations of these audiences, melodramatic texts started to be influenced by the everyday

life (conflicts, afflictions, desires etc.) shaped through the capitalist social order. Daniel Gerould analyzes “one sub-genre of melodrama” what he calls “revolutionary melodrama,” which germinated “in both nineteenth-century French and twentieth-century Russian theater” (1994: 185). Even though Gerould refers to ‘revolutionary melodrama’ as a sub-genre, he thinks that

it reveals something fundamental about the nature of the genre. Since the poor and downtrodden are its protagonists of choice, melodrama tends to favour the cause of the dispossessed rather than of those in power, even when its plot structure ultimately brings about accommodation to the reigning order. Thus melodrama’s central theme of oppressed innocence has regularly been perceived as an incitement to rebellion against tyranny by audiences suffering similar victimisation. (1994: 185)

This rebellious side of melodramatic attitude reveals itself in its ‘myth-making function’ which, stems from the impossibility of reconciling the socially and culturally restricted desires with reality.

Two of Lévi Strauss’s insights are specially provocative: that a dilemma (or contradiction) stands at the heart of every living myth, and that this dilemma is expressed through layered pairs of opposites which are transformations of a primary pair. The impulse to construct the myth arises from the desire to resolve the dilemma; but the impossibility of resolving it leads to a crystal-like growth of the myth through which the dilemma is repeated, or conceived in new terms, or inverted – in short, subjected to intellectual operations that might resolve it or attenuate its force. (Eckert, 1991: 214)

In other words, the contradictions or dilemmas, though in a ‘displaced⁴’ manner, occupies “at the heart of” melodrama’s dream-like world. Melodrama has a metaphorical language. All melodramatic elements

⁴ ‘Displacement’ is a Freudian term which refers to “the substitution of an acceptable object of love, hate etc., for a forbidden one” (Eckert: 217). The displacement of desire in melodrama arising out of its attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable “depicts the return of the repressed, in the Freudian sense,” according to Kleinhans (1991: 201). Likewise, Laura Mulvey regards melodrama as “the terrain of the ‘unspeakable’ ” (1994: 122), within the same context. So, it is possible that fantasies in melodramatic texts, just like dreams, indicate readers’s/audiences’s repressed desires or aversions.

can be considered personalized and metaphorical embodiments of the social conflicts because, as Elsaesser avers,

the element of interiorization and personalization of primarily ideological conflicts, together with the metaphorical interpretation of class conflict as sexual exploitation and rape, is important in all . . . forms of melodrama, including that of the cinema. (1991: 71)

In the same manner, while commenting on Elsaesser's approach to melodrama, Pam Cook states that "the focus on individuals as the site of sexualized class conflict [allows melodrama] to present social struggle and change explicitly, and, depending on historical and social context, criticise the *status quo*" (1991: 249).

In most instances, as Landy remarks, the struggle in melodramas represents social conflicts which stem from sexual, racial and/or class power and domination (1991: 45). Therefore, in tune with the dichotomized world of this genre or style, we expect to see the representation of these social dilemmas or contradictions in the form of layered binary oppositions or paradigmatic relationships between different genders, races or classes in all melodramatic texts although they are produced in different socio-cultural contexts. However, there are also peculiarities in melodramas of the different countries in terms of the composition of these layered oppositions. For instance, the excessive use of the 'poor-rich' paradigm in the Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films, I think, is an important characteristic of the Turkish melodramas which separate them from Western, particularly Hollywood, melodramas. Hollywood, as in most of other Third-World countries, has been highly effective on the development of melodrama, the most popular genre of the cinema industry in Turkey. Therefore, in order to understand the peculiar characteristics of the Turkish melodramas as regards which social conflicts gain ascendancy compared to the others in these films, a crude comparison between them and the American melodramas seems especially meaningful. According to Gaines, the

main paradigm in “classical Hollywood narrative cinema” (1992: 1) is related to the patriarchal structure of the society. She states that the main approach to the Hollywood classical narrative “understands [it] as [a] patriarchal form” (1992: 2). Because the gender conflict constitutes the most obvious binary opposition in these films, she holds, Hollywood cinema is criticized first on the basis of this paradigm and “classical narrative is said to be a form so powerful that its aesthetic devices are able to reinforce gender positions in society” (1992: 1). Not only critics of Hollywood, but also of other Western melodramas deal in their studies heavily with gender conflict rather than class conflict. Since its very beginnings, most of the melodramas are accepted to be “directed to an essentially female audience,” in which the heroine is represented as the victim of society (Bourget, 1991: 429-430). According to Kleinhans, to better understand melodrama, the development of the family under capitalism has to be examined because “bourgeois domestic melodrama emerges with the ascension of capitalism” and it deals with the family (1991: 198). By drawing upon Engels, Kleinhans mentions that, contrary to the precapitalist social formations in which economic and social life were not splitted, under capitalism, the family has become the primary site of reproduction, “the central area of personal life, a place of respite from productive life, from the alienated labor,” in which meaning and purpose of life are constructed (1991: 198); and, being the primary institution for personal happiness and fulfillment, “the family becomes a center of subjectivity, cut off from the world of action and decisions” (1991: 199). Kleinhans argues that this historically specific form (the contemporary family) supplies the raw material of melodrama because of a basic contradiction: “Under capitalism people’s personal needs are restricted to the sphere of the family, of personal life, and yet the family cannot meet the demands of being all that the rest of society is not” (1991: 200). The chief actors of this emotional trap are women. Because the family is the basic

institution for personal regeneration, to protect its order is very crucial for the capitalist system. And, the major part of this role (protecting the family order) is of woman, who must sacrifice herself, if necessary, for the sake of this order.

One of the most persistent structures in bourgeois domestic melodrama is the pattern of a woman sacrificing her own goals – which may be defined as personal achievement, a career, happiness, independence – for the happiness of another person. (Kleinhans, 1991: 201)

The portrait of woman in melodramas has changed depending on the socio-cultural developments. For instance, the “tender fragile woman” of nineteenth-century Victorian melodrama (Smith, 1973: 21) has been replaced by a less submissive and even a bit wild one in the twentieth century. And even “the divorcée, the promiscuous and the prostitute” started to be “treated with considerable sympathy and understanding” in melodramatic narratives at the beginning of the twentieth century; however, “the purity and gentility” which were “so important to the traditional feminine ideal” have always been maintained in the representation of melodramatic heroine (Cawelti, 1991: 42). Thus, since its very beginning, the contradiction between socially insisted expectations and restrictions upon woman and her own personality has been one of the primary motifs in melodrama. In short, the primary paradigm in the Western melodrama has been related to the role of women as opposed to that of men in society, and class conflict has remained to be a latent content. According to Gledhill, in Hollywood, “[c]lass antagonism is organized into sexual conflict” (1992: 148). She states that class conflict in American melodrama, is “displaced by an overriding concern with gender. . . . The oppositions that displace class in American melodrama pivot on gender” (1992: 136). Especially in arabesk films, unlike Hollywood’s middle-class stories, “[p]ower and powerlessness are not however confined to gender issues” (Stokes, 1992: 13). As Yeşil puts it, “Hollywood often told the stories of middle

class families. However, Yeşilçam melodramas' favorite subject was the stories of the lower class in contradiction with the upper class" (2004: 25). The gender roles of the protagonists and antagonists in the Yeşilçam melodramas and in arabesk films are accompanied by a primary concern with the class positions of them. In most of the Yeşilçam melodramas, the class difference between the lovers (the poor woman – the rich man love) is the main point of conflict. A similar plot can be seen in the melodramas of another Third World country, Egypt, which were also highly effective on the Turkish melodramas. According to Shafik "one of the core narratives of Egyptian melodrama" is as follows:

a young and poor white-collar worker falls in love with the daughter of his wealthy employer. However, urged by the girl's father and even after his ascent to become an acclaimed singer, he gives up his wish to marry her because of his own inferior social position. . . . Similar motifs were repeated in many other [Egyptian] films. (2001: 55)

We can hardly see such a love story in Hollywood melodramas, however the Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films are full of such sad stories of the lovers who suffer a lot from class difference. The emphasis on the class difference between the lovers is not the only paradigm which provides the Turkish melodramas their different characteristic from the mainstream, particularly Hollywood, melodramas. There are also some other binary oppositions which are frequently used in the Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films, but which seem quite alien to the classical Hollywood narratives. Many Yeşilçam melodramas

focus on heterosexual couples, underlining socio-cultural conflicts on a number of axes: poor versus rich, rural versus urban, lower class versus bourgeois, Eastern versus Western. . . . In [one of the] typical plot[s], the downtown boy would seduce the poor girl from a village, the girl would then go to the city, disguised as a modern

and rich woman, and take revenge. (Erdoğan&Göktürk, 2001: 536)

The recurrent use of these binary oppositions, such as poor/rich, rural/urban or modern/traditional, in the Turkish melodramas as opposed to the Hollywood, is related to the socio-cultural developments that Turkish society has experienced throughout the modernization process. The use of these paradigms, especially the emphasis on the poor/rich opposition, in many Yeşilçam and arabesk films again and again after the 1950s, shows us the fact that the social conflicts, especially the class conflict, which were provoked by the socio-economic developments such as industrialization, urbanization and migration from rural to urban areas, had traumatic effects on the social life of the popular classes in Turkey. Therefore, in the following chapter, I will consider how the social tensions arising out of the modernization process have influenced the development of the Turkish popular cinema.

CHAPTER III

TURKISH MODERNIZATION, YEŞİLÇAM, AND THE RISE OF ARABESK

The following statements by Meral Özbek as regards the aim of her study on arabesk music explain to a large extent my aim of analyzing arabesk films in this thesis:

The aim here is to put forth the response that arabesk gives to the modernization process in Turkey into consideration; [in other words] to point out what kind of a historical experience this response – as a ‘map of meanings’ – corresponds to and what kind of a relationship there is between the modernization process and such a response. (2002: 56, my translation)

This aim consists of not only understanding arabesk culture, as a major constituent of the popular culture in Turkey, in light of the overall social developments /transformations backed by the modernization process, but also understanding the modernization process itself in light of the popular responses given to it. As Özbek remarks “understanding arabesk is crucial to comprehending the contradictions and ambivalences of the project and process of Turkish modernity” (1997: 212). Therefore, my study can be regarded as an attempt to read the history of the Turkish modernization process ‘from below’, to realize further how the lower classes have experienced this process and attributed their own meanings to their experiences so as to understand better the social consequences of this complex and long-lasting social transformation. For such a study, the products of popular culture provide an extremely valuable source of information. As Türkeş argues,

although popular texts, which are composed of many contradictory connotations, use some motifs only in order to draw attention to themselves, i.e., to be sold (read, watched or listened) in the market, it has to be kept in mind that these contradictory connotations give some clues about the contradictory thoughts or feelings in the society (2001: 138). Therefore, Gramsci avers,

[c]ommercial literature must not be neglected in the history of culture. Indeed, it is extremely valuable, precisely from the point of view of the history of culture, for the success of a work of commercial literature is indicative (and often it is the only existing indicator) of the 'philosophy of the age,' that is, of the mass of sentiments [and conceptions of the world] prevalent among the 'silent' multitude. (1996: 313)

As opposed to the dominant 'modernist' arguments which foresee a linear – from 'the traditional' to 'the modern' – conception of the social developments, the attitudes of the lower classes towards the modernization process are indicative of a non-linear and contradictory experience which cannot be fully grasped by the modern/traditional dichotomy. The popular response to the modernization reveals an ambivalent character in which modernist and traditionalist, progressive and reactionary, or approving and opposing attitudes can coexist. Most importantly, the traumatic experience of the modernization process in Turkey by the lower classes can be regarded not only as a national identity crisis that stems from the conflicts between the Western and the Eastern social values, but it also bears the signs of how the class opposition, which gradually increased throughout the modernization process, plays a significant role in the representations of their social identities. In the *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, 'traumatic' is defined as "of, relating to, or resulting from a trauma". 'Trauma' has two definitions: "1: an injury or wound to a living body caused by the application of external force or violence. . . . 2: a psychological or emotional stress or blow that may produce disordered

feelings or behavior”. I consider experiencing of the modernization in Turkey traumatic because it has been applied by an external force – the State – and created psychological or emotional tensions, especially on the part of the lower classes. The traumatic nature of these tensions can be detected, for instance, in the Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films. In these narratives, certain paradigms, such as poor/rich, modern/traditional or urban/rural, which contain symbolically represented and seemingly contradictory thoughts or feelings towards the real life experiences of the popular classes shaped under the modernization process, are used again and again. The recurrent use of these paradigms is indicative of the fact that the traumatic effects of the modernization could not be overcome, especially through certain period of time in which these films were quite popular, and, as the following definition of ‘trauma’ makes it clearer, they were stored in the popular imagination of the social reality. Trauma is

a moment in time, or string of moments where the sensations, emotions, and thoughts are stored. [It] causes difficulties for humans as they guide behavior inappropriately. [Trauma is composed of] usually painful or difficult experiences and [it] creates post traumatic stress or disorder. (Peak States)

I would suggest that the paradigmatic structure of the Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films give some clues about this complex relationship between the modernization process and experiencing of it traumatically by the lower-class people in Turkey.

3.1 The Grand Paradigm: Modernist Conceptions of Modernization

According to Tekeli, ‘modernity project’, which has developed on the basis of the Enlightenment process in the Western Europe, has four basic dimensions: The first one is the economic dimension, which refers

to the industrial society shaped by the capitalist economic relations. The second dimension is related to the approaches towards knowledge, ethics and art, which are marked by the belief in objective and universal truths. Thirdly, “modernity project” gives birth to the ‘rational individuals’ who are rescued from the traditional social ties. The fourth dimension is newly-emerging constitutional structure, which develops through the emergence of the nation-state and representative democracy (2002: 19-20). The Turkish modernization process includes the developments in all these dimensions and the history of these developments goes back to the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire (Mardin, 2002: 49). ‘Westernization’ and ‘modernization’ are two concepts that are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to this social transformation process, which has been effective not only on the late Ottoman and Republican periods of Turkish society, but also on many other non-western countries. Along with these two, the concept of ‘colonialism’ also refers to the same process. Although at different stages of this process the use of one concept was preferred to the other because of some socio-political and economic developments⁵ or because of the analyst’s ideological stance on this process⁶, I will not dwell on this conceptual differentiation and use these concepts as synonyms. I will limit my discussions on this complex and long-lasting process by

⁵ Kocabaşoğlu states that the political, economic and cultural transformation of non-western countries in accordance with the developments towards ‘democracy’, ‘capitalism’ and ‘rationality’ in the Western Europe were commonly called ‘westernization’ up to the mid-twentieth century; but especially after the two world wars in Europe when the colonies started to achieve independence from European countries and realized that the European way is not the only way of becoming a ‘modern’ society, the concept of ‘westernization’ is replaced by ‘modernization’ (2002: 15).

⁶ While the concepts of ‘westernization’ and ‘colonization’ are mostly preferred to point out the political, economic and cultural tensions experienced by non-western societies as a result of the transformations and to criticize western countries and their ‘compradors’ for imposing their values on other societies, the concept of ‘modernization’ has been loaded with hegemonic meanings that encode these originally western social values – representative democracy, market oriented economy, rational thinking etc. – as the primary and inevitable target for all the countries in the world.

focusing on two points: The first one is related to the top-to-down character of the modernization, especially in the Republican period. Kaliber states that modernization, which became the underlying paradigm behind the Republican discourses and policies, evolved from being a part of the project that aimed saving the State from the West (in the Ottoman Empire) into being the fundamental ideology of the new State which envisioned becoming modern through incorporating into the West (in the Republican period) (2002: 107). Especially in the Republican period, modernization became a social transformation project carried out by the State itself. Because modernist policies were imposed on the people in an oppressive way, experiencing of modernization more as a social trauma became inevitable. Behind the idea that regards this trauma as being experienced by ‘the people’ only as a national-identity problem lies the design of the modernity project as a radical and an overall social transformation. The second point that I would argue regarding the Turkish modernization is related to the modernist conceptions of this process. The modernist ideology in Turkey dominated not only the official discourses and policies, but it has also become a ‘grand paradigm’⁷, which almost every attempt to understand the Turkish modernization has primarily engaged with. To be or not to be ‘westernized’! It has been ‘our great question’ not only for the politicians but also for most of the nineteenth-century Ottoman intellectuals as well as the economists, sociologists, writers, artists, musicians etc. of the Republic. By saying ‘our great question’, I would like to emphasize that the grand paradigm, which has been regarded as the primary source of the social tensions and conflicts of ‘us all’ since the nineteenth century, marginalizes or ignores other social conflicts that arise ‘between us’.

⁷ It is called “grand conflict paradigm” (“*büyük çatışma paradigması*”) by Kahraman (2002: 621) and “grand dichotomy” by Karakayalı (2001: 129).

Mardin describes 'westernization' as an approach that considers the social and intellectual formations of the Western Europe an ultimate target (2004: 9). The need to be westernized arose in the Ottoman Empire in order to defend the State against the Western countries; therefore, firstly military and educational institutions were re-organized in accordance with the modern techniques and necessities at the beginning of the nineteenth-century. At the end of this century, however, westernization 'in all spheres of public life' was of a major concern to the politicians as well as the intellectuals in the Empire (Kaliber, 2002: 107). Thus, westernization became a social transformation project as a whole and turned out to be the founding ideology of the Republic. As Robbins argues

[f]rom the period of the *Tanzimat* reforms, through to the movements of the Young Ottomans and Young Turks, the Ottoman Empire struggled to find some accommodation to Europe. The social 'revolution' undertaken by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) in the 1920s was the culmination of this long process. Turkey opened itself unconditionally to the forces of western modernization. (1996: 67)

From the Ottomans on, modernity or 'civilization' was considered something that should be taught to 'the people' by the elite. The views of some Ottoman intellectuals and the ideology of the Republican modernity project are very much alike in the sense that both accepted westernization as a social ideal which had to be brought and taught to 'the people'. Modernity project was carried out 'for the people against the people'. This top-to-down and oppressive nature of the Turkish modernization caused the people to experience this process more as a social trauma. Robbins argues that modernity offers a dualistic imagination of the world: "The world [is] divided between the enlightened and the benighted. Its Other [is] made to symbolize whatever [is] alien to western modernity and its project of development" (1996: 62). As a result of the strictly applied modernist policies, the

Turkish society was forced to rescue from the 'Otherness'. Such a social transformation project,

however, is likely to provoke feelings of anxiety and fear in the collectivity (Shall we not suffer through our loss? What shall we be turned into?). . . . In defence against such a catastrophic eventuality, the collectivity will assert the possibility of its self-perpetuation, elaborating myths and symbolic representations concerned with a 'perennial meaning' in [their collective] culture. (Robbins, 1996: 61)

On the one hand being forced to leave traditional socio-cultural formations in favour of the modern ones, and on the other hand a reflexive need to preserve a self-identity against the compulsions caused by the foreign – modern or Western – formations of life created the traumatic social consequences of the Turkish modernization.

The official ideology of the Republic, which insistently rejected the class character of the social structure, probably exerted a considerable influence on becoming dominant of the corporatist approaches towards the social implications of the modernization process in Turkey. The grand paradigm, which defines the 'Otherness' of 'the people' within the framework of a colonialist discourse by constructing an all-embracing dichotomy between the modern West and the traditional-Eastern socio-cultural roots of the Turkish society as a whole, is based on the corporatist official ideology that considers the Turkish nation as a mass in which all classes intermingled with one another. As Nezih Erdoğan remarks, the colonial discourse defines the 'Other' simply as a collective identity in opposition to the West; the 'Other' means 'the other than the West' (1995: 182). Therefore, it has been generally accepted that the traumatic experience of modernization paved the way for a collective, national-identity crisis; and, the social conflicts arising from the modernization process have generally been examined within the framework of this national-identity problem. The reactions of 'the people' to the modernization process have been accepted to be indicating their need for a collective identity. The major

source of social tensions, fears and anxieties have been argued to be the reflections of the grand paradigm which emanates from the conflict between the 'modern-foreign culture' and 'traditional-native culture'. To (be) westernize(d) or to (be) modernize(d) has been regarded as the primary source of tension and conflict within 'our' society and the paradigmatic relationship between 'west and east' or 'modern and pre-modern (traditional)' has been presented, by many intellectuals, as 'our' fundamental social problem; the causes of social conflicts have been reduced to the conflicts between 'modern' and 'traditional' cultures. Therefore 'our' primary concern has become/is argued to be how to prune 'our' pre-modern features, which, as Keyder implies, would prevent 'us' from being excluded by the 'new world order' (Şengül, 2001: 157)⁸. Thus, 'modernization' has always been preserved as a social ideal. As a result, some other conflicts, although they are structural consequences of the social order shaped through the modernization process, have been either totally ignored or regarded as an inferior problem compared to the grand paradigm.

I would argue that the grand paradigm, which regards the traumatic social consequences of the modernization simply as the

⁸ Here, Keyder mainly talks about the necessity for an economic integration with the 'new world order'. This new order, he argues, is determined by the logic of the 'global capital'. The close relationship between the concepts 'westernization' and 'modernization' also exists between these concepts and 'globalization'; and 'globalization' necessitates not only economic but also political and cultural transformations. Especially since the 1990s, it is 'globalization' rather than 'modernization' that is used to refer to the recent stages of 'our' long-lasting process of social transformation. Nowadays, we, both as the State and the society, are trying to prove that we are very decisive on and quite deserving of being accepted as a part of the Europe. For this purpose, on the one hand, the economic structure and policies of Turkey are carefully inspected by international financial institutions, and on the other hand, some cultural problems, which extend from the necessary changes in eating habits (the discussions on the prohibition of consuming offal, *kokoreç*) to the rights of minorities to broadcast in their mother tongues, are tried to be solved. The point I would like to emphasize here is that modernization/globalization is still our primary concern. Our first and foremost problem is presented to be finding a solution to the conflicts between our pre-modern social (political, economic, cultural) features and the modern/global necessities of the 'new world order'. The social problems are still understood in light of the old 'grand paradigm'; therefore, other social conflicts, such as class conflict, which cannot be fully grasped by the west/the east or modern/traditional dichotomies, remain to be negligible.

reflections of an irreconcilable opposition between 'the West' and 'the East', offers a reductive understanding of this process. As the recurrent use of certain paradigms in the Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films point out, the identity problem represented in the popular narratives is not limited only to being the 'Other' of an outer – foreign, Western – power, but it also includes being the 'Other' of a domestic power. The representation of this inner identity problem in the popular narratives indicates how the lower-class people have perceived the modernization process also as a class-bounded experience. In these narratives, the tension over the national-identity problem felt by 'the people' as a whole against the West and the tension over the class-identity felt by the lower-class people against the upper class coincide with one another; a class-based reaction might take the form of a traditionalist/rural attitude towards the modern/urban ways of life, while a collective reaction towards the Western-modern values might be revealed through an opposition between the lower and upper classes within the society. Therefore, I would suggest, throughout the modernization process, the lower-class people, "the silent multitude", identified themselves not only in opposition to the West but also in opposition to the upper-class. This opposition neither appeared to be a complete rejection of the westernization (that is why, as I will mention below, Mardin calls the popular attitudes towards the modernization process not 'anti-westernization' but 'anti-superwesternization'), nor it turned out to be an antagonistic attitude of a conscious working-class towards the bourgeoisie; because, the popular classes on the one hand reacted against the social consequences of modernization, but on the other hand they inescapably accommodated themselves to the new life conditions shaped by this process. Therefore, the social tensions that emerged throughout the modernization process did not create a deep social split between the 'modernist' upper-class and the 'traditionalist' lower-class. The modernization process refers to the contradictory

articulation of different social formations to one another; as a result, a mixed and ambivalent cultural environment, a significant part of which, as I will discuss later, is arabesk culture, came into being. What I would like to underline here is that class formations constituted an important dimension of the reactionary attitudes against, what Mardin calls, 'superwesternization'.

3.2 Class Roots of the Grand Paradigm

In his analysis of the modernization in the late Ottoman society, Mardin points out the class character of the reactions to this social transformation process. As I will attempt to do in this study, Mardin makes use of the cultural (literary) products of the period to support his claims on the class-roots of the modernization experience. According to him,

[a] little used source for the study of Turkish modernization is that of the Ottoman novel. This genre which developed in the Ottoman Empire beginning with the 1860s is a mine of information about conditions that existed in upper class circles in Istanbul at that time. Such sources also provide an important record of the way in which Ottoman intellectuals approached the problem of social change. (1974: 403)

Mardin's analysis of the Ottoman society depends on a cultural duality which is based on, on the one hand, the dichotomous political structure – the "ruling group" vs. the "ruled" (1974: 412) -, and on the other hand, the economic distinction between "tax collectors" and "tax payers" (1974: 423).

To this basically economic [and political] difference between the metropolis and the periphery [who include nomads, peasants, and even lower classes in the capital] corresponded well delineated cultures. On the one hand, there was the culture of the Palace and the ruling elite; on the other, that of the periphery, the masses. (1974: 423)

Such a dualistic approach towards the social structure of the Ottomans, which, according to Ercan, has been generally used also for the analysis of the social structure in the Republican period (2003: 628), paves the way for the idea that westernization/modernization process created a reaction on the part of the 'periphery' by which "a decline in public morality is associated with an anti-Western outbreak" (Mardin, 1974: 433) against the Westernized (*Avrupaî*) 'ruling elite'. However, in his analysis, Mardin also implies that the reactions against westernization/modernization in the Ottoman society cannot be fully grasped through the framework offered by the center/periphery model because in the attitudes towards this process " 'class' origins seem to be the independent variable" (1974: 435). Mardin argues that westernization was criticized by the different classes in the Ottoman society as long as it took the form of imitation of the Western life style and private over-consumption on the part of the some ruling elites, and these criticisms found their typical expression in representation of the protagonists of many novels:

one extreme of [such protagonists] finds its classical expression in Rezaizâde Ekrem's (1846-1913) *Araba Sevdası* (1896). Bihruz Bey, the hero of this novel, is the archetypical Westernized fop. The scene of the novel is set in the 1870s. In this work we begin to get, for the first time, an inkling of the social strains that lurk behind the stereotype of over-Westernized Ottoman. *Araba Sevdası* satirizes the superficial veneer of Westernization which a new class [the Tanzimat grandees,] has adopted in Turkey after the passing of the edict of reform of 1839. (1974: 406-407)

Mardin states that "Bihruz Bey types reappear [many times] in Turkish literature as persons to be made fun of or despised. It could be said that they are the only really solid characters in all of nineteenth century and much of twentieth century Turkish literature" (1974: 411). Departing from Bihruz Bey types, Mardin argues that it was not 'westernization' but 'superwesternization' (characterized by the imitation of the Western

life style and private over-consumption) which was lying behind the social strains. For the purposes of this study, the most important point in Mardin' s analysis of these strains is that the ones who were against the superwesternization in the late Ottoman period were composed of different classes: “In effect, there was in the anti-Bihruz attitude a tri-partite alliance of persons of lower class origins who had climbed on the bandwagon of modernization, alienated members of the elite and –to the extent that their attention was drawn– lower classes” (1974: 425). According to Mardin, Young Ottomans were ‘alienated members of the upper class’ and there were several reasons behind their reactions against westernization (which was led by the Tanzimat reformers), such as their being “excluded from the spoils of the Tanzimat”, their position to access to sources of knowledge about the lower classes (they were “in the lower ranks of executive positions”) which “Tanzimat ruling class was less familiar with”, and their eagerness as “social mobilizers” in order to “gather popular forces behind their social policies and their political banner”. “Thus”, Mardin states, the Young Ottomans “used the Bihruz type of criticism of Westernization in their struggle against the upper bureaucracy” (1974: 425), which leads him to the conclusion that “the anti-Bihruz stand [of these non-elite modernists] becomes instrumental” (1974: 441). On the other hand, “[f]or Ahmed Mithat Efendi”, the writer of *Felâatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* (1876), “the anti-Bihruz stance was much more spontaneous” because of his social origins (1974: 425). Because he “had suffered from poverty into his adolescent years”, for Ahmed Mithat, it was easier, compared to the instrumental stand of the Young Ottomans, “to adopt and overwork the Bihruz Bey theme and to stress its economic aspects” (1974: 427). According to Mardin, Ahmed Mithat “brought his lower class origins into his moralism” (1974: 434), and how this morality was marked by the values of his class can be seen in the opposition between the two protagonists of his novel. Râkım Efendi is a successful person, the

leitmotif of whose life is “work and thrift. His values are a successful blend of Western cultural baggage and the views of the Ottoman lower middle classes among whom he continues to live even after his successes”, whereas “Felâtun Bey is Râkım’s opposite”, who is

a rich fortune [and] spends his time frequenting fashionable spots in the European quarter of the capital, gambling and womanizing. The superficiality of all his knowledge is repeatedly knocked into his head by his friend Râkım Efendi every time they meet. (1974: 406)

Mardin states that Râkım Efendi possesses the values of lower middle class which “emerge periodically” in all Ahmed Mithat’s other writings. These values, which were advocated by the writer, “were those of Ottoman craftsmen (the *esnaf* class): thrift, avoidance of conspicuous consumption, honesty [as well as abstemiousness and hard work]. Almost the protestant ethic” (1974: 415). Felâtun Bey, on the other hand, represents what Ahmet Mithat is critical of: superwesternization. Mardin provides us a framework to analyze the reactions towards the modernization process in the late Ottoman society, which were based on the class origins of the different social groups who had an anti-Bihruz stance. Although all these groups collided with one another in their criticisms against the ‘superwesternized’ ruling elite without actually being the opponents of westernization/modernization per se, their reactions were shaped independently by their class origins. That is why their alliance “was brittle” (Mardin, 1974: 425). Mardin states that because of the class differences, the emergence of some conflicts between the social groups who entered into the anti-Bihruz alliance were inevitable and these conflicts continued “[t]hroughout the later modernization movement” (1974: 426).

3.3 The Development of Poor/Rich Paradigm

The conflict between different social groups who were formerly in alliance with each other in their reactionary attitudes towards modernization process found its expression through the extensive use of poor/rich paradigm in the popular narratives especially after the 1950s. I would regard this paradigm as pointing out the class character of popular culture in Turkey. Trke states that Ottoman writers symbolized East/West opposition through the conflict between 'goodness' and 'badness', and to this end, the conflict between 'poor' and 'rich' became a metaphoric representation of this primary East/West opposition in their novels (2001: 136). It is generally argued that this relationship between East/West and poor/rich oppositions (the former as the 'grand paradigm' and the latter as the 'metaphoric representation of the grand paradigm') changed in the 'social-realist' texts as well as in the 'melodramatic' ones, that have been produced since the 1960s in that the poor/rich dichotomy has by itself been underlined. Although, this paradigmatic shift, which occurred in all these narratives, was argued to be on the foreground in 'social-realist' texts (such as novels or films) as the representation of the class conflict, the analyses of melodramatic texts were still mostly made on the basis of the old 'grand paradigm'. What I would argue here is that, after 1950s, in melodramas, especially in arabesk films, the main problematic became the conflict between the 'poor' and the 'rich', which provides a melodramatic representation of the class conflict, and East/West or modern/traditional oppositions became the symbolic representation of this social reality.

In Trke's view, while nineteenth-century Western novelists dealt with the problems in the newly-emerging capitalist society, the themes of the Ottoman novelists were different because the classes shaped within the capitalist order and, thus the conflicts between these

classes, were not present in nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. Therefore, rather than the class conflict, they dealt with the social tensions which were related to the East-West dichotomy and the national-identity problem. Nevertheless, however, some writers, such as Ahmed Mithat, presented the material conditions of poverty by providing the income levels of his protagonists, although the class identities of many novel characters in this period were not quite clear and poorness/richness dichotomy was used only as a symbolic representation of the conflict between East and West (2001: 136). According to him, at the beginning of the twentieth century, in the second period of the constitutional monarchy (II. Meşrutiyet), the representation of the poverty started in a striking way in the Ottoman novel. In these novels, the poorness/richness dichotomy was intertwined with the morality of the previous period (which was represented, for instance, by Ahmed Mithat), and thus, poorness became the symbol for all the good values. The popular literature of the Republican period, Türkeş argues, used this symbolization as its raw material for years, as a result of which many 'poor but proud', 'poor but honourable' or 'poor but hard-working' stereotypes appeared (2001: 137-138). Türkeş emphasizes the point that the writers of the Republican period used such stereotypes, which they took over from the Ottoman writers, up to the 1950s; and the most prominent characteristic of these novels was that they used poorness/richness dichotomy as the metaphorical representation of the tensions mainly generated by the conflict between 'West' and 'East' or 'modern' and 'traditional' formations of the social life (2001: 140). Türkeş does not argue here, of course, that the poor and rich characters disappeared after the 1950s, but he argues that in these years the poorness/richness dichotomy was started to be presented as a structural social problem rather than as being merely the symbolic representation of the 'grand paradigm'. These stereotypes were used not only in the popular

literature but also in the popular cinema. In light of these arguments, we can suggest that in the in the 1960s the popular imagination and representation of the social conflicts started to change. The old conflict between modernity and traditionality ('grand paradigm') now had a partner: class conflict.

3.4 The Signification of Class Conflict Through Poor/Rich Paradigm

The fact that the extensive use of poor/rich paradigm in the popular literature and cinema started after 1950s deserves a special attention. In Özbek's view, the modernist practices of the Republic have a monist character, which are based on 'the elite'/the people' dichotomy, rather than being based on pluralist cultural policies that take into consideration the local, class and ethnic differences; therefore, the cultural modernization project of the Republic met with a reaction especially after the 1950s when the modernization process rapidly accelerated (2002: 40). Here, the emphasis on the relationship between class and the developments towards modernization after the 1950s seems especially important to me. The acceleration of the Turkish modernization in the 1950s is highly related to the economic dimension of the 'modernity project', which, as mentioned before, refers to transforming into an industrial society shaped by the capitalist economic relations.

In Turkey, the 1950s witnessed the germination of the big industries in urban areas and massive migration of the work force from rural places to industrial cities. In fact, the whole history of the Turkish modernization can be read as the history of a socio-economic development towards capitalism. As Ercan puts it,

the economic model aiming at the accumulation of national-capital was realized throughout the modernization process which, since 1920s, was marked by the active

intervention of the State and generally indicated the overall transformation of the everyday-life. The process, which is defined by the concepts such as modernization or contemporaneity/westernization, at the same time prepared the substructure for a capitalist social development in the country. (2002: 57, my translation)

In Ercan's view, this socio-economic strategy oriented towards the inner-development, in other words towards the accumulation of national-capital, in fact tells us the story of how the domestic commercial bourgeoisie transformed into industrial bourgeoisie. To him, this transformation, which accelerated in the 1950s, caused the industrial bourgeoisie to realize further its class interests and also caused the conflicts between it and other social forces to become more obvious (2002: 59-60). One of these other social forces was the working-class. An important dimension which characterized the transformations in the capital-accumulation process in these years was related to an increasing need for massive amount of work-force. According to Akkaya, up to the 1950s, the working-class profile in Turkey was mostly made up of the seasonal workers who came from different rural areas and considered working in industrial sectors a temporary occupation or an additional source for earning money (2002: 145). In the 1950s, however, the growing need for the labour force as parallel to the industrialization in Turkey caused an enormous amount of workers to permanently settle in certain [metropolitan] areas and to form an industrial-urbanite working class (Ercan, 2002: 64). Thus, as a result of the industrialization and concomitant migration of the work force to the industrial areas, on the one hand, the bourgeoisie gained power and became, for the first time, a separate class (separate from the ruling elite) by realizing its own economic and political interests (Keyder, 2001: 164); on the other hand, especially with the second generation of the migrant workers, the working-class people started to realize their class identities. According to Keyder, the first generation of

migrant workers re-produced their rural/traditional cultures in the city. This cultural formation is called '*gecekondu* culture'. *Gecekondu* is the name given to the squatter settlements in the big cities of Turkey. It is generally accepted that the dwellers of *gecekondus* are mostly migrant workers who come from rural areas. That is why the traditional culture, which is argued to be re-produced in the city by these workers, is called '*gecekondu* culture'⁹. Therefore, Keyder argues, up to the 1960s, the social opposition between the elite, upper class members of the city and the lower class, which was mostly composed of the migrant workers, was experienced through a differentiation between the separate, i.e. modern versus traditional, cultures of the two social groups. Beginning with the second generation, however, a class-based understanding of the social life started to become widespread among the workers. The urban and *gecekondu* cultures were continually mixing with each other. As a result of this cultural interfusion, the old problematic shaped around modern/traditional or urban/rural dualities was left and the workers gained a new, class-based, perspective in their comprehension of social problems (2001: 190). Keyder further argues, however, that although proletarianization became evident among the second generation of the migrant workers in accordance with the socio-economic and cultural developments, the class-based perspective could not gain prominence in the analyses of this period's social developments. For him, *gecekondu* dwellers' socio-cultural identity, which was established mainly on the basis of their popular anti-elitism and their eagerness to preserve their traditional values, was so powerful that this identity prevented the perception of the new axis of the social reality which was determined actually by the class conflict (2001: 280-281). Here, Keyder himself seems to be suggesting the idea that in spite of their proletarianization, the lower classes did not fully realize

⁹ As I will mention again while discussing specifically on the rise of arabesk, the *gecekondu* culture and arabesk culture are generally used as synonyms by most of the intellectuals.

their class identities; therefore, the popular culture remained to be considered an area on which the old 'grand paradigm' was still primarily effective. An alternative view concerning *gecekond* culture comes from Karpat. He suggests a different idea regarding the social origins of the *gecekond* dwellers: "the *gecekond*s in Turkey, similar to settlements elsewhere in the world, are established not by migrants coming directly from villages or towns but by slum dwellers or low-income groups who have congregated and settled earlier in the city" (1976: 78). So, it seems, according to Karpat, that what is called '*gecekond* culture' is not shaped primarily by the rural background of its developers, but primarily by their class origins. In my view, both modern/traditional or urban/rural oppositions and class opposition play a significant role in the reactionary attitudes of the lower class people to the modernization process. However, the changes in the class formations as a result of the above-mentioned developments in the socio-economic structure of the country caused the perception of the everyday reality by the urbanite lower-class people from a class perspective to gain prominence after the 1950s. The paradigmatic shift from the modern/traditional dichotomy to the poor/rich dichotomy observed in the popular cinema after the 1950s is related to the transformations in the class structure. In other words, the emphasis on the poor/rich dichotomy in many of the Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films shot between the 1960s and the 1980s is indicative of the class opposition as a major dynamic that highly effects the popular imagination of the social reality. It is for sure that there has always been non-class dimensions of the popular culture in Turkey which are generally based on a traditionalist attitude against the Western or urban forms of life¹⁰.

¹⁰ To quote from Hall may be quite illuminating for my perspective about the relationship between 'class' and 'popular culture': "The term 'popular' has very complex relations to the term 'class'. We know this, but are often at pains to forget it. We speak of particular forms of working-class culture; but we use the more inclusive term, 'popular culture' to refer to the general field of enquiry. It's perfectly clear that what I've been saying would make little sense without reference to a class perspective

All these different dimensions of the popular reactions towards modernization coincide with one another and partake in the complex and contradictory feelings or thoughts of the popular classes about this process. What I would argue here is that, as in other social consequences of the modernization process, in their everyday lives, the lower-class people faced with the class opposition, which became more obvious as a result of the rapid developments towards industrial capitalism after the 1950s, as a traumatic experience; the traumatic effects of class on the popular imagination, in my opinion, found their typical expression in the stereotypical opposition between the poor and rich characters of the Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films.

One problem here is related to the question that on which basis the conflict between the poor and rich characters of popular literature and cinema can be accepted as the representation of class conflict. In the classical Marxist sense, in capitalism the class conflict emanates from an employer-employee relationship in which the capitalist utilizes the labour power of the worker without giving a just or equivalent return; thus, it may be argued that the direct representation of class conflict is the representation of such an exploitative relationship. Then, why is the class conflict represented in the popular cinema by an opposition between the poor protagonist and the rich antagonist who come face to face within a story the main problem of which is a love relationship instead of an employer-employee relationship? As Türkeş puts it, in Turkey, not only in the popular literature or cinema, but also in 'social-realist' novels Marxism's emphasis on the economic base and on the class roots of the social conflicts were reduced to the 'poorness' (2001: 143). According to Sennett&Cobb, the poor/rich dichotomy is a traditional way of signifying the class conflict: "The injustices of class have traditionally been attacked on the grounds that the deck is

and to class struggle. But it is also clear that there is no one-to-one relationship between a class and a particular cultural form of practice. The terms 'class' and 'popular' are deeply related but they are not absolutely interchangeable" (1981: 238).

stacked, that the rich are more likely to be rewarded than the poor, that the inequalities of wealth are undeserved” (1973: 249). Likewise, Necmi Erdoğan states that although social hierarchies and differences in Turkey are articulated with one another in a complex manner, the imagination of the social area by the poor-subaltern is determined by a binary opposition between ‘the poor’ and ‘the rich’; therefore, the poor/rich dichotomy stands at the core of how the poor-subaltern experience and give meaning to the social relationships (2002: 34). The inequalities in a class society is represented symbolically in the Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films in such a way that the poor protagonist cannot or suffers a lot to be together with the woman he loves most of the time because of a rich villain. The most obvious difference between the protagonist and the antagonist or between the lovers arises from poorness/richness dichotomy. In most of the Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films, there is actually not an independent measure of the poverty, but ‘poor’ characters are identified through their relations/oppositions to the ‘rich’ ones¹¹. The melodramatic characters are presented as ‘types’ who seem to be the representatives of different social groups rather than separate ‘individuals’ and poorness/richness dichotomy is apparently (and recurrently) used as a constitutive part of these different social identities who are presented in relation to each other. Thus, as Elsaesser observes regarding the Western melodramas, the love relationship in the Turkish melodramas contains a metaphorical representation of the class opposition. There is

¹¹ In a recent study, *Yoksulluk Hâlleri*, we see that lower class people still comprehend class differences through an opposition between ‘the poor’ and ‘the rich’, which is quite reminiscent of the representation of the class conflict through ‘poor’ and ‘rich’ characters of melodramas, but not through an objective or theoretical measure concerning the economic differences. In his article, Ocak explains how the objective measures of the ‘poorness’ or ‘richness’, which correspond to the boundaries between different class positions, are in fact used by the middle and upper classes, and how the lower class avoids using such measures and separate the world simply as ‘the poor’ and ‘the rich’ (2002: 92-93). We can see many examples of this dualistic popular imagination of the class positions in the interviews with the lower class people, which are present in this book.

a famous line that was frequently used in the Turkish popular cinema: The hero or heroine says to the other that 'we belong to different worlds'. These different worlds refer, above all, to different class positions of the lovers. Moreover, it has to be kept in mind that class is not only an economic category, but, as Sennett&Cobb aver, it is also related to the "issues of *freedom* and *dignity*" (1973: 28, original emphasis). Then, we can say that the personal stories of melodramatic texts, or, in Sennett&Cobb's words, "[a]ll the dreams of individuality, all the anger and accusations, revolve around the issue of a common dignity" (1973: 248). In their view, "[c]lass society takes away from all the people within it the feeling of secure dignity in the eyes of others and of themselves" (1973: 170), but "class constricts the weak more obviously in that they must obey commands" (1973: 28). Therefore, 'poor but proud' or 'poor but honourable' characters of the popular literature and cinema can be regarded as the "metaphors of self-worth" (1973: 28) which emanate from the need of the lower classes for self-validation. Necmi Erdoğan states regarding the interviews carried out with many poor people and published in *Yoksulluk Hâlleri* that

to the people with whom we have had an interview, what makes poorness critical is related not only to the increasing and deepening of social inequalities and material poverty, but also to the emotional-symbolic violence against self-esteem, which stems from these [social and material situations]. (2002: 45, my translation)

Therefore, he adds, the answer to the question how the poor-subaltern defend themselves against the ones who have a 'higher', 'superior', 'powerful' position should be looked for, above all, in honour and inner-beauty. The claim of possessing something of which the property-owners are deprived, i.e. the claim of possessing humane values and the pride out of that seem to be the most important emotional weapon (2002: 47). Against the social consequences of the modernization process in Turkey, the lower-class people, who were deprived of both

the Western socio-cultural values necessary to lead a modern way of life and the material wealth that can apparently supply a respectful position in the society, identified themselves through the values they possess. As Özbek puts it against the rationality of the capitalist system which is based on increasing the capital accumulation in the society and promoting individual success, especially in the Third World countries, the resistance is organized around the traditional ways of life, which continually transform and are re-formed throughout the capitalist development (2002: 50). Therefore, the popular imagination glorified on the one hand the traditional or rural against the modern or urban, and on the other hand the spiritual or abstract against the material or concrete. In the Turkish melodramas, it is especially shown that the antagonist has a big and luxurious house, a brand-new car, the latest-fashion clothes etc., and the protagonist has none of these 'marketable' items. However, the protagonist has some spiritual or abstract qualities which cannot be seen, such as honour, honesty, sensitivity etc., and the antagonist is deprived of these values. The sublimation of the spirituality against the material signifiers of dignity can be considered a class attitude through which the poor people prove their dignity as opposed to the rich ones. This is a common or popular attitude of the lower-class people. As Sennett&Cobb argue

[i]n a class society, laborers are confronted with the fact that they are treated as a mass, as 'nobody special'. . . . If being 'nobody special' is not awarded much prestige in [the] society, . . . it is a condition which all the nobodies have learned to share. (1973: 213)

One can ask, however, that why this popular attitude does not take the form of the representation of a conscious working-class against bourgeoisie in these films. We really do not see a 'conscious' and determined struggle of 'the poor' against 'the rich' in these narratives. Moreover, some poor characters may not be 'good' and not all rich ones are presented as 'bad'. The Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films

cannot, of course, be regarded as the manifestations of a conscious working class. However, it does not mean that class opposition is totally absent. On the contrary, it became an indispensable part of the melodramatic texts after the 1950s. I think one error comes from thinking class as a 'thing' which people directly experience and conceptualize as a concrete phenomenon. Class is actually an analytical, rather than an ontological, concept. There cannot be one 'correct' way of representing it. People experience it together with other social problems that they confront in their everyday lives. Therefore, class issues coincide with other social issues in the popular imagination. Sennett&Cobb argue that "class as a problem of day-to-day existence rather than as an abstraction, creates a hidden content in a wide variety of social issues" (1973: 148). That is why in the Turkish popular cinema class appears only through the accompaniment of other social paradigms such as modern/traditional or urban/rural. From its beginning on, modernization process was experienced as a cultural trauma by 'the people', which revealed itself by the opposition between modern and traditional values. After the 1950s, however, when a massive amount of labour force from rural areas permanently settled in the big cities, class dimension of this traumatic experience became more apparent. These migrant workers, who came from different ethnic or local backgrounds, as well as other lower-class people who had formerly settled in the cities had a common source of their injuries: their class position. That is why in the Turkish popular cinema of the 1960s poor/rich dichotomy appeared to be one of the dominant paradigms, along with others, which pointed out the common thoughts or feelings of the lower-class people concerning the social reality they confronted with.

3.5 The Yeşilçam Melodramas

Melodrama is probably the most popular genre of the Yeşilçam. This is partly because “the melodramatic mode runs across almost all genres” of the Turkish popular cinema (Erdoğan&Göktürk, 2001: 536). Even the daily-use of the term ‘Turkish film’, which has strong mocking implications, refers actually to the Turkish melodramas, which means that if there is any special characteristic of the Turkish cinema, it has been determined by melodramas. The first film of Muhsin Ertuğrul, *İstanbul’da Bir Facia-ı Aşk* (1922), was a melodrama and it is accepted as one of the prototypes of this genre in the Turkish cinema (Scognamillo, 1998: 66). The first sound motion picture, *İstanbul Sokaklarında* (1931) was also a melodrama (Scognamillo, 1998: 74). The first country film, *Aysel, Bataklı Damın Kızı* (1934-35) was very close to the melodramatic structure, too (Scognamillo, 1998: 85). In Giovanni Scognamillo’s *History of the Turkish Cinema 1896-1997*, it can be clearly seen that in most of the films made in Turkey, the patterns of melodrama were used. What was the reason behind that? As Nezh Erdoğan puts it, one of the widely accepted answers is that “melodrama is perfectly suited to Yeşilçam, which sticks to narrative traditions inspired by legends, fairy tales and epopees” rather than by, say, tragedy, which emphasizes the inner conflicts and transformations of its characters (1998: 265). While in tragedies the protagonist is an ‘individual’ who has strengths and weaknesses, gains and losses and who ‘acts’ and tries to change his destiny, in melodramas, characters cannot “act but were ‘acted upon’” (1998: 266) by external forces, including the destiny, just like in legends or fairy tales. Apart from the cultural closeness between melodrama and the Turkish narrative tradition, another reason behind the popularity of melodrama among audiences of Turkey probably is the same for all audiences of melodrama: its simplicity. Although it was always popular,

the heyday of the Yeşilçam melodramas is accepted to be the 1960s. Erdoğan&Göktürk state that

[t]he period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s is marked by a mode of production and film performance that is unique in the history of Turkish cinema. Continually increasing demand from the audience caused a rapid expansion of the film business. While the film directors were at pains to reconcile the rules of commercial success and personal style, film production increased enormously. (2001: 535)

So, in this period, many films were shot, which were very much alike in their form and content. In this study, I am concerned with the melodramas of this period.

The Yeşilçam melodramas generally possess generic features of melodrama which have been discussed in the previous chapter. The stock characters of melodramatic texts (the hero, the heroine and the villain), manichaeism, realization of the poetic justice, personalization or internalization of the social conflicts, an emotional atmosphere, exaggerations (miraculous coincidences, accidents etc.) and a middle-class morality are all present in most of the Yeşilçam melodramas. However, there are also distinctive characteristics of these films the most important of which is related to the extensive use of the poor/rich paradigm. In these films, the narrative is constructed in such a way that all events are presented from the perspective of the poor. The world of the poor is considered superior to that of the rich in these films. Maktav argues that in popular cinema 'poorness' had always been used as a melodramatic element. However, reminiscent of Türkeş's remarks regarding the popular literature, the poor and rich stereotypes of the Yeşilçam melodramas, in his view, actually appeared at the end of the 1950s (2001: 163). As mentioned before, the changes in the class structure of the society as a result of the socio-economic transformations in this phase of the modernization process were quite influential in the emergence of these stereotypes. Moreover, the

recurrent use of poor/rich paradigm in many Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films is indicative of the fact that class issues created traumatic effects on the popular imagination. However, in Maktav's view, the poor/rich paradigm "which became the symbol of the Yeşilçam cinema" in the 1960s (2001: 163), was not provoked by the class conflict. He states that

the Turkish cinema, to a great extent, was nourished by the Kemalist ideology; regardless of the story, in the background of every film a social model which was in tune with the 'populism' [*halkçılık*] principle of the Republican People's Party [CHP] was represented. Until the 1980s, when the prime minister of the period Turgut Özal said that 'I admire the rich', the Turkish cinema admired 'the poor' and advocated the poor hero in its emotional world; it treated the poor and poorness based on this [corporatist] utopia [of Kemalism] until the end of the 1970s. (2001: 161-162, my translation)

So, Maktav argues, the development of the Turkish cinema is closely related to the changes in the hegemonic, official ideology. For him, until the 1980s, the popular films reflected corporatist ideology of the Kemalist modernization project, which was based on the claim that the Turkish society was a harmonious whole and there was/could be no class conflict in this society. Maktav argues that "the social model" offered by the Yeşilçam melodramas is quite reminiscent of the official ideology, according to which "there are classes in the Turkish society, but not class conflict" (2001: 163). These films, he argues, always presented a social background in which we see the peaceful collaboration of 'our' poor and rich people, which is the picture of "the modernizing Turkey" (2001: 164). Thus, he implies, although the different classes were present, the conflict in these films was not related to the class conflict, but rather it was related to the cultural tensions of the modernization process which show themselves ultimately in the dichotomy between East and West. "In the popular films, the poor represent Anatolia whereas the rich represent the West 'which

contradicts our traditions” (2001: 166). However, Maktav adds, it does not mean that Yeşilçam melodramas are critical of the bourgeoisie and its western life style; in these films, the badness is so much personalized that, regardless of their class origin, bad people are always bad. Although the ‘bad characters’ do most of the time belong to the upper class, the ‘good rich’ characters are also present in these films. Maktav implies that the anti-superwesternization attitude and Bihruz Bey types of the Ottoman novels were transformed into most of the Yeşilçam melodramas, in which, according to him, ‘the rich’ are presented to be ‘bad’ only when they imitate the Western habits and their determination to become rich turns out to be a greed for more and more money; they are ‘good’ characters as long as they do not forget the traditional social values although they benefit from the modern life. Therefore, in his view, what is criticized in these films is not ‘richness’ or ‘westernization’ per se, but over-consumption and, what Mardin calls, superwesternization (2001: 166-167). For Maktav, although “poverty talk” (“*yoksulluk edebiyatı*”) was always one of the favourite themes in the popular cinema, these films did not problematize poverty.

At the end of the popular films, which are produced on the basis of the poor/rich opposition, the poor heroes either become rich or, by experiencing a reunion motivated by ‘love’ (this reunion may take place as a result of dying or two poor lovers may come together when the rich villains have been got rid of), they make the poorness/richness opposition invalid or meaningless. (2001: 165)

Maktav argues that we see the ‘realistic’ representation of the poverty in ‘social-realist’ (*toplumcu gerçekçi*) films of the 1960s and the 1970s but not in the Yeşilçam melodramas (2001: 164). This distinction he makes between melodramatic and ‘realistic’ films also paves the way for an implicit argument that the representation of the poor/rich dichotomy in the Yeşilçam melodramas has nothing to do with the class conflict. Maktav’s approach towards the Yeşilçam melodramas is quite similar to the Western critiques of melodrama. Like his arguments about the

Yeşilçam melodramas, western examples of melodrama have been generally criticized, as I have mentioned in the previous chapter, on two bases: their personalization of the social conflicts and distortion of the reality. Thus, in Maktav's view, Orr's following claim as regards the western melodrama is valid for the Yeşilçam melodramas, as well: "the melodrama has served as an ideological instrument of the bourgeoisie" (1991: 381).

Maktav's approach towards the Yeşilçam melodramas is also shared by many other critics. As I will mention below, his arguments are quite reminiscent of the arguments regarding arabesk culture, as well. His claims can be summarized as follows: Firstly, the main paradigm in the Yeşilçam melodramas is related to the grand paradigm. Secondly, Yeşilçam melodramas do not problematize poverty; on the contrary, these films personalize the social conflicts and they end in such a way that poor/rich opposition becomes meaningless, so that they support the corporatist ideology of the State. It is indisputable that the grand paradigm, which may take the form of modern/traditional, West/East or urban/rural oppositions, was always an indispensable part of the Turkish popular cinema. It was because the cultural trauma caused by the modernization process could not be got over for years. However, what symbolized the Yeşilçam cinema after the 1950s, as Maktav himself remarks, was the emergence of antagonistic 'poor' and 'rich' stereotypes of 'the Turkish film'. So, a class-based – poor/rich – paradigm supplied its peculiar characteristic to the Turkish popular cinema after the 1950s. Therefore, it seems highly problematic to reduce the paradigmatic character of the Yeşilçam cinema to the East/West opposition. Maktav defends his reductionist approach by claiming that the Yeşilçam melodramas did not problematize poverty. It is true that in these films we cannot see an analytical criticism against the political or economic structure which actually causes poverty to become a structural problem in the country. If they would contain such a

criticism, we probably could not consider them melodramatic texts, because, as Gripsrud remarks,

one may regard the popularity of melodrama as indicative of a popular resistance to *abstract, theoretical* ways of understanding society and history. Melodrama continues to present its audiences with a 'sense-making system', a system which insists that politics or history are only interesting in so far as they affect our everyday life and its conditions, our feelings – fears, anxieties, pleasures. (2000: 88)

The Yeşilçam melodramas threw light on what the corporatist ideology of the Republic tried to make invisible. This was related to the existence of classes as well as class conflict in society; these films foregrounded the poor/rich paradigm so that the audience came face to face with a 'melodramatic' conception of social reality¹² which emphasizes the inequalities between different social groups. Although the conflicts are personalized in these films, melodramatic personalities are presented as 'types' who look like the representatives of different social identities rather than separate 'individuals'. Therefore, the personalized or internalized conflicts in these films were probably perceived as common, rather than individual problems. I think that the Yeşilçam melodramas problematize poverty, but, in accordance with the melodramatic mode, they represent this problem through the personal feelings, sufferings or struggles of the poor heroes or heroines. Class comes into being in the emotional world of the Yeşilçam melodramas by being attached to other social paradigms; and, as in the case of the East/West paradigm which is indicative of the existence of a cultural

¹² The language of the melodramatic texts (compared to the 'realistic' ones) may well be perceived, as argued by Elsaesser, a metaphorical representation of the class conflict, which gives us some clues about how the social reality is 'refracted' through popular imagination. What I suggest here is that the readers/audiences do not perceive the melodramatic texts as the 'reflections' of 'the reality' but they are aware of the symbolic language of these texts, which, as Voloshinov points out in relation to every sign system, "refract [rather than reflect] another reality outside itself" (1994: 50).

trauma, the poor/rich paradigm indicates the existence of a class-based traumatic experience of modernization process in society.

In the early 1970s, the poor/rich paradigm of the Yeşilçam cinema was started to be used in arabesk films. These films can be regarded as a subgenre of the Yeşilçam melodramas, because they, too, had a melodramatic structure. However, in arabesk films, poor/rich paradigm was represented in a more grieved, more hopeless and more reactive manner than the classical melodramas of the Yeşilçam.

3.6 The Rise of Arabesk

The term ‘arabesk’ primarily refers to a kind of music which “emerged in Turkey at the end of 1960s [and] captured the passions of rural migrants living in *gecekondus*, or urban squatter settlements. . . . [This term] later came to describe the entire migrant culture formed at the peripheries of Turkish cities” (Özbek, 1997: 211). The obvious reason why we call the films analyzed in this study ‘arabesk’ is that arabesk singers act and arabesk songs are played in these films. Therefore, to provide a succinct history regarding the rise of arabesk music, and arabesk culture in general, seems essential before a detailed analysis of the films. According to Özbek, there are three basic factors behind the rise of arabesk music and culture, each of which has a complex relationship with the other two: These are the official cultural policies of and the interventions by the State, the development of the market forces, and the new life style which emerged in the [big] cities as a result of the ‘modernized’ practices of everyday life (2002: 141-142).

In Özbek’s view, official policies on music were highly effective upon the emergence of arabesk music:

By promoting Western music and Turkish folk music while neglecting, censoring, and prohibiting Turkish classical and art music or any reinvention different from the state-sanctioned modes, the cultural politics of the Turkish state

contributed to the development of arabesk music and to its social significance. The state's actions have put music and culture at the center of the national ideological and political struggle since the foundation of the republic. (1997: 226)

In 1930s, broadcasting of the Turkish music from radio was forbidden for twenty months. The education of Turkish classical music was also forbidden by the State. All these official prohibitions provoked the discussions about the East/West or modern/traditional oppositions in intellectual circles. As Karakayalı remarks

from the 1920s onwards a number of new institutions mostly aiming at reforms (i.e. 'Westernization') in 'fine arts' and musical education were founded. In the same period, a series of institutional restrictions were imposed on traditional Turkish music. The increasing opposition between pro-Western state policies and the excluded proponents of traditional Turkish music gradually crystallized into two discursive positions: pro-Western vs. pro-Turkish, or, alternatively, modernists vs. traditionalists. (2001: 127-128)

Karakayalı calls this opposition 'grand dichotomy' and argues that at least until the 1970s both scholarly and popular discourses on music were dominated by this grand dichotomy (Western vs. Turkish) and that its influence is "still very much alive today. Nevertheless, especially since the rise of arabesk music in the 1970s, both theoretical and empirical limitations of the grand dichotomy have begun to come into daylight" (2001: 125). How did arabesk music weaken the explanatory power of the grand dichotomy? The answer lies in the hybrid structure of arabesk music. According to a generally accepted idea, during the prohibition of broadcasting Turkish music from radio, 'people' started to listen to the Arabian radio stations; and, at the end of the 1930s, through the Egyptian films, Arabian music became more widespread in Turkey. In Özbek's view, Arabian music and Egyptian films became popular in Turkish society because they were in tune with the popular emotions of the period which were marked by "a kind of 'fragility' (*yetim*,

garip, berduş, avare)” (2002: 154). She also talks about a more technical reason behind the popularity of the Egyptian music among the Turkish musicians. Because the official policies disregarded the traditional and supported the Western musical forms, especially the Turkish classical music developed on the basis of the research made by the musicians in the market themselves. Once these musicians, who searched for composing different songs, met with the popular Western music (*Hafif Batı Müziği*) and realized its possibilities in terms of orchestration and harmony, they made use of Egyptian music because of two reasons: Firstly, the Turkish and Egyptian music had common traditional backgrounds. Secondly, because the Egyptian musicians had long been producing a hybrid music based on a composition of Western and traditional forms, their music functioned as a quite suitable model for the Turkish musicians who were willing to make a similar, hybrid music in Turkey (156-157). Arabesk music emerged at the end of the 1960s on the basis of such a historical background.

Arabesk is a hybrid musical genre which is formed through the use of both Western and traditional elements in it. That is why, Karakayalı states,

[w]ith the emergence of arabesk, . . . [the] discursive space [determined by the grand dichotomy] went through a crucial reconfiguration. . . . In arabesk traditionalists saw too much experimentation and too many foreign elements. In contrast, modernists saw too much tradition and too little rationality. In this strange ‘object’ both sides saw not only the betrayal of their own ideals but also a kind of resistance of their basic means of categorization. (2001: 130)

Although arabesk music seems to escape the clear-cut distinctions between Western and traditional forms, we can talk about the dominance of the modernist arguments concerning the rise of it. The discussions on arabesk, which has been dominated by the grand paradigm (or, in Karakayalı’s words, the grand dichotomy) are not

limited to a kind of music. As Karakayalı argues it is difficult to relate arabesk “exclusively to a musical style, not only because it cuts across several music genres but also because it extends far beyond music and denotes, more often than not, a *kitsch* culture in general” (2001: 130). Özbek states that,

[s]ince the late 1970s, various attempts have been made to explain the rise of arabesk culture and its social significance. In the majority of these explanations, arabesk is seen as a threat in its so-called impurity, fatalistic outlook, and degeneration. It is said to ruralize and contaminate the urban environment. Underlying these dominant appraisals is ‘classical modernization theory,’ which assumes a duality between the traditional and the modern and postulates a cycle that admits a basic backwardness of the traditional followed by a transition period in which tradition gives way to modernity. Arabesk culture has been portrayed as the product of this transitional period – an alien and malformed element marginal to society that is supposed to fade away as industrialization and urbanization proceed. (1997: 211).

In their analyses of arabesk culture, most of the intellectuals (who are composed of sociologists, cinema critiques, men of letters etc.) share this perspective provided by the grand paradigm which explains arabesk on the basis of modern/traditional, Western/Eastern or urban/rural dichotomies; and the modernist attitude lying behind their approaches can be easily observed, because, as Stokes point out, “for many of its critics, arabesk expresses a negative and essentially ‘eastern’ aspect of the Turkish psyche about which something has to be done if the Turks are to be saved from themselves” (1992: 98). For instance, according to Kongar arabesk is “the reflection of a life style or culture” the sources of which can be found in *gecekondus* (1985: 5-6), which are “ruralized urban” places where “un-urbanized rural” people live (1985: 8); and, he regards arabesk culture as a “social disrespectfulness” (1985: 8). Similarly, Evren talks about the “scary vulgarity” of arabesk culture (1985: 9). She, too, explains the

emergence of arabesk culture within the framework of urban/rural dichotomy and regards it as a “classless culture” (1985: 10). According to Yavuz, arabesk culture is related to the identity problem that the Turkish society has been faced with for a long time. “Who are we? It is the solution of the masses to this question which turns out to be an East-West problematic” (1985: 25, my translation). Murat Belge is one of the first intellectuals who provided a sociological approach towards arabesk and tried to throw light on the class character of this cultural phenomenon. However, he, too, prefers to explain it on the basis of the grand paradigm rather than a class paradigm. He states that although ‘arabesk’ is the name given to a “kind of music”, this phenomenon goes beyond the boundaries of a musical form. Arabesk is “a life style” (399). Then he starts to analyze the social dynamics which gave birth to arabesk culture. According to him, this phenomenon is “a part of what we call ‘modernization’ process” (1986: 400). He explains the emergence of arabesk culture through industrialization, migration and the emergence of squatter settlements in big cities in the 1960s. ‘Arabesk culture’ or ‘gecekondü culture’, in his view, was the product of the squatter areas, which were settled mostly by the migrant workers; they were semi-urban and semi-rural people. They were in-between modern cultural values of the urban life and the traditional values that they had taken from their rural past (1986: 401). Thus, Belge argues, the cultural differences between ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ ways of life, rather than class differences, provided the social dynamics of arabesk culture (1986: 408): To him, we cannot say that the group of people who listen to arabesk music are the urbanized working class, as in the West, but rather they are newly-migrated, semi-urban people who still maintain strong ties with their rural past (1986: 410). It is true that arabesk has a hybrid quality not only in terms of its cultural characteristic but also in terms of its class characteristic. In other words, arabesk cuts across not only different (Western-Eastern, or urban-rural)

cultures but also different classes. As Karakayalı states “it would . . . be somewhat misleading to associate [arabesk] merely with the poor migrants of the urban centers since one of the most common settings for ‘arabesk culture’ is expensive night-clubs” (2001: 130). However, it still seems possible to argue that, at least in its early phases, the target customers of arabesk music (and films) were mostly composed of the lower-class urbanites. That is why arabesk is also called *gecekondu*¹³ or *dolmuş*¹⁴ culture. At this point, we have to re-consider two interrelated questions: Why did arabesk-culture products (songs and films) become that much popular among the lower-class urbanites? And, does the grand paradigm provide a satisfactory explanation concerning the socio-cultural dynamics lying behind arabesk phenomenon?

The grand paradigm, which is based on a modernist ideology, paves the way for ‘cultural essentialism’ because, according to it, the primary source of arabesk is not the material conditions of life in the city but it is the culture of immigrants already embedded in their minds. The ‘marginality’ concept is often used in modernist arguments while analyzing the nature and behaviour of the urban poor. Modernism ideology suggests that modernization process is an inevitable and natural development, and regards the subaltern classes as marginal, anomic or transitory. These classes are left out of the natural evolution (both socially and spatially) because of their traditional and conservative cultures. Therefore, they maintain a potential to interrupt the development. As Baştuğ puts it, marginality concepts suggests “[that] marginals live in enclaves (usually squatter settlements) in which a ‘culture of poverty’ or rural subcultures prevail” (1979: 60). He further argues, however, that “while maintaining their most cherished rural values and behaviours, [urban poor] at the same time [adopt] necessary

¹³ The dwelling areas of the urban poor.

¹⁴ A form of shared public transport, which is generally used by the poor who live in the peripheries of the urban areas.

urban traits gradually” (Baştuğ, 1979: 68), because this is the inescapable result of modernization process. In these views, on the one hand, the culture of urban poor is accused of being traditional or conservative and of being (at least for some time) a perverse force against the development, and on the other hand, the manipulation of these people by the rules of modern city life is proposed to be inevitable. In this way, the inequalities and conflicts rising out of capitalist economic relations and concomitant political structure is naturalized and anything contradictory to the prevailing ideas of modernity is regarded as simply marginal, anomic or inharmonious. What is ideological in these views is the concealment of economic and political factors behind the marginality of urban poor. For Castells, “we find at the roots of ‘urban marginality’ the state employing different policies for different social groups” rather than some transcendental cultural characteristics of these groups; however, “the ‘marginality theory’ persists, relying on the merger of occupational and ecological marginality, and the consequent production of a cultural type, the ‘marginal personality’” (1983: 189). Contrary to the modernist arguments which suggest that arabesk culture reflects the marginal and inharmonious existence of urban-poor (which have been mostly composed of rural immigrants), what is proposed here is that arabesk culture has developed through the efforts of these people to get articulated with the city life in every sense, i.e., economically, politically, socially as well as spatially. The social bases of arabesk culture can be found in the practices of urban-poor who were experiencing the bad material circumstances. Behind the suggestion that “arabesk is a music of the city and for the city” (Stokes, 1992: 1), there is an emphasis on the material conditions with which urban poor are faced. In that sense, arabesk culture is the culture of urbanites. Here, the term ‘urbanites’ is used deliberately because arabesk does not only belong to the inhabitants of *gecekonu* but it is also shared by other people in the

city. “[Arabesk] is a process which has affected everybody in the city, whether they are migrants or not” (Stokes, 1992: 10). The urbanites, other than the immigrant population of the city, may find it close to themselves, because arabesk is not the reflection of inharmonious or anomic existence of ‘urban villagers’ but it stems from the efforts to be articulated with the conditions of urban life. As Özbek puts it,

The concept of ‘village in the city’ is insufficient to express that ‘arabesk’ is an urban phenomenon. Life on the peripheries of the city is not solely ‘anomalous’ despite all the problems related to poverty and signification. Although there are evident social conflicts, the daily social interaction among people is still maintained. The people leading their lives on the peripheries have already been drawn into the very dynamics of the city. The problem does not rise out of slums’ being ‘the rural within the urban;’ on the contrary, it is very much related to the fact that slums do belong to the city and that people in slums are involved in the act of giving-meaning to their distressing and confusing experiences in the city. (2002: 107-108, my translation)

In this passage, another important dimension of arabesk culture is emphasized, as well: It is not only affected by the material conditions of the city life, but it also reveals a response to these conditions, i.e., it is an effort to give meaning to the ‘world’ experienced in the city. According to such a perspective, the people do not play a passive role in cultural processes, but rather culture is an active process in which people raise attitudes and reactions, though in symbolic ways, towards the material life they encounter. As Agnew puts it, whereas “for some, [culture] seems to be largely symbolic in nature and mental in origin”, for others, such as Raymond Williams, “[it] is practical in origin if also symbolic in nature” (1984: 5). The emphasis on the practical origin of culture depicts not only its material base but its ‘active’ nature, because ‘praxis’ which lie behind the ‘cultural processes’ refers to the productive practices of people. Thus, arabesk culture can be regarded as a ‘subculture’ in which the sorrows, difficulties and inequalities

experienced by urban-poor under the material conditions of urban life are transformed into a symbolic domain of feelings and emotions. The important point here is that social structure of the city cannot be explained from the point of view of cultural essentialism, but material circumstances of living experienced under some historically and spatially contingent social conditions should be considered. Once the incapability of modernist arguments, which reduce the social dynamics lying behind the emergence of arabesk culture to an essentially cultural paradigm that goes through rural/urban, east/west or traditional/modern dualities, is realized, the class-based dynamics of this cultural formation can be seen more easily.

Arabesk has a class-based effect not only on the part of the urban poor who are generally associated with this phenomenon, but also on the part of the upper class and intellectuals who raise a negative attitude towards it. This is because of the fact that class is not only an economic category, but cultural differences also have a class dimension. By drawing on Belge, Özbek states that cultural differences in Turkey are designated not only by class differences, but, before and along with 'the money', also by educational differences; in other words, when educational difference is articulated with class difference, it becomes a determining factor in the cultural struggle between the 'popular' and 'dominant' classes (2002: 155-156). Therefore, there may be a hidden class-based fear behind the negative treatments of arabesk by many intellectuals. As Landy remarks, the bias against popular culture in general can be linked to a class bias (1991: 16). Although they insistently avoid class issues in their arguments about arabesk, the modernist intellectuals look at this 'low' culture (and the lower-class people associated with it) from their superior class positions which is determined by their economic, cultural and/or educational capital. Thus, class is inevitably inscribed into their ideas about arabesk; and, by criticizing arabesk culture in favour of modernist cultural forms, these

intellectuals provoke, though indirectly, class differences between them and 'the people' who are generally associated with arabesk. As Bourdieu remarks,

The denial of lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile – in a word, natural – enjoyment, which constitutes the sacred sphere of culture, implies an affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane. That is why art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences. (1984: 7)

In my view, behind the popularity of arabesk-culture products among the urban poor lies the fact that the emotional atmosphere of these products touched the popular feelings (*hissiyât*) of the period, the 1970s, which was marked by, as mentioned before proletarianization of the second generation of migrant workers as well as mixing of the rural and urban ways of life. If we recall Sennett&Cobb's remarks regarding how class is related to "freedom and dignity" as well as being an economic categorization, class character of arabesk can be observed more easily. Orhan Gencebay, who is known as the singer-actor who provided the first examples of arabesk songs as well as arabesk films, recorded his first famous song *Bir Teselli Ver* in 1968, and his first film, again titled *Bir Teselli Ver*, which is accepted as the first example of arabesk films by Özgüç (1985: 14), was shot in 1971. The late 1960's and the early 1970's are roughly the years during which, what Keyder calls "second generation of the migrant workers" started to engage in the urban life and to realize their class identities. Although proletarianization became evident among the second generation of the migrant workers in accordance with the socio-economic and cultural developments, we cannot talk about the emergence of a 'pure' working-class culture in this period. Instead, a hybrid cultural formation engaged the hearts and minds of the urban poor, in which their class-based

aspirations and anxieties found their expression in an emotional manner together with a traditional attitude towards the modern/urban way of life. Class dynamics of arabesk never turned out to be the manifestation of a 'conscious' working-class against bourgeoisie; however, within its ambivalent structure, "at least until 1980s", it contained a "progressive potential" or a resistance against the dominant social order (Özbek, 2002: 136, my translation). While trying to incorporate into the urban life, the lower-class people on the one hand tried to maintain their self-dignity, but on the other hand they were constantly subjected to economic and cultural denigrations; so, popular imagination of the period bore the signs of both a resistance against and submission to the conditions of everyday reality. In Stoke's view,

arabesk lyrics do in fact constitute a form of political commentary, but one which is expressed through an aesthetic of indirectness, metaphor, and circumlocation. One of the threats posed by arabesk to successive Turkish governments has been the fact that it has indirectly addressed class issues, raising an intense awareness of the migration problem and social issues connected with this on a national scale Whilst arabesk does contain a repertoire of metaphors which might be used in an explicitly 'political' commentary, this repertoire has remained muted. (152)

The metaphorical nature of arabesk culture partly stems from the abstractness of arabesk songs. Özbek states that

the articulation of the lyrics with the sounds of the melodies amounts to an invention of popular tradition containing connotations that were readily understood and in tune with the popular discontent and protest specific to the 1970s. Poverty, displacement, deprivation, and the harsh daily round of urban life are not explicitly described in arabesk lyrics, but they are expressed abstractly and through a feeling of disquiet and yearning that permeates the music. Although the lyrics do not speak directly of social inequalities, they have struck a sympathetic chord in the people who receive their immediate contextual meaning. (1997: 216)

Thus, their abstractness does not indicate that arabesk songs have nothing to do with the social conflicts. As a subculture, arabesk “appropriate[s] material resources from one domain and transform them symbolically into another” (Jackson, 1989: 3). In other words, the social problems that the lower-class people face with in their everyday lives are transformed into abstract emotions (fears, sorrows, anxieties, hopes etc.) and represented through a metaphorical language in arabesk songs. In that sense, I consider arabesk culture, in Özbek’s terms, “a cultural invention” (2002: 111), a reaction raised by the popular classes towards the socio-cultural consequences of modernization process.

In the following chapter, I will try to make a detailed analysis of arabesk films which have a more concrete language compared to arabesk songs. Before the analysis, I would like to briefly touch upon the ‘implied readers’, i.e. the target audience of these films.

3.7 The Audience of Arabesk Films

Meral Özbek states that, throughout the 1970s, the listeners of arabesk music were mostly the popular classes who were living in the periphery of the big cities; however, after 1980s, it gained popularity among the middle-class urbanites as well as in the rural places (2002: 181). Therefore, it cannot be argued that arabesk culture belongs to one separate class; in other words, it is not a “working-class culture” per se. Arabesk culture is composed of many, sometimes contradictory, elements in which, as Özbek avers, different social groups found something that was in accordance with their social identity (2002: 181). We can argue the same thing regarding the audience of arabesk films, as well. Arguably, the audience of these films were from the lower-class people in the 1970s. A great proportion of this audience was probably young lower-class males, because in this period the films were shown in the cinemas, and, especially at the end of 1970s when the erotic

movies became so popular, the cinemas were not the places where the whole family could go and entertain. In the 1980s, arabesk films were produced in vast numbers for the video. As Özbek remarks “[t]he audience for arabesk music [and cinema] had expanded to include not only the masses of *geceköndü* dwellers and much of the rural population but also sections of the middle and ruling classes of the 1980s” (1997: 220). After 1990s, the private television channels started to broadcast arabesk films. Even today, these films are shown almost everyday in different television channels during the daytime. Thus, the audience profile has changed and became more and more heterogeneous. Therefore, we cannot reach any accurate judgement regarding the class positions of the ‘real’ audience of arabesk films. I think, however, we can hold an opinion about the ‘implied’ audience of these narratives. As was mentioned before, Rimmon-Kenan regards “the implied reader” as “encoded in the text ‘in the very rhetoric through which it is required to make sense of the content or reconstruct it ‘as a world’”. According to Kress and van Leeuwen

[t]he ‘implied reader’, ‘preferred reading position’, etc., . . . is ‘an image of a certain competence brought to the text and a structuring of such competence within the text: the text selects a ‘model reader’ through its ‘choice of a specific linguistic code, a certain literary style’ and by presupposing ‘a specific encyclopedic competence’ on the part of the reader. . . This we can know. Of this we have evidence in the text itself. . . [although] real readers we cannot ultimately know. (2003: 120)

What I would suggest is that the lower-class people, ‘the poor’, constitute a large proportion of the ‘implied reader’ of arabesk narratives. Most of arabesk films resemble each other very much. Therefore, the audience can easily guess what they will come across in the film. If that is the case, then how can they enthusiastically watch too many arabesk films which are nearly identical? In my opinion, the popular taste for the simple plots of arabesk films is indicative of the fact

that these films address to an essentially lower-class audience. As Bourdieu puts it “[t]o the socially recognized hierarchy of the arts, and within each of them, of genres, schools or periods, corresponds a social hierarchy of the consumers. This predisposes tastes to function as markers of ‘class’” (1984: 1-2). According to him, popular taste or ‘popular aesthetic’, which is generally shared by the lower-class people, is based on the affirmation of the continuity between art and life,

which implies the subordination of form to function [and] so performs a systematic reduction of the things of art to the things of life. . . . Intellectuals could be said to believe in the representation – literature, theatre, painting – more than in the things represented, whereas the people chiefly expect representations and the conventions which govern them to allow them to believe ‘naively’ in the things represented. (1984: 4-5)

By drawing on Bourdieu, I would suggest that arabesk films are attractive to their audience because the audience “ ‘naively’ involve in the things represented”, i.e. they identify themselves with the protagonist and his social environment: They share the feelings of the protagonist and expect to see in all films how the opponents of the protagonist will be defeated; moreover, they might enjoy witnessing the same emotional atmosphere again and again on the screen, which seems very familiar to them from their everyday lives. In other words, arabesk films can be seen as the expression of the mental and emotional world of the audience. Therefore, they watch these films like the supporters of a football team. Every time, in every movie, they enjoy seeing the struggle of the protagonist, who is very much like themselves, against ‘Them’. If arabesk films can only be watched by being identified with the protagonist, then the target audience of them must be easily accomplishing this identification process. Because arabesk narratives are encoded in such a way that the gaze of the poor protagonist(s) become the gaze of the audience, I would argue, the ‘implied audience’ of arabesk films are the poor, subordinate classes.

Similar to the Yeşilçam melodramas, in arabesk films, too, we witness the conflict between poor protagonist(s) and rich villain(s) and the narrative is encoded so as to motivate the perception of the story from the perspective of the poor. In these narratives, the poor/rich paradigm coincides with other paradigms, such as traditional /modern or rural/urban, and, generally, the poor (the spiritual values like honour, honesty, sensitivity etc. as well as traditional cultural values they possess) are sublimated whereas the rich (their devotion to material wealth, their modern way of life etc.) are debased. In these films, too, we see the desire of the lower-class people to maintain their self-dignity which is threatened economically and culturally by the upper classes; compared to the classical melodramas of Yeşilçam, however, class opposition seems more severe and the emotional atmosphere is more gloomy in arabesk films.

CHAPTER IV

SYNTAGMATIC STRUCTURE OF ARABESK FILMS

This chapter is generally devoted to the syntagmatic analysis of arabesk films. An in-depth analysis of the paradigmatic structure in these films will be carried out in the following chapter. Firstly, I will dwell on what the syntagmatic analysis is generally about and how I will make use of this method. After defining shortly the ‘functions’ of which the syntagmatic structure in arabesk films is generally made up, I will go on with a detailed consideration of them one-by-one. I will clarify why I have regarded each function as a constant element in arabesk films. I will especially try to explain the role each function plays in the construction of the narrative as well as how each function and combination of them with one another may affect the perception of the films by the audience.

4.1 Syntagmatic Analysis

Syntagmatic analysis is a structuralist method of analyzing verbal and visual narratives. It basically seeks to discover whether there are any rules of combination according to which the elements of a group of narratives are brought together. Such analyses of narratives owe much to the ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure according to whom, and the structural linguists who followed him, “the key to understanding signs was to understand their structural relationship with others. There are two types of structural relationship – paradigmatic, that of choice; or

syntagmatic, that of combination” (Fiske, 1990: 58). Likewise, Metz argues that, from a structuralist point of view, “the ‘grammar’ of a language (element of a code) has two major components: an ‘associative’ (paradigmatic) grammar and a syntagmatic grammar” (1974: 163)¹⁵. The syntagmatic grammar, which is defined by Saussure as one of the two ways (along with paradigmatic) of organizing “the signs into codes”, is related to “the message into which the chosen signs are combined” (Fiske, 1990: 57). The rules of combination that an analyst tries to disclose constitute the syntagmatic structure of narratives. “The term *syntagm* means chain” (Berger, 2000: 44). So, syntagmatic structure refers to the way that is regularly used in a group of narratives to link one textual element with another. Syntagmatic structure is generally regarded as being related to the denotative level of the meaning, whereas paradigmatic structure seems to be constituting the connotations that can be discovered through revealing oppositional relationships between the signs which are coded, i.e. hidden or covert, and can be detected via a paradigmatic analysis of the narrative. As Metz puts it, however, “this is where the error lies” (165), because “the analysis of the syntagm and the analysis of the paradigm are equally codical” (1974: 165). The use of one syntagmatic structure rather than another within a text influences meaning because that “one type of combination is possible and not another is plainly of a codical order” (Metz, 1974: 163).

¹⁵ In this study, the term ‘grammar’ refers to a mode of representation. The relationship between the elements of a ‘language’ cannot be solely determined by a formal set of rules or conventions that are arbitrary and all-pervasive, but it is specified within the particular uses of these rules or conventions which are fostered by contextual needs, motivations, or intentions; therefore, particular uses of language can end up with particular grammatical structures which lead to particular meanings. M.A.K. Halliday’s remarks on ‘grammar’ may further illuminate what I mean by this term: “Grammar goes beyond formal rules of correctness. It is a means of representing patterns of experience. . . . It enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality; to make sense of their experience of what goes on around them and inside them” (qtd. in Kress&van Leeuwen, 2003: 2).

The primary aim of syntagmatic analysis is to find out *how* the meaning of a narrative is constructed instead of discovering *what* that meaning can be. Vladimir Propp's analysis of the Russian folktales is regarded as the most well-known work of that type. By adopting a morphological approach, Propp aimed at supporting the idea that folktales generate meaning by utilizing a constant pattern of elements, which constitutes their, what Saussure refers to as, 'syntagmatic grammar'.

The aim of Propp's pioneering study . . . is to unearth the common pattern governing the narrative propositions abstracted from a corpus of close to two hundred Russian fairy tales (one type of folktale). For this purpose, the constant elements have to be abstracted from the variable, specific events and participants constituting the individual stories (as well as the propositions abstracted from them). (Rimmon-Kenan, 1989: 20)

The reduction of the individual texts to a constant structure provokes some criticisms against this method. As Chandler puts it,

some literary theorists fear that [Propp's method] threatens to make Shakespeare indistinguishable from Star Wars. Even Barthes noted that 'the first analysts of narrative were attempting . . . to see all the world's stories . . . within a single structure' and that this was a task which was 'ultimately undesirable, for the text thereby loses its difference'. (2003: 92)

However, this reductive strategy can be compensated by establishing a link between the syntagmatic-paradigmatic structure of the texts and the socio-historical context of the period. For instance, in his analysis of James Bond novels, Umberto Eco exceeds the reductive features of the method by linking the structural characteristics of the novels into a broader context of their period. In my analysis of arabesk films, too, the narrative structure of arabesk films will be considered in its relation to the socio-cultural context within which the films were produced.

While classifying fairy tales, Propp separated some constant elements that can be found in every fairy tale from variable ones and

called these elements 'functions'. Propp described a function as "an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action" (qtd. in Rimmon-Kenan, 1989: 20). He suggested that there are at most thirty one functions in each fairy tale, although a particular one might not contain all functions. Furthermore, he claimed that the functions that he found in these fairy tales were always identical; therefore, he named each function and arranged them in the order of their fulfillment, which, he also argued, was the same in every fairy tale (Berger, 1997:24) Another important point about these functions is that it does not matter who fulfills a function; in other words, "[f]unctions may remain constant even when the identity of the performer changes. This is why Propp insists that the study of *what* is done should precede 'the questions of who does it and how it is done'" (Rimmon-Kenan, 1989: 20). What is significant in fairy tales, according to him, is the actions of the characters¹⁶, but not the characters' individual identities or personalities. Thus, in Propp's analysis, 'characters' are subordinated to 'actions'. However, Durnat mentions an objection, made by Elizabeth Bowen, to such treatment of the character-action relationship:

What about the idea that the function of action is to express the characters? This is wrong. The characters are there to provide the action. . . . It is the indivisibility of the act from the actor, and the inevitability of *that* act on the part of *that* actor, that gives action verisimilitude. (1991: 147)

The argument of Bowen is contrary to Propp's analysis of fairy tales. Whereas Propp considers the personality or identity of the character insignificant insofar as the function is fulfilled when its time comes, Bowen argues that the act and the actor are indivisible. Following Bowen, it can be argued that the identity of the character who carries

¹⁶ "Propp listed seven *roles*: the *villain*, the *donor*, the *helper*, the *sought-for-person* (and *her father*), the *dispatcher*, the *hero* and the *false hero*" (Chandler: 92).

out a particular action is highly significant and should be taken into account while analyzing the 'function' of that action within the development of the narrative. Arabesk films are melodramatic texts; therefore, we expect to see 'types' rather than 'characters' in these films. Rimmon-Kenan mentions a classification of characters, suggested by Joseph Ewen, which is based on the relative complexity of the traits associated with them. At one pole of the complexity axis, she holds, stand the least complex ones: "allegorical figures, caricatures, and types". She states that these kinds of characters are generally "constructed around a single trait or around one dominant trait along with a few secondary ones", and that in 'types', "the prominent trait is grasped as representative of a whole group rather than as a purely individual quality" (1989: 41). This definition is quite illuminating of what I mean by 'types' in arabesk films. These 'types', although they are relatively incomplex, have identities and some personality traits attached to these identities; moreover, these identities may be regularly used in different arabesk films. I would suggest that these 'types' do not exist only to fulfill a particular action or they are not only identified by which action they perform in the story; but, their very own identities, independent of their actions, already carry out some meanings, which, in turn, deeply affect how the audience give meaning to their actions. Therefore, while analyzing the films, I will pay special attention to the identity traits through which arabesk figures are determined.

4.2 A Syntagmatic Analysis of Arabesk Films

Like Propp, I will use the term 'functions' in my analysis to name the integral elements of the narrative in arabesk films; however, these elements are composed not only of the purposeful actions of the characters which serve to push the story forward as in Propp's analysis, but also of the textual and narrational elements which are involved in

the narrative independent of the characters' actions. Prior to the detailed examination of the functions, in which the syntagmatic and paradigmatic structure of the films will be clarified, each of them will be briefly defined.

*Exposition*¹⁷: Introducing the identity traits or psychological-emotional state of the hero and his environment at the textual level at the beginning of and in some parts of the film.

Love: The hero's and the heroine's falling in love with each other, or showing that they are already in love.

Trouble: Showing the characters and situations, which gives clues about the main conflict from which the hero and heroine will suffer a lot throughout the story.

Conflict: The state in which the two sides of the main conflict, or secondary conflicts directly interact with each other, and the revelation of the opposition between them.

Determination: The hero's and the heroine's determined efforts to overcome the villainy in order to be or to stay together despite all the difficulties.

Concealment and Revelation: Firstly, the separation of the hero and the heroine, as a result of three incidents: 1) The villain makes either the hero or the heroine believe something wrong about the other one. 2) The hero or heroine makes the other one believe something wrong about a situation in purpose. 3) The hero or heroine misunderstands a situation which s/he has witnessed coincidentally. Secondly, the disclosure of the concealment, which shows that the strong emotional tie between the hero and the heroine has never disappeared.

¹⁷ The term 'exposition' is defined as a "part of the structure that sets the scene, introduces and identifies characters, and establishes the situation at the beginning of a story or play. Additional exposition is often scattered throughout the story" (Norton).

Blow: An event, which causes the hero and/or the heroine to suffer, and ultimately, to be separated from each other, and which occurs as a direct or indirect result of an act of the villain.

Dénouement: The final part of the narrative in which the hero, the heroine and the villain come face to face for the last time.

Arabesk Songs: The use of arabesk songs in arabesk films is regarded as a function because they are not only used at the background to improve sentimental mood of what is going on in the story, but they are also included in the narrative in their own rights.

Although a few of these functions are not present in some films as I have defined them here¹⁸, these are the functions in arabesk films which can provide us with a general framework in the analysis of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic features of these films. It should also be noted that the sequence of the functions is not identical in every film and each function can be detected more than one time throughout a film; however, which functions are combined with one another is a significant point to which I will pay special attention.

4.2.1 Exposition

I will regard *exposition* as a function, firstly, because at the very beginning of the film when the events, which will develop around the main conflict, have not started yet, the two sides of the conflict are introduced through the most prominent indicators of their identities. Thus, they are positioned with respect to each other; moreover, the major point of view in the text through which the subsequent events will be filtered is provided. Secondly, the use of *exposition*, especially somewhere in the middle of the story, can carry some notable meanings when the combination of it with the preceding or subsequent functions is taken into account. Because it is not actually included in the

¹⁸ I will pinpoint these films while examining the functions one by one.

course of actions, *exposition* belongs to the textual level of the narrative rather than to the story, which underlines that the identification of the characters and places is “filtered through some prism or perspective”.

Three main characters of melodrama – the hero, the heroine, and the villain(s) – are present in arabesk films, as well. Every arabesk film starts by showing the hero and his environment (his family, home, neighbourhood etc.). The audience is informed about his identity mostly during this part of the film; in other words, although additional information about some other traits of the hero can be obtained during the course of the events, the critical indicators of his identity, which ‘determine’ the overall personality and actions of him throughout the story, is provided within this initial *exposition*¹⁹. Initial *exposition*, I assume, is limited to the point where the first sign of a *trouble* or (new) *love* is given within the story or the text. In arabesk films, the characterization process is carried out through “indirect presentation”²⁰; however, some “direct definitions”²¹ which are available through the dialogues between other characters, are also included in this process. The most prominent indicator of the hero’s identity in this part is his ‘poorness’²², except for *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, *Son Sabah*, *Utaniyorum*, *Haram Oldu*, *Ayrılamam* and *Aşkınsın*. In these films, the

¹⁹ Rimmon-Kenan states that character, “as one construct within the abstracted story”, is arrived at “by assembling various character-indicators distributed along the text-continuum and, when necessary, inferring the traits from them” (1989: 59).

²⁰ This type of textual indicators “does not mention the trait[s] but displays and exemplifies [them] in various ways, leaving to the reader[audience] the task of inferring the quality they imply” (Rimmon-Kenan, 1989: 60).

²¹ This type of indicating character-traits “names the trait by an adjective (e.g. ‘he was good-hearted’), an abstract noun (‘his goodness knew no bounds’), or possibly some other kind of noun (‘she was a real bitch’) or part of speech (‘he loves only himself’)” (Rimmon-Kenan, 1989: 59).

²² The jobs of the heroes, which are presented mostly during the initial *exposition*, in these thirty films is as follows: ‘worker’ in a factory, a dockyard, a boat or a shop (*Bir Teselli Ver*, *Batsın Bu Dünya*, *Benim Gibi Sevenler*, *Hatasız Kul Olmaz*, *Son Sabah*, *Yuvasız Kuşlar*, *Durdurun Dünyayı*, *Huzurum Kalmadı*, *Vurmayın* and *Allahım Sen Bilirsin*); ‘peddler’ (*Dertler Benim Olsun*); ‘peasant’-‘farm worker’ (*Derbeder*, *Batan Güneş*, *Sabuha*, *Kara Yazma* and *Dil Yarası*); ‘poor musician’ (*Seven Unutmaz*, *İsyankâr* and *Sensiz Yaşıyorum*); ‘driver’ (*Çile*, *Mavi Mavi* and *Gülüm Benim*); ‘unemployed’ (*Kul Kuldân Beter*, *Öksüzler* and *Acı*); ‘a famous singer’ (*Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, *Utaniyorum*, *Haram Oldu*, *Ayrılamam* and *Aşkınsın*).

hero and his life conditions do not seem to be 'poor' when he first appears on the screen. However, throughout the narrative in *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, *Son Sabah*, *Haram Oldu* and *Ayrılamam*, 'poor-rich' opposition gains a marked status in signifying the conflict between the hero and the villain(s). In *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, the hero is imprisoned unfairly because of the villain and is stricken with poverty afterwards while we see the villain in a luxurious office with his secretary. In *Son Sabah*, the villains are much richer than the hero as it is made obvious by, for example, the difference between their big farm house and the hero's small and ordinary one. In *Haram Oldu*, we see the 'boss-worker' opposition, which can be regarded as a version of the central opposition between 'the poor hero' and 'the rich villain' in arabesk films, because, recursively enough, the relationship between the hero or heroine as poor and the villain as rich in most of arabesk films is encoded as an employer-employee relationship, which inevitably affects the audience's giving a meaning to the identity of 'the boss' and to the identity of 'the worker'. In *Ayrılamam*, although he is rich and famous now, it is made known, by flashback (through which a significant part of the story in this film is shown), that the hero was suffering from poverty while the villain was enjoying the hero's money. *Utaniyorum* and *Aşıksın* are the most inconsistent examples regarding the central role that 'poor-rich' opposition plays in arabesk films. The heroes in these films are neither poor at the beginning nor they become so afterwards, though, in *Aşıksın*, 'the rich villain' part of the opposition is preserved. These two exemplify 'mafiatric villainy' and a conflict between the hero and such a group, which seem to be used more in arabesk films made in the 1980s than those in the 1970s. Although the fact that he is poor gains its pivotal meaning when the antagonist's being rich is shown soon after our first encounter with the protagonist,

the audience already knows the binary opposition of 'poor-rich'²³ beforehand because it is a generic feature of arabesk films.

The indirect presentation of the hero during the initial *exposition* at the very beginning of the film includes also the presentation of his girlfriend/wife (the heroine), his home/family, his neighborhood/friends and his job. The Table 1 shows the context within which the hero in each film is presented. So, the hero is introduced within a context in which he has friendly, happy and seemingly strong relationships with some other people. These relationships which are not presented in detail are the only channel of getting information about these people around the hero. We learn their names or learn about the jobs of a few of them, but nothing more in personal. The only thing we are made sure about these people is limited to their conditions of living which is the same or similar to the hero's. The identification of the hero in the initial *exposition* never allows him to be regarded as a 'character' rather than a 'type', as well. As other people around him, almost nothing about the different sides of his personality, his inner conflicts, dreams, fears etc. is provided. The most evident, if not the only, characteristic of him, as I mentioned before, is generally his being 'poor'. In many of arabesk films, although in the initial *exposition* the hero is represented with his environment (his family, his friends, his girlfriend etc.) he somehow loses them or is separated from them because of the villain(s); the most obvious examples are *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, *Dertler Benim Olsun*, *Batsın Bu Dünya*, *Derbeder*, *Batan Güneş*, *Seven Unutmaz*, *Kara Yazma*, *Durdurun Dünyayı*, *Huzurum Kalmadı*, *Çile*, *Utaniyorum*, *Öksüzler*, *Gülüm Benim*, *Vurmayın* and *Ayrılamam*. Within the story of the rest of these thirty films, too, 'loneliness' is encoded as the

²³ As mentioned before, the first term in binary oppositions is regarded as the dominant or superordinate one. Accordingly, this opposition in most of the texts is referred to as 'rich-poor' duality. However, as we shall see at the end of the analysis, the 'poorness' with all the signifiers attached to it is constructed as superior to the 'richness' in most of arabesk films. That is why I mention this opposition as 'poor-rich'.

Table 1: Context Within Which the Hero in Each Film Is Presented

	Home/Family	Neighbourhood/Friends	Job	Girlfriend
<i>Bir Teselli Ver, Batsın Bu Dünya, Gülüm Benim</i>		X	X	
<i>Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm</i>	X		X	X
<i>Dertler Benim Olsun, Acı</i>		X		
<i>Derbeder, Huzurum Kalmadı, Çile, Allahım Sen Bilirsin</i>	X	X	X	X
<i>Benim Gibi Sevenler</i>	X			X
<i>Hatasız Kul Olmaz</i>			X	X
<i>Batan Güneş, Durdurun Dünyayı</i>		X	X	X
<i>Son Sabah, Seven Unutmaz</i>			X	X
<i>Sabuha, İsyankâr, Utanıyorum, Haram Oldu, Ayrılamam, Sensiz Yaşıyorum</i>	X		X	
<i>Yuvasız Kuşlar, Dil Yarası, Öksüzler</i>	X			
<i>Kara Yazma</i>		X		X
<i>Mavi Mavi, Vurmayın</i>	X	X	X	
<i>Kul Kuldun Beter</i>		X		
<i>Aşkınsın</i>			X	

secondary indicator of the identity of arabesk hero which actually underlines his 'poorness'. Arabesk heroes have no personal history and the narrative does not construct a personal history for them when the film is over, either, apart from their struggle against villainy, although, especially in some films, their loneliness evokes some questions: At the beginning of *Kul Kuldun Beter and Acı*, for instance, heroes are shown in the prison from which they will soon be released. During the initial *exposition* in these films, we do not know why the hero has been in the prison; until he gets out of the prison, we only see his friends in the prison, who seem, above all, 'poor'. This 'poorness' is not only signified through their material conditions of living or their appearance. They are also 'lonely'. They seem to be deprived of the material well-being as well as a family, a home etc. It seems that the hero has only the people in the prison as his friends. During the course of actions, his crime is somehow made clear, but no detail about his personal, inner life is given. Therefore, he is again identified through his 'poor' and 'lonely' existence as was presented at the beginning of the film²⁴. Undoubtedly, some information is provided about the past of the hero at some point of the text²⁵, but this information contains nothing peculiar about his choices, achievements, failures, desires etc. which makes this history personal. The history of arabesk hero before and after the film is shaped by the events in which he does not have an active role or in which he is not included as a personality but only as a composite of some traits, such as 'being poor', which are attached to his identity mostly during the initial *exposition*. So, arabesk hero is presented, in his past, present, and also in his future, as if he is not an individual but only a 'type' whose "prominent trait is grasped as representative of a whole

²⁴ Prison is a frequently used sign in arabesk films which underlines the 'poorness'/'loneliness' of the hero. We will touch upon this point again while examining the *blow*.

²⁵ In *Bir Teselli Ver*, *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, *Hatasız Kul Olmaz*, *Son Sabah*, *Kara Yazma*, *İsyankâr*, *Huzurum Kalmadı* and *Aşkınsın*, however, the past of the hero remains to be completely unknown.

group rather than as a purely individual quality” (Rimmon-Kenan, 1989: 41). Therefore, all figures in arabesk films, including the heroes, just like the ones in melodramas, who cannot become ‘characters’ but remain as ‘types’, seem ‘to be acted out’ rather than ‘to act’. In all arabesk films, the gap stemming from the lack of personal history of arabesk hero is filled by the history of the singer-actor. The own history of the singer-actor which is inevitably transferred from the real life into the fictitious life of the film, is composed mostly of his image in the eyes of the audiences. This image, which is marked by slogans like ‘wholehearted friend’, ‘voice of the people’, ‘one of us’ or labels like ‘brother’ or ‘father’, is often supported by the real history of the singer-actor who was once ‘poor’ just like the hero of the film. In *Haram Oldu*, for instance, the hero, the name of whom is the same with the actor-singer’s real name, explains the relationship between him and his admirers in the film, which inevitably include the audience of the film, as well, as follows: “I am one of them”(Appendix A – 1)²⁶. The singer-actor’s using of his real name in most of arabesk films²⁷ also strengthens the link between his real identity and the fictitious identity of the hero. Stokes states that “while watching the [arabesk] films, [I realized that] the actors do not ‘act’, but play themselves. In most films, arabesk stars use their real names” (1992: 138). In some films, the hero is or becomes a famous singer, as well. These films are *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, *Derbeder*, *Batan Güneş*, *Sabuha*, *Seven Unutmaz*, *Yuvasız Kuşlar*, *Kara Yazma*, *İsyankâr*, *Utaniyorum*, *Haram Oldu*, *Öksüzler*, *Ayrılamam*, *Aşıksın* and *Sensiz Yaşıyorum*. Generally speaking, then, arabesk hero is a ‘type’ rather than a ‘character’ because neither in his past (in his history) nor in his present (in initial *exposition*) and future is he identified by his different character-traits as an individual; but it is

²⁶ Appendix A is devoted to the original (Turkish) dialogues which I will quote from the films throughout my analysis.

²⁷ Except for *Dertler Benim Olsun*, *Mavi Mavi*, *Kul Kuldun Beter* and *Gülüm Benim*.

usually indicated, in the initial *exposition*, that he lives in an environment, which is mostly marked by its solidarity and its ‘poorness’.

In some of these thirty films, the identification of the heroine is a part of the initial *exposition*²⁸, while in some others, it is the moment when the story actually begins by showing the first sign of a newly-emerging love²⁹.

4.2.2 Love

The main subject in most of arabesk films is the love between the hero and the heroine. So, arabesk story is mainly a ‘love story’. This love is at the center, and all other events develop around it or they are connected to it. That the film will be mainly a ‘love story’ can be regarded as one of the generic expectations of the audience from these films. “Elements of pathos and sentiment”, which have been mentioned as one of the generic features of melodramas, are largely contained within this love relationship in arabesk films. As Stokes puts it “in arabesk films, [w]ithout the emotion of love, the dramatic machinery of the narrative cannot be set into motion” (1992: 156). Love between the hero and the heroine constitutes the main subject of arabesk films, and, the recurrent theme in these films is that the most precious value which has to be protected against all villainy is ‘love’. Therefore, Cawelti’s argument concerning how “the emphasis on

²⁸ *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm, Dertler Benim Olsun, Hatasız Kul Olmaz, Derbeder, Batan Güneş, Seven Unutmaz, Kara Yazma, İsyankâr, Durdurun Dünyayı, Çile and Utanıyorum.*

²⁹ *Bir Teselli Ver, Yuvasız Kuşlar, Huzurum Kalmadı, Mavi Mavi, Aşksın and Allahım Sen Bilirsin.* In the rest of the films, initial *exposition* is followed by *trouble* instead of *love*. Among these, three films have some different features in terms of the role of the hero. In *Öksüzler, Vurmayın* and *Ayrılamam* (all of which by Küçük Emrah), the hero does not either have a girlfriend (and hence a love relationship is totally absent), or the love relationship between the hero and his girlfriend is not central, as opposed to the other films; therefore, the role of the heroine who, most of the time, is the direct or ultimate target of the villain, in these films is shared by the sister, the mother and the girlfriend. *Love’s* losing of its generically conventional status in Küçük Emrah’s films can probably be explained by his being too young.

romantic love as an ultimate value” comes out to be one of the “basic continuities of theme and structure” in melodramas seems highly relevant for arabesk films, as well.

In most of arabesk films, the hero and heroine immediately fall in love with each other if they are not already so. In other words, *love* between the protagonists of the film seems to be taken for granted. Therefore, the main question is not whether these two people will fall in love with each other or not. Instead, the main question is always how come the hero and heroine will suffer due to their relationship in spite of the fact that they love each other. Because there is no tension between the hero and heroine as regards their romantic, individual feelings towards each other, what is emphasized through the love story in arabesk films becomes something outside the sphere of personal love relationship. The conflict and struggle between the hero and the villain, which is created around or in relation to the relationship of lovers, is encoded as the actual problematic. In other words, although it is romantic, *love*, as a function, serves in arabesk films not for showing how its romanticism is experienced, but rather for emphasizing how its value is ignored, discredited and suppressed by the villain(s).

There are three ways of combining *exposition*, *love* and *trouble* in arabesk films: 1) *exposition* (including *love*) – *trouble*; 2) *exposition* – (newly-emerging) *love* – *trouble*; 3) *exposition* – *trouble* – (newly-emerging) *love*. In *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, *Dertler Benim Olsun*, *Derbeder*, *Batan Güneş*, *Seven Unutmaz*, *Kara Yazma*, *Isyankâr*, *Durdurun Dünyayı*, *Çile* and *Utaniyorum*, the hero and heroine are already in love with each other and the heroine is included in the initial *exposition*³⁰. Therefore, in these films, encoding of the main conflict between them and the villain(s) in relation to their love becomes fully

³⁰ In *Hatasız Kul Olmaz*, too, the heroine is included in the initial *exposition*. Although during the initial *exposition* we see that the hero and heroine do not know each other yet, they immediately meet and fall in love, before from whom the actual threat to their relationship will come is revealed.

apparent right after the initial *exposition*, which is followed by *trouble*, i.e., showing the clues (the villain) about from where (whom) the ultimate *blow* to the hero and heroine will come before it actually takes place. In *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, we see during the initial *exposition* that the hero and heroine are very happy while getting prepared for marriage. Immediately after these happy scenes, we learn that a mafiatric gang is forcing the hero's brother to take part in a robbery where he has been working; and, this robbery would be committed in the same night when the hero and heroine would get married. So, we understand that this villainous act, although it is not directly related to the relationship between the hero and heroine³¹, will make this marriage impossible. In *Derbeder*, *Seven Unutmaz*, *Kara Yazma*, *İsyankâr*, *Çile*, *Durdurun Dünyayı* and *Utaniyorum*, the hero and heroine are presented as already being in love. However, we immediately see that their relationship is directly threatened by the villain(s) who have a close (family) relationship mostly with the heroine³². In *Dertler Benim Olsun* and *Batan Güneş*, we see the villain right after the initial *exposition* in which love between the hero and heroine is revealed, and the first sign of his villainy is shown immediately: he throws the heroine a furtive and villainous glance, which is emphasized by a zoom shot of his face. In *Bir Teselli Ver*, *Yuvasız Kuşlar*, *Huzurum Kalmadı*, *Mavi Mavi*, *Aşıksın*

³¹ In some films (*Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, *Hatasız Kul Olmaz*, *Sabuha* and *Sensiz Yaşıyorum*) love seems not to be the direct target of the villainy, however, in these films, too, the main suffering of the hero and heroine comes out to be their separation which is, though indirectly, caused by the villainy.

³² In *Durdurun Dünyayı*, the first sign of *trouble* is related to the heroine's mother. This film is the only one in which the mother (instead of the father) is shown as a villainous character. The heroine is fatherless, and her fatherlessness is emphasized during the story. Her mother does not want the heroine to get married with the hero, because he is poor. However, she has a reason behind her objection to this marriage, and this objection is because of what her husband (the heroine's father) did to them in the past: "I said the same thing to my mom before getting married to your father. What happened then? You were knee high to a grasshopper when he left us. Where are all the happy dreams? He left me the debts to the grocer, the butcher as well as empty saucepans. Is it a lie, huh, is it?" (Appendix A – 2). Moreover, we see afterwards that the ultimate *blow* to the hero and heroine comes from a rich friend of both hero's and heroine's, and the mother repents of taking part in the separation of the hero and heroine.

and *Allahım Sen Bilirsin*, the heroine is not included in the initial *exposition*, which is followed by the first sign of a newly-emerging *love* between the protagonists³³. Therefore the story actually begins with the encounter of the hero and heroine with each other. However, in these films, too, the development of the story does not depend on the question whether they will really love each other or not, because the process of falling in love is short enough that the main emphasis becomes how (because of whom) this love causes pain for them. As mentioned above, that the main problematic of the film would be related to the villainous acts of some third persons rather than the personal relationship between the protagonists can be regarded as one of the generic expectations of the audience from arabesk films. As soon as the hero and heroine meet for the first time after the initial *exposition*, we understand that they will soon fall in love. We do not wait long for our expectation to be met, because, in a very short period of time³⁴,

³³ *Mavi Mavi* and *Allahım Sen Bilirsin* are different from other arabesk films in that after the initial *exposition* the hero and heroine fall in love with each other but at some point in the story we understand that the heroine is deceiving the hero about her love towards him; in *Mavi Mavi*, this is because to take her revenge on the hero, and in *Allahım Sen Bilirsin* to be informed more fully about him. So, the heroines take part in villainy in these two films. Although in *Mavi Mavi* the heroine really falls in love with the hero afterwards, in *Allahım Sen Bilirsin* *love* never really takes place and the hero suffers from an unrequited love. However, in both of these films the conflict between the hero and the heroine is not restricted with a romantic relationship; *love* is again surrounded by the class identities of the two sides of the conflict. I have mentioned before how the social identity of the hero together with his environment is constructed in *Allahım Sen Bilirsin*. In this film, the richness of the heroine and the social group she belongs to, which is underlined through her intellectual – her being a journalist – and material – her rich home and neighbourhood, her rich bosses etc. – richness, is emphasized as opposed to the poorness of the hero and his environment, as well. Likewise, in *Mavi Mavi*, the class opposition between the two, by the end of the film when the heroine actually falls in love with the hero, is clearly uttered by the hero as follows: “We belong to two different worlds. As you have said in your holiday home, you and I like the lovers in the pulp fictions. You were right. I am not angry with you. But we cannot be happy after all what has happened. We go on separate paths” (Appendix A – 3).

³⁴ What I mean by ‘time’ here is both the ‘text-time’ and the ‘story-time’. If the actual duration of (i.e. the temporal relationship between) the successive events in a story is regarded as the story-time, the text-time refers to how this temporal relationship is spatially represented in the text. As Rimmon-Kenan puts it, “[text time] is a spatial, not a temporal, dimension” of the narrative (1989: 44). The distinction between story-time and text-time seems important because the duration of the events in the text (i.e. what

their feelings for each other become explicit. In *Batsın Bu Dünya*, *Benim Gibi Sevenler*, *Son Sabah*, *Sabuha*, *Dil Yarası*, *Haram Oldu*, *Kul Kuldun Beter*, *Gülüm Benim*, *Acı* and *Sensiz Yaşıyorum* the initial *exposition* is followed by *trouble* instead of *love*. Therefore, from its very beginning on, love between the hero and heroine in the story of these films is experienced in relation to the opposition between the hero and the villain(s). In other words, we, the audience, watch the hero and heroine (i.e. their future relationship) as the victims of the (potential) villain(s) introduced beforehand although love between them has not actually been shown yet; because the audience is made aware of a family or

proportion of the text is devoted to the events) compared to the duration of the events in the story (i.e. what is the actual time passed for these events to take place) as well as comparison of both with the text-time and story-time of the entire narrative can be an important indicator of which elements in the narrative are emphasized and which are regarded as to be taken for granted. In these six films, the meeting of the hero and heroine comes right after the initial *exposition*, and it immediately becomes obvious that these two will be lovers soon. The following proportions show the text-time (the approximate minutes) devoted to this process of falling in love including the initial *exposition* in comparison with the whole text-time (approximate minutes) of the films: in *Bir Teselli Ver* 15' /90' ; *Yuvasız Kuşlar* 10' /97' ; *Huzurum Kalmadı* 15' /101' ; in *Mavi Mavi* 20'/86' ; in *Aşkınsın* 5' /78' ; in *Allahım Sen Bilirsin* 20' /78'. The same proportions in terms of the story-time is as follows: in *Bir Teselli Ver* (at most) 1 day/unknown (but at least a few weeks); in *Yuvasız Kuşlar* (at most) a few days/unknown (but at least a few years); in *Huzurum Kalmadı* (at most) a few weeks/unknown (but at least a few years); in *Mavi Mavi* (at most) a few days/unknown (but at least a few months); in *Aşkınsın* (at most) 1 day/unknown (but at least a few months); in *Allahım Sen Bilirsin* (at most) 1 week/unknown (but at least a few months). (I have given the proportions only in these six films, because in the rest of the films either *love* is present at the beginning and story actually begins with the presentation of *trouble*, or *trouble* already precedes newly-emerging *love*.) These proportions, I suggest, indicate that the main problematic in these films, too, is about how the story develops after the hero and heroine fall in love with each other; and, as mentioned before, the beginning point of this part of the story is the moment when the clues about the villainy is revealed for the first time, i.e., *trouble*. Although there is a latent *exposition* in most of arabesk films during which we see the happy or hopeful moments of the hero and the heroine somewhere in the middle of the story (and which is accompanied by the hit song of the film that lasts at most approximately five minutes), this part actually does not push the story forward; therefore, the latent *exposition*, too (like the initial *exposition*) belongs to textual level, rather than the story level. So, I would argue, the greatest portion of the story and text in all arabesk films is devoted to the presentation of the conflict and struggle between the hero and the villain(s) which develop in relation to the love between the hero and heroine rather than to the presentation of personal and romantic relationship between them.

employment relationship between the villain and the heroine³⁵, it is understood that the opposition between the hero and the villain, revealed during the initial *exposition* and *trouble* following it, will turn out to be a *conflict* that will be openly encountered by the hero (and heroine, as well as, the audience). In *Batsın Bu Dünya*, for instance, the heroine is a worker of the villain's father (in his olive groves), and the villain sees and immediately covets her while she is working. Although at this stage of the story the hero and heroine are not lovers yet, because it is a generic expectation from these films that they will soon be, *love* is encoded as the primary target of the villainy, and hence as the main sphere of the conflict between the hero and the villain. So that, the social identities of the hero and the villain become the primary indicator of the two sides of the actual conflict which develops around or in relation to the love relationship afterwards. Thus, in most of arabesk films, regardless of different combinations of *love* and *trouble*, the conflict, which develops in relation to *love*, functions as a metaphorical representation of the social conflicts because the (potential) tension between the hero and the villain(s) is primarily constructed on their opposing social identities.

³⁵ The films, in which the close relationships between the heroine and the villain(s) are revealed after the presentation of the hero (*exposition*) and the villain (*trouble*), but before the hero and the heroine fall in love with each other (*love*), are as follows: in *Benim Gibi Sevenler*, the heroine is the daughter-in-law of the villain; in *Son Sabah*, she is the daughter-sister of the villains; in *Sabuha*, she is one of the villagers ruled by the villain (*ağa*); in *Dil Yarası*, she is the daughter of him; in *Haram Oldu*, the hero is married with the daughter of the villain, therefore it is apparent that love between the hero and the heroine will be the main conflict; in *Kul Kuldun Beter*, the heroine is a belly-dancer in the villain's night club; in *Gülüm Benim*, she is the daughter of him; and, in *Acı*, she is about to be a prostitute in the hands of the villains; in *Sensiz Yaşıyorum*, she is the witness of a crime committed by the mafiatric villains, therefore she is already threatened by them, which establishes the main obstacle of a relationship between the hero and the heroine.

4.2.3 Trouble

Trouble, as a function, serves for introducing the villain(s) who will be ultimately responsible for *blow(s)*, from which the hero and heroine will suffer, at the beginning of the story. Because the two diametrically opposed sides of the main conflict, the primary representatives of which are the hero and the villain, are made known very early within the story, all the successive events develop in accordance with this opposition established primarily on the basis of the social identities of ‘types’ (the hero, the heroine, the villain(s), their different environments etc.).

The villain is the complete opposite of the hero. The primary indicator of villainy in arabesk films is ‘richness’ because ‘being rich’ comes out to be the common identity trait of the villains almost in every arabesk film analyzed in this study. In some films, such as *Batsın Bu Dünya*, *Hatasız Kul Olmaz* and *Huzurum Kalmadı*, there is more than one villainous character and some of them seem to belong the same class with the hero. However, in all these examples, except for the chief villain, who is always ‘rich’ and actually responsible for the suffering of the hero and the heroine, others are transformed within the story and take the side of the hero afterwards. Sometimes, we witness the transformation of the villain at the end of the film, as well. In *Derbeder* and *Durdurun Dünyayı*, for instance, villainous characters repent of torturing the hero and heroine. However, as mentioned before about the villain in melodrama, Steele states that in such situations the audience “doubt the sincerity of [their] repentance” because they show it “only when [their] doom is near”. The villain, like the hero, is not a ‘character’ but a ‘type’. He is even more roughly identified than the hero because he is not a part of the initial *exposition*. The moment he first appears is most of the time the starting point of the story (unless the sign of a new

love between the hero and heroine is shown first³⁶) because we are provided with the sign of a *trouble* soon after we see the villain³⁷. In other words, the narrative is transferred from the textual level to the story level at this point. The villain is not given a chance to be introduced during the initial *exposition*. We do not see his relationships with his family or his friends outside the story, therefore the audience are not permitted to be identified with him as they are with the hero during the initial *exposition*. In every film, when the villain is shown for the first time, we see him within a context which underlines his 'richness'. The villain is always presented first in his luxurious home, luxurious office, his car or in another luxurious vehicle he owns. The signifiers of 'richness' come soon after (sometimes right after) the initial *exposition* during which we mostly recognize the 'poorness' of the hero and his environment, so that the construction of the opposition between the hero and the villain through the 'poorness/richness' duality in arabesk films is emphasized by the help of this syntagmatic feature. The presentation of the dinner table, for example, becomes a remarkable signifier of this central opposition, especially when the *exposition* of the hero's and villain's homes comes one after another as in, for instance, *Dertler Benim Olsun*, *Batsın Bu Dünya*, *Derbeder* and *Sabuha*. The same syntagmatic feature can be detected in latter *expositions* in almost every film, which shows the happy scenes – mostly accompanied by a song – of the hero and heroine³⁸. The presentation of these happy moments, is always followed by a *conflict*,

³⁶ As in *Bir Teselli Ver*, *Hatasız Kul Olmaz*, *Son Sabah*, *Huzurum Kalmadı*, *Mavi Mavi* and *Allahım Sen Bilirsin*.

³⁷ The audience knows beforehand about not only the singer-actors but also the actors who act as villains in almost every film. Therefore, the overall image of these actors, marked mostly by their 'richness', is inevitably transformed from one film to another. Erol Taş (in *Benim Gibi Sevenler*, *Derbeder* and *Sabuha*), Coşkun Göğen (in *Batan Güneş*, *İsyankâr*, *Huzurum Kalmadı* and *Ayrılamam*) and Turgut Özatay (in *Yuvasız Kuşlar*, *Öksüzler* and *Acı*), for instance, are among the most well-known villains of the Turkish cinema who also acted in arabesk films.

³⁸ However, in *Sabuha*, *Öksüzler*, *Vurmayın* and *Ayrılamam*, we cannot see such a scene.

a *trouble* or a *blow*, the cause of which is, of course, the villain(s). For instance; in *Hatasız Kul Olmaz*, right after such an *exposition*, we witness a *conflict* between the hero and the villain; in *Batan Güneş*, when the hero's and the heroine's happy moments are over, the camera slightly moves and shows us the *trouble* i.e. the villain who has been spying on them; in *Çile*, when the hero and heroine are having a picnic and very happy, a group of young men and women suddenly come by their cars, beat the hero and attempt to rape the heroine. Thus, the opposition between the hero and the villain is constructed right at the moment when we see the villain for the first time.

4.2.4 Conflict

Once the two sides of the main opposition are identified at the textual level through *exposition* and *trouble*, the scenes, in which the hero and/or heroine directly interact with the villain(s), present how *trouble* turns out to be a real opposition between these two sides at the story level. *Conflict*, in arabesk films, is not limited to the encounter of the hero/the heroine with the chief villain(s). In some films, there are some other villainous characters with whom the hero interacts. Although these conflicts are only indirectly related to the main subject, their existence seems quite important because they emphasize further how the identity of the hero and his counterpart is established and what is generally problematized by the narrative. In these films, as mentioned before, 'poorness' is pointed out as the only possible site for the realization of *love*; in other words, 'poorness' is encoded as a 'possibility'. As it is made fully apparent through *conflict*, however, 'poorness' is encoded at the same time as an 'impossibility' because, most of the time, their desire to be together turns out to be a matter of life or death for the lovers; although in some arabesk films they succeed in being together at the end, they suffer a lot from the villainy

throughout the story. This dual encoding of the 'poorness', I suggest, is one of the main characteristics of these films which makes them 'arabesk'; in other words, tragedy of the 'arabesk hero' stems from this paradox because 'poorness' is the most prominent indicator of his identity. "Hence", as Özbek puts it regarding Orhan Gencebay songs, 'poorness', as a social problem, "is, on the one hand, approved, but, on the other hand, rebelled against" in arabesk films. "So", she remarks, "this cul-de-sac" causes these films and songs³⁹ to be "marked as arabesk" (2002: 201). However, this is not what 'arabesk film' is all about⁴⁰. This ambivalent characteristic has been generally ignored by the critics of arabesk culture especially when they consider arabesk songs, because arabesk lyrics are very "abstract". They consist of universal questions like love, death, happiness, loneliness, destiny, patience, and general issues regarding human relationships such as affection, friendship, poverty, humiliation (Özbek, 2002: 105). Arabesk songs generally have a depressing emotional atmosphere in which hopelessness and heart-ache are the dominant feelings; and, one can hardly find an apparent, physical reason lying behind the dark mood which covers most of these songs. Arabesk films, however, are not only made up of presenting the paradox of the hero mentioned above, but they also concretize the villainy, the source of his suffering. Therefore, as opposed to the songs in which 'the voice' does not address a flesh-and-blood opponent (that is why 'God' and 'fate' attract the attention of the critics, because, along with an 'abstract' lover, they are the ones which 'the voice' in some songs directly addresses), films provide a target (an identity) towards which all anger, opposition and resistance existing within 'arabesk' can be directed. In arabesk films, we do not see the hero as if he was absolutely prisoned at and submitted to the hopelessness of this cul-de-sac. But, we also see his and the heroine's

³⁹ She mainly talks about Orhan Gencebay songs and films, but I think this remark is also applicable for the films by other arabesk singers.

⁴⁰ And, this is not generally what 'arabesk' is all about, for Özbek, either.

struggle against the villainy which is encoded by the narrative as the primary source of their suffering. Therefore, arabesk films are not simply the narratives of submission, but they are also a site for the expression of discomfort, and thus, the narratives of resistance. Lastly, in some arabesk films, the conflict does not only arise between the hero and the villain(s), but also between him and his environment. In *Bir Teselli Ver*, *Dertler Benim Olsun*, *Derbeder*, *Son Sabah*, *Seven Unutmaz*, *Dil Yarası*, *Mavi Mavi*, *Gülüm Benim* and *Allahım Sen Bilirsin*, hero's family or his friends want him to give up his relationship with the heroine because of the class difference; in *Batsın Bu Dünya*, *Hatasız Kul Olmaz*, *Sabuha*, *Isyankâr*, and *Çile*, because of some traditional values or social norms, a conflict occurs between the hero and his environment (sometimes the heroine herself). Such conflicts, in these films, add to the encoding of 'poorness' as the 'impossibility' because the hero remains 'lonely' (at least for a certain period of time in the story) and thus his 'poorness' is underlined.

There are usually a couple of scenes which show *conflict* in every film, therefore it is hard to define a strict pattern which is the same in all of them in terms of how they are combined with other functions. However, at least, it can be said that *conflict* in which the hero and/or the heroine come face to face with the chief villain(s) generally precedes *determination* and *blow*. In other words, it is after *conflict* that the audience see how determined the hero and/or the heroine are to be together and what kind of *blow(s)* the villain delivers from which they suffer a lot.

4.2.5 Determination

This is one of the functions which is common to all arabesk films. Although his 'poorness' as an impossibility has been revealed, the hero (and the heroine) does not give up the struggle against the villain(s)

because his 'poorness', at the same time, comes out to be the necessity for the realization of 'love'. *Determination* shows that this paradoxical existence of the hero firstly paves the way for a desire to resist against rather than to submit to the villainy. *Determination* is the first and shared reaction of the hero and the heroine against the villainy. However, in most of these films, they lose this strong emotional tie because of some misunderstandings or deceptions.

4.2.6 Concealment and Revelation

Concealment is a function used in most of arabesk films which causes the hero and the heroine to separate. The hero and the heroine *decide to separate* not because they give up struggling against the villainy, but because one of them thinks that the other does not love him/her any more. Such a thought stems from either a misunderstanding⁴¹ or a deception⁴². There are two types of deception. Either the hero or the heroine deceives the other one because his/her life or freedom is in danger, or the villain deceives the hero/heroine or both to separate them. But in all cases, the villain(s), though sometimes indirectly, takes part in the separation of the lovers. For instance, the heroine in *Sabuha* coincidentally sees the hero with a woman and thinks that she is his lover; therefore, the heroine leaves the hero. However, the hero is still in love with the heroine. Moreover, the audience know that the reason why the hero left his village and came to İstanbul, where he met with this woman, is related to the villain's killing of the hero's father and mother. In *Dil Yarası*, the heroine deceives her lover, the hero, by saying that "You can't make me give up my life just

⁴¹ As in *Bir Teselli Ver*, *Benim Gibi Sevenler*, *Sabuha*, *Çile*, *Utaniyorum*, *Haram Oldu*, *Gülüm Benim*, *Ayrılamam*, *Aşkınsın*, *Acı* and *Sensiz Yaşıyorum*.

⁴² As in *Bir Teselli Ver*, *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, *Derbeder*, *Batan Güneş*, *Son Sabah*, *Yuvasız Kuşlar*, *İsyankâr*, *Durdurun Dünyayı*, *Dil Yarası*, *Mavi Mavi*, *Öksüzler* and *Allahım Sen Bilirsin*.

for you. I'm a rich girl from İstanbul. What can somebody like you offer me? What do you want me to do? Shall I swap my Mercedes for a donkey? Everybody should stay where they belong. Go back to your own life; you must miss it" (Appendix – 4). The hero leaves her. However, the heroine is actually lying. She deceives the hero because her father threatens her with killing the hero if she did not put an end to her relationship with him. In *Batan Güneş*, the villain deceives both the hero and the heroine. He tells the hero that the hero's brother and the heroine became lovers while he was away. The villain also says to the heroine that the hero has come from Germany with another woman, who is his wife. Thus, the hero and heroine separate. What is the most striking thing about *concealment* is that the hero and the heroine, in spite of their deep and passionate love, easily believe in the deceiver or what they coincidentally see. They do not question whether they might have misunderstood or not, or whether the deceiver is telling the truth or not. *Concealment* creates a confusion, awakens curiosity and increases tension on the part of the audience because the situation is in fact so simple that to misunderstand or to be deceived is almost unbelievable, especially when the strong emotional tie between the hero and heroine is concerned. This confusion, curiosity and tension, on the one hand, makes the film be watched more easily. Because arabesk films are quite similar to each other, the expectation for *revelation* created through *concealment* gives each film an additional energy to be watched. In all the films where *concealment* is used as a function, *revelation* also takes place through which the hero and the heroine realize the misunderstanding or deception, so that *love* as a personal relationship between these two people regains its unproblematic status, although it does not necessarily lead to the re-unity of the lovers.

As mentioned before, "suspenseful excitement" and "seemingly miraculous coincidence" are among the essentials of the melodramatic incidence. *Concealment* also serves for exaggerating or "dwelling-upon"

the emotions, which is argued to be one of the essential strategies of melodrama. These melodramatic characteristics of arabesk films, which are amplified through *concealment*, pave the way for the criticisms against them according to which, in these films, ‘reality’ is distorted and ‘fate’, rather than actual social problems, is presented to be responsible for all sufferings. As it has been mentioned regarding melodramatic imagination, all sufferings in arabesk films can be considered a symbolic representation of social conflicts. Therefore, it can be said that, arabesk films, like other melodramas, do not distort ‘reality’ but they represent the mental-emotional universe of the lower classes which is nourished by their real life experiences. In fourteen of the thirty films analyzed in this study (*Batsın Bu Dünya, Benim Gibi Sevenler, Derbeder, Batan Güneş, Seven Unutmaz, Yuvasız Kuşlar, Kara Yazma, İsyankâr, Çile, Kul Kuldân Beter, Öksüzler, Gülüm Benim, Ayrılamam* and *Acı*), the word ‘fate’ is uttered (I did not take into consideration the songs. The interaction between the narrative of the film and the songs will be considered while examining *songs* as a function). In addition to the fact that the audience already know it is the villainy, but not an unknown reason, like ‘fate’, lying behind the separation of the lovers as well as that *concealment* always ends in *revelation*, in some films, the utterance of ‘fate’ as an abstract cause is directly linked with the ‘villainy’ as a concrete reason of the sufferings. The following dialogue between the hero and the heroine (who is about to die) in *Derbeder*, after *revelation*, is an example:

- (*heroine*) Fate has drawn us apart, Ferdi [the hero].
- (*hero*) No İpek [the heroine], you will live!
- (*heroine*) They drew us apart. They damaged our great love (*The audience know to whom this ‘They’ refers to – the heroine’s ‘rich’ father and the hero’s ‘rich’ friend*). (Appendix A – 5)

Likewise, at the end of *Kul Kuldân Beter*, when the heroine is killed by the villain (the ‘rich’ boss of the heroine) the hero, who is also about to die, says to his friend that “Ergun! We were just about to marry. They

didn't let us live again. They hurt us again. What kind of a fate is this? Don't we deserve to live? Is one person worse than the other?" (Appendix A – 6). Similar examples can be given from some other films, in which 'fate' is not encoded as an unknown phenomenon but rather the villain is pointed out as the obvious and concrete representative of what is meant by 'fate'. Therefore, I suggest, the following statement by Stokes, which also summarizes on which basis 'arabesk culture' is criticized in general, does not seem quite agreeable: "The arabesk drama describes a situation in which the real enemy is fate" (1992: 154). Although somewhere in the middle of the story, the hero and the heroine separate as a result of a "seemingly miraculous coincidence" and a concomitant misunderstanding, or of their unexpected trust in the deceiver, they, in the end, realize the villainy lying behind their separation (*revelation*), so that coincidences are not presented to be the ultimate reason for their sufferings. Moreover, the audience already know that the villain, but not 'fate' or a 'miraculous coincidence', is actually responsible for their separation, although the hero and the heroine have not realized it yet. Thus, as long as *concealment* is preserved within the course of actions (i.e. until *revelation* takes place), the increasing tension on the part of the audience causes the reaction against the villain to increase, as well. Exaggeration through *concealment* emphasizes further the conflict between the hero and the villain, which has been encoded primarily as a class conflict since the very beginning of the narrative, rather than emphasizing 'fate' as ultimately responsible for the separation of the hero and the heroine, because after *revelation*, the villain remains to be the ultimate reason for *blow(s)*, the villainous act(s) because of which the hero and heroine suffer a lot, their relationship is destroyed and, in some films, they never come together again.

4.2.7 Blow

Throughout the films, arabesk hero and heroine become subject to several *blows* coming from one or more villainous characters. Table 2 shows what kind of *blows* (caused by the villain) the hero and heroine suffer from in these thirty films. As mentioned above, although some coincidences are also effective on the separation of the lovers, at the end of the story, it is always the chief villain that turns out to be the primarily responsible person for their sufferings. The direct target of *blow*, which comes from the chief villain, may be the livelihood, the freedom, the honour or the life of the hero; but, it ultimately threatens the relationship between the hero and the heroine. By the end of the film, the hero is faced with the ultimate *blow* of the chief villain. This is the final part of the narrative.

4.2.8 Dénouement

Dénouement is a literary term which is defined as follows: “It may be the event or events following the major climax of a plot, or the unravelling of a plot’s complications at the end of a story or play” (Cuddon, 1992: 215). In another definition of the term, it is emphasized that “[dénouement] usually takes place in the final chapter or scene, after the climax is over. . . . [and, it] occurs only after all the conflicts have been resolved” (Wheeler). In almost all of arabesk films analyzed here, the villain is somehow punished at the end⁴³, but in most of them

⁴³ Except for *Gülüm Benim*, *Aşksın* and *Allahım Sen Bilirsin*.

Table 2: Blows From Which the Hero and Heroine Suffer

	<i>Sensiz Yaşıyorum</i>	<i>Allahım Sen Bilirsin</i>	<i>Acı</i>	<i>Aşksın</i>	<i>Ayrılamam</i>	<i>Vurmam</i>	<i>Gülüm Benim</i>	<i>Öksüzler</i>	<i>Kul Kuldun Beter</i>	<i>Mavi Mavi</i>	<i>Harım Oldu</i>	<i>Utaniyorum</i>	<i>Dil Yarası</i>	<i>Çile</i>	<i>Huzurum Kalmadı</i>	<i>Durdurun Dünyayı</i>	<i>İsyankâr</i>	<i>Kara Yazma</i>	<i>Yuvasız Kuşlar</i>	<i>Seven Unutmaz</i>	<i>Sabuha</i>	<i>Son Sabah</i>	<i>Batan Güneş</i>	<i>Hatasız Kul Olmaz</i>	<i>Derbeder</i>	<i>Benim Gibi Sevenler</i>	<i>Batsın Bu Dünya</i>	<i>Dertler Benim Olsun</i>	<i>Ben Doğarken Olmuştum</i>	<i>Bir Teselli Ver</i>	
1	x	x			x												x	x	x	x				x							
2	x	x	x					x						x	x						x					x					
3									x			x			x	x	x	x	x			x					x		x		
4							x		x		x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x			
5	x							x		x													x		x						

- 1- Threatening the livelihood (of the hero)
- 2- Threatening the freedom (of the hero with calling the police etc.)
- 3- Threatening the honour (of the hero and heroine) – Suicide (of the heroine)
- 4- Beating and/or (attempt for) killing (the hero, one of his friends etc.)
- 5- Deception (of the hero and/or heroine)

the hero and the heroine are not rewarded⁴⁴. So, the poetic justice in melodramas, which was defined, in the previous chapter, as ‘being rewarded of the good and being punished of the evil’ at the end of the narrative, does not take place in many of arabesk films or it does only partially. What happens to the hero, the heroine, and the villain(s) at the end of these thirty films is shown at Table 3. Because the audience’s expectation for the realization of the poetic justice is not satisfied most of the time, at the end, they are not given a chance to be released from their anger towards the villainy. In that sense, most of arabesk films do not have a cathartic⁴⁵ *dénouement*. What I would further suggest as regards *dénouement* in arabesk films is that, although the hero and the villain come face to face with each other “at the end of” the film, as the definition of the term suggests, which creates an expectation on the part of the audience for the resolution of the conflict between them, this expectation is not satisfied in most of the films. In other words, the audience is not provided with a ‘sense of ending’. *Dénouement* is left half finished because the narration of the story is cut at such a point that the audience is left with the feeling of discomfort. I will try to clarify what I call ‘half finished *dénouement*’ in the arabesk films by giving some examples: in *Dertler Benim Olsun*, after being raped by the villain, the

⁴⁴ Except for *Bir Teselli Ver*, *Batsın Bu Dünya*, *Benim Gibi Sevenler*, *Hatasız Kul Olmaz*, *Batan Güneş*, *Son Sabah*, *Sabuha*, *Seven Unutmaz*, *Yuvasız Kuşlar*, *Öksüzler* and *Sensiz Yaşıyorum*. These films have ‘happy endings’. The hero and the heroine (in *Öksüzler* the siblings) come together and their coming together turns out to be the punishment of the villain(s). However, in some of these films (especially in *Bir Teselli Ver*, *Batsın Bu Dünya*, *Son Sabah*, *Yuvasız Kuşlar*, *Öksüzler* and *Sensiz Yaşıyorum*), too, the villainy, though somehow punished, may remain to be not totally defeated. For instance, in *Batsın Bu Dünya*, the hero kills the villain, but the the situation of the villain’s father, who is presented as one of the villainous characters as being primarily responsible for the sufferings of the hero and heroine, is not shown at the end of the film. Therefore, although ‘the villain’ (who rapes the heroine) is defeated, ‘the villainy’ (encoded as ‘richness’ throughout the film, one of the primary representatives of which is the villain’s father) remains untouched when the film is over. That is why *dénouement* in most of arabesk films, I would suggest, are left ‘half finished’.

⁴⁵ Cathartic effect is explained as follows: “the tragedy, having aroused powerful feelings in the spectator, has also a therapeutic effect; after the storm and climax there comes a sense of release from tension, of calm” (Cuddon: 115). What I suggest regarding arabesk films is that such “a therapeutic effect” is rarely experienced in these films.

Table 3: The Situation the Hero, the Heroine and the Villain Are In at the End of the Films

	<i>Sensiz Yaşıyorum</i>	<i>Allahım Sen Bilirsin</i>	<i>Acı</i>	<i>Aşksın</i>	<i>Ayrılamam</i>	<i>Vurmayın</i>	<i>Gülüm Benim</i>	<i>Öksüzler</i>	<i>Kul Kıldan Beter</i>	<i>Mavi Mavi</i>	<i>Haram Oldu</i>	<i>Utanıyorum</i>	<i>Dil Yarası</i>	<i>Çile</i>	<i>Huzurum Kalmadı</i>	<i>Durdurun Dünyayı</i>	<i>İsyankar</i>	<i>Kara Yazma</i>	<i>Yuvasız Kuşlar</i>	<i>Seven Unutmaz</i>	<i>Sabuha</i>	<i>Son Sabah</i>	<i>Batan Güneş</i>	<i>Hatasız Kul Olmaz</i>	<i>Derbeder</i>	<i>Benim Gibi Sevenler</i>	<i>Batsın Bu Dünya</i>	<i>Dertler Benim Olsun</i>	<i>Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm</i>	<i>Bir Teselli Ver</i>
1			x	x			x		x		x		x	x			x		x									x		
2							x		x			x			x			x							x					
3								x	x	x		x			x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
4								x												x	x	x	x	x		x	x			

- 1- The hero dies.
- 2- The heroine dies.
- 3- 'The villain' dies (or is punished by some other way).
- 4- The hero and the heroine reunite.

heroine gets married with him. In the morning, when they are getting prepared for the honeymoon, the hero appears and kills the villain on the street before the heroine's eyes. After killing the villain, the hero slowly walks away. During all these events, the hero and the heroine do not talk to or touch each other. The heroine just stands there and looks at the hero while he is walking away. And the film ends at that point. The heroine could have run after the hero and say, for instance, "I will wait for you" (because he will probably be imprisoned), but she does not. Or, the hero could have said to the heroine that "we cannot be together any more because ...", but he does not. The film ends at a point when both of them can still be seen within the same frame. We cannot understand whether they are totally separated or not. At least one last conclusive remark seems to be missing in the narrative. At the end of *Seven Unutmaz*, the hero blinds himself and leaves the heroine's home. The heroine runs after him and catches him on the street. Meanwhile, the heroine's father (the villain) comes and says to her daughter that "Stop Esen, or I will kill him!" (Appendix A – 7). But, the heroine does not listen to his father, embraces the hero and tells him that "We will always be together, Hakkı [the hero]; all I need is your love" (Appendix A – 8). While she is uttering these words, his father stands just behind them with a gun in his hand. Although he seems to have understood that he cannot prevent his daughter from loving the hero, we cannot still be sure if he will let them stay together. The story is cut at that point when the hero (whose eyes are still bleeding)-the heroine and the villain are shown at the opposite sides of the same frame, and the film ends through re-presentation of certain scenes from the film⁴⁶. In *Haram Oldu*, the heroine decides to go to Germany where

⁴⁶ A direct comparison between two films may be more clarifying. At the end of *Batan Güneş*, the hero kills the villain and prevents the heroine from committing suicide; and, immediately after that, we see the hero and the heroine as bride and groom, and they, including the hero's family, get prepared to have a wedding photo taken. Meanwhile, the heroine's father (another villainous character of the film, similar to the heroine's father in *Seven Unutmaz*) and mother come there. The heroine's father seems to feel

her mother lives. In the final scene, the hero and the heroine come to the train station. The heroine wants the hero to buy some newspapers for her. While buying newspapers, the hero sees that his book is published, right at that moment the train departs. They cannot say their last words (“we will never see each other again”, or “we will soon be together because I love you” etc.) to each other before leaving. He buys the book and runs after the train shouting happily to his lover: “Şerife [his lover]! My book! My book has been published!”. Meanwhile, the hero’s wife (one of the villainous characters) comes to the station and shoots the hero while he is running. The heroine sees the hero’s wife before she shoots the hero but he cannot hear her voice because the train is moving. The hero dies, and the film ends at that point. In *Allahım Sen Bilirsin*, after the hero learns that the heroine has deceived him (throughout the film, the hero thinks that she is a worker who is in love with him, but actually she is a journalist who is doing a research about the lives of the workers), he decides to kill her. He goes to her home with a knife in his pocket. He catches the heroine and tells her “Why, why did you do that to me? I offered you my innocent love. But you played with me. You broke my heart. Do you find it that easy to play with people?” (Appendix A – 9). Right at the moment he would kill her, the heroine’s little ‘disabled’ son comes and says to him that “Don’t do it, please don’t leave me without a mother. This is useless. I will be a writer when I grow up. I will write your story. I will write about my mom. I will write about the drivers who made me like this. I will write about unfair acts. Please don’t do anything to hurt her!” (Appendix A – 10).

a big regret for the things he did in the past. When the hero sees them, he goes and brings them to the others’ side, so, everyone is included in this wedding photo, which somehow gives a message that “they lived happily ever after”. This *dénouement* creates a ‘sense of ending’ on the part of the audience, because, here, all conflicts seem to be resolved and the positions of the major figures of the film (the hero, the heroine, the villain, the other villainous character etc.) in terms of their relationship with each other and their reactions towards the final situation of the story do not remain to be uncertain when the film is over. What I suggest as to be missing in most of arabesk films is such a conclusion which would create a feeling of satisfaction or ease on the part of the audience.

The hero throws the knife and starts to walk away. We see his face full of grief and pain, while the heroine and his son are standing at the background. The film ends at that point. *Dénouement*, in most of arabesk films, has a similar characteristic in that it cuts the story at a point when a final, concluding remark has not been said yet, and thus, leaves the audience with discomfort. Therefore, it can be said that, in general, at the end of arabesk films (even including some films with a seemingly 'happy ending' such as *Batsın Bu Dünya*, *Son Sabah* and *Öksüzler*) the conflict between 'the goodness' and 'the villainy', which is encoded as a conflict between 'poorness' and 'richness', remains unsolved. Thus, the ambivalence of arabesk narrative, which is underlined throughout the narrative by the 'poorness' encoded both as a 'possibility' and an 'impossibility', is emphasized at the end of the films, too, because of 'partially realized poetic justice' and 'half-finished *dénouement*'. I do not argue that *dénouement* is left half-finished by the directors of arabesk films certainly on purpose. There may even be some technical reasons behind that. Nevertheless, however, such *dénouements* are observed in many arabesk films and, I suggest that, they create a feeling of discomfort on the part of the audience.

4.2.9 Arabesk Songs

Arabesk songs in arabesk films do not only belong to the level of the narration, i.e. they are not only used to support the emotional atmosphere established through the course of actions, but they are also included in the textual as well as the story level in their own rights. That is why I regard them as one of the functions that have to be taken into account in the analysis of arabesk films. Undoubtedly, the first criterion on the basis of which 'arabesk films' are grouped together is the songs which are used in all of them. In other words, these films are called

'arabesk' because 'arabesk singers' act and 'arabesk songs'⁴⁷ are used in them⁴⁸. Therefore, the interrelationship between the narrative of the songs and that of the films is a very significant point which has to be touched upon in an analysis of arabesk films. 'Intertextuality' is a key term that can help us clarify this interrelationship. Intertextuality is [a] term coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966 to denote the interdependence of literary texts, the interdependence of any one literary text with all those that have gone before it. Her contention was that a literary text is not an isolated phenomenon but is made up of a mosaic of quotations, and that any text is the 'absorption and transformation of another'; however, intertextuality "is not connected with the study of sources" or it has nothing to do with the 'effect' of a writer on another writer; therefore, Kristeva uses another term, "transposition" in order to point "not merely to the way texts echo each other but to the way that discourses or sign systems are transposed into one another – so that meanings in one kind of discourse are overlaid with meanings from another kind of discourse" (Cuddon, 1992: 424). This is what I would suggest regarding the use of arabesk songs in these films: as the term 'intertextuality' points out, the meanings created through arabesk songs are overlaid with the meanings created through arabesk films, and vice versa⁴⁹. The

⁴⁷ The actor-singer (the hero) sings, in some films, *türkü* (folk song) in addition to arabesk songs.

⁴⁸ In arabesk films, some other kinds of music are also used. Konuralp mentions this type of music as the *döşeme müzik*. He states that the *döşeme müzik* is a term coined by Nedim Otyam, a Turkish composer, which refers to the musics used in the melodramas (including arabesk films) that are taken from several, mostly foreign, records and which accompany the scenes of fighting, pursuing, tension etc. (1999: 65). Konuralp argues that the use of *döşeme müzik* in arabesk films is more widespread compared to the classical Yeşilçam melodramas because, in arabesk films, using such scenes of violence and tension are more common (1999: 68). In this study I will only deal with the songs, not with the *döşeme müzik*, used in arabesk films.

⁴⁹ While talking about intertextuality between arabesk films and arabesk songs, intertextuality between arabesk films and the Yeşilçam melodramas, Turkish popular theatre and traditional folk narratives has to be mentioned, as well, because not only arabesk songs but also these sources have significant effects on the construction of the narrative in arabesk films as well as on the perception of it by the audience. When the similarities between the Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films in terms of their

songs are produced before they are used in arabesk films⁵⁰. In other words, most of the audiences probably know the songs in advance; they have already listened to it in their everyday lives (at home, on the street, at work etc.) when they come to the cinema; they are already familiar with the narrative of the songs – the meanings as they are encoded in a musical form, the emotional atmosphere of them etc. – and the reception of these narratives as a musical form by the audiences/the listeners has already been affected by their real life experiences. In arabesk films, the narratives of the songs are intertwined with the narratives of the films, so that the meanings which are previously created in one encoding system (music) are transmitted to another encoding system (cinema); they are articulated with and inevitably affect the meanings created through the film. At the same time, however, the meanings in the songs are also affected by the meanings in the films, and thus, they become subject to change. Therefore, ‘intertextuality’ between arabesk songs and arabesk films does not indicate that the meaning of a signifier, as it is encoded in a song, is totally maintained in the encoding system of the film in which this song is used; but, it rather means that, when the song is used within the narrative of a film, the meaning of that signifier does inevitably change because of the interaction between these two

generic features are taken into account, it becomes obvious that arabesk films were made to a large extent on the basis of the conventions which were previously used in the Yeşilçam melodramas. Moreover, as Yeşil remarks, “Yeşilçam’s oldest sources [are] said to be *Ortaoyunu*, *Karagöz* and *Tuluat* . . . which [use] stereotypical character figurations. In addition, . . . Yeşilçam adapted the tales of Keloğlan, which ‘symbolizes the struggle of an ordinary person against the upper classes’” (2004: 24). Thus, many elements with which the audience are already familiar from the Yeşilçam melodramas, popular theatre and folk narratives are used and transposed into a new context in arabesk films.

⁵⁰ Stokes makes a mistake regarding this point. He states that “[s]ongs which achieve the status of popular hits, giving their name to the film and cassette of the film music with which they are associated, typically occur in the middle of the film” (1992: 142). However, the songs are composed and sold in the market prior to the production of the films. In other words, these songs are not a part of the soundtrack. On the contrary, when a song becomes popular, a film is shot and the title of this popular hit is used as the title of the film.

encoding systems. Hence, the reception of the meanings of the songs never remains the same any more once the songs are used within the narrative of the film; in other words, the meanings created through the narrative of the film are, in turn, articulated with the meanings of the songs, and they affect the listening process of the songs ever after⁵¹. One of the major concerns in this study is to see into what kind of a story arabesk songs are transposed. Once they are used as an integral element of the films, the 'abstract' nature of lyrics is concretized. For instance, 'fate' is addressed in some arabesk songs as the source of the grief, which is one of the dominant feelings in these songs. When the song becomes a part of the film narrative, however, the source of the sad feelings, which are embedded in the music and lyrics of the song, turns out to be quite concrete – the villain(s). Therefore, 'fate' is not encoded as something 'abstract' any more, but it also refers to 'the villainy' because of which, the voice in the song (i.e. the hero of the film) suffers a lot.

In this analysis, I do not suggest that the combination of these nine functions with one another is always identical in every arabesk film. I suggest, however, that there are certain regularities in terms of how these significant elements of the film narrative are combined, which affect the meanings that can be derived from the film as a whole by the audience. One of my major conclusions is that the primary paradigm/binary opposition in arabesk films is the one between 'the poor' and 'the rich'. When we consider the functions discussed above, we see that arabesk films possess the generic features of melodramas. As in melodramas, the sufferings of the hero and the heroine turn out to be a metaphorical representation of the social conflicts. However, I would suggest, because of the emphasis on the 'poorness' both as a

⁵¹ 'Intertextuality' as a mutual process between arabesk songs and arabesk films becomes more meaningful when it is concerned that the songs used in the films are usually the most well-known or the hit songs,. Most of the time, the title of the film is at the same time the title of the hit song.

'possibility' and as an 'impossibility' in arabesk films i.e. because of this ambivalent characteristic which makes them 'arabesk', the class conflict in arabesk films is presented more as a 'social problem' compared to the more personal representation of the class conflict in the Yeşilçam melodramas. Arabesk films identify the hero primarily through his 'poorness'. He is encoded as a 'type' (i.e., representative of a social group) rather than as a 'character'; in other words, not the 'individual', but 'social' characteristics of his identity (such as his 'poorness') is used in the presentation of the hero as well as other figures (the heroine, the villain etc.); that is why 'Us'/'Them' opposition is frequently uttered in these films to refer to the conflict between the protagonists and the antagonists. In the following chapter, I will give concrete examples as regards the binary opposition between 'Us' and 'Them' in arabesk films.

CHAPTER V

THE DICHOTOMIZED WORLD OF ARABESK MELODRAMA: 'US'/'THEM' PARADIGM

This chapter is devoted to the analysis of the paradigmatic structure in arabesk films. Firstly, I will dwell on what the paradigmatic analysis is generally about and how I will make use of this method. In this chapter, I would basically argue that 'Us'/'Them' opposition, which is frequently uttered in arabesk films, is established primarily on the basis of the poor/rich paradigm; thus, the conflict between protagonist(s) and antagonist(s) is encoded, above all, as a class conflict between these 'types' which seem to represent a social group rather than being autonomous 'individuals'. In *The Uses of Literacy*, Richard Hoggart states that

[p]resumably most groups gain some of their strength from their exclusiveness, from a sense of people outside who are not 'Us'. How does this express itself in working-class people? I have emphasised the strength of home and neighbourhood, and have suggested that this strength arises partly from a feeling that the world outside is strange and often unhelpful, that it has most of the counters stacked on its side, that to meet it on its own terms is difficult. One may call this, making use of a word commonly used by the working-classes, the world of 'Them'. . . . To the very poor, especially, they compose a shadowy but numerous and powerful group affecting their lives at almost every point: the world is divided into 'Them' and 'Us'. (1966: 62)

According to John Hill "the 'them' and 'us' attitude [is] characteristic of certain forms of working-class consciousness" (1986: 143), and this

attitude can be observed in most of arabesk films analyzed in this study. Actually this feature can be observed in the Yeşilçam melodramas, as well, since, as mentioned before, manicheanism or “dichotomizing of the world” is within the constitutional strategies of melodrama. Because each melodramatic figure appears to be a ‘type’, not a ‘character’, the prominent trait of whom “is grasped as representative of a whole group rather than as a purely individual quality”, the opposition between the protagonist and the antagonist almost automatically divides the world of melodrama into two hostile camps, ‘Us’ and ‘Them’, even though the main conflict is most of the time personal. I will try to show how and on the basis of which identity traits ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ opposition is encoded in arabesk films. I will specifically attempt to make it clear that the class opposition constitutes one of the primary paradigms in these films; in other words, I will argue that in the construction of ‘Us’/‘Them’ dichotomy, the class identities of the hero, the heroine, the villain and their environment play a significant role. The most important indicator of the class character of ‘Us’/‘Them’ opposition is the identification of these two social groupings primarily on the basis of ‘poorness’/‘richness’ dichotomy. One may ask if the representation of the hero as being poor and the representation of the villain as being rich is enough to conclude that arabesk films problematize the class conflict. To deal with this question we have to consider a broader one: How can class or class conflict be represented? Therefore, before the analysis, I will discuss on the question how ‘class’ can be represented. And, following the analysis, I will consider the relationship between the poor/rich paradigm and other paradigms that are frequently observed in arabesk films, and examine how class issues are incorporated into other socio-cultural issues which are problematized in these films.

5.1 Paradigmatic Analysis

Paradigmatic analysis is a way of analyzing texts on the basis of discovering which “signs are organized into codes” (Fiske, 1990: 56), i.e., which particular signs are selected from a set of signs instead of others and/or which signs are considered as superior to the others. Chandler defines a paradigm as “a set of associated signifiers or signifieds [or both] which are all members of some defining category, but in which each is significantly different” (2003: 80). From this definition, the following can be inferred as regards a paradigm: Firstly, a paradigm is composed of signifying units which are associated with each other. Chandler suggests that this association is formed on the basis of a particular function each of these units can fulfill in the same context; so, “in a given context, one member of the paradigm set is structurally replaceable with another. The choice of one excludes the choice of another” (2003: 81). In other words, each unit in a paradigm is a substitute of others. Secondly, this substitution, however, is not a positive but a negative one because these units are different from one another, i.e., they are ‘antonymous’. Saussure’s following remarks reveal the logic behind suggesting that the signifying elements in a paradigm are oppositionally associated with each other: “concepts are purely differential and not defined by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system. Their most precise characteristic is in being what the others are not” (qtd. in Berger, 1980: 10). Therefore, choosing one signifier instead of another one in the same context deeply affects the meaning. As Fiske states “where there is choice there is meaning, and the meaning of what was chosen is determined by the meaning of what was not” (1990: 58).

Paradigmatic relationships foster the preferred reading because the elements of a binary opposition are not equally weighted. In other words, it is through these binary oppositions, which construct the hidden

(or one can say 'ideological') meanings of the narratives, that the readers /audiences are positioned "to privilege one set of values and meanings over the other" (Chandler, 2003: 108). Chandler argues that the first term in a binary opposition "is typically dominant . . . and therefore seems to be 'neutral', 'normal' and 'natural'. It is thus 'transparent' – drawing no attention to its invisibly privileged status" (2003: 112), whereas the second term is different, deviational and subordinate. "The very idea of a binary opposition implies a centring or imposition of order" (Cuddon, 1992: 82). Fiske holds that, even if it is not always explicit, "there is none the less an unspoken consensus within [a] culture" (1990: 109) which makes the members of this culture be aware of the common meanings that can be derived from a paradigmatic relationship; in other words, paradigms are culture-specific. Therefore, paradigmatic relations can be "held '*in absentia*': in the absence from a specific text of alternative signifiers from the same paradigm" (Chandler, 2003: 99). Chandler argues that paradigmatic units can be represented in a text even though they are absent from it, because, the relationship between signifiers is assumed to be taken-for-granted or obvious; therefore, while analyzing such "a profoundly ideological absence which helps to position the text's readers" as one of the "people like us" (2003: 99), one should be aware of the fact that this 'Us' is positioned in opposition to 'Them' and this association between 'Us' and 'Them' is culture-specific. In this chapter, I would like to examine how this 'Us'/'Them' opposition is encoded through the use of certain layered paradigms among which the poor/rich dichotomy plays a central role in arabesk films so as to see how the audience are positioned to watch the films from a class-based perspective.

5.2 The Representation of Class

“There is no homogeneous working class as such which is capable of representation” (Bromley, 2000: 54). As Thompson points out, class is not “a thing” (1963: 10). He considers class as “a relationship, and not a thing” (1963: 11), “an historical phenomenon, unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events, both in the raw material of experience and in consciousness” (1963: 9). Class is not a “structure”, or even a “category”, into which the people were born and by which they are conditioned once and for ever. Class is rather “an active process, which owes as much to agency as to conditioning” (1963: 9). It refers to “an historical phenomenon” which is always in a state of “making”:

If we stop history at a given point, then there are no classes but simply a multitude of individuals with a multitude of experiences. But if we watch these men over an adequate period of social change, we observe patterns in their relationships, their ideas, and their institutions. Class is defined by men as they live their own history, and, in the end, this is its only definition. (Thompson, 1963: 11)

Thompson offers a dynamic conception of class instead of the static, vulgar conceptions of class formations according to which “[t]he position of proletarians in their relation to capital produces the proletariat as a revolutionary class. Capital produces its own negation, its own ‘grave-digger’” (Johnson, 1979: 204). According to this simplistic view, there is a direct correlation between economic base and class consciousness. The base/superstructure model suggests that the working-class is essentially revolutionary because the economic base of the social structure necessitates so. If the working-class fails to accomplish this historical mission this is simply because bourgeoisie imposes false consciousness on it. Such a conception of class consciousness paves the way for the idea that the cultural representation of class conflict can

only be possible through showing the exploitation of the labour power by the capitalists and the conscious and determined resistance of proletariat against them. Therefore, the 'poor'/'rich' dichotomy by itself is not accepted to be enough for a 'true' representation of the class conflict. However, according to Gramsci,

[a] very common error is that of thinking that every social stratum elaborates its consciousness and its culture in the same way, with the same methods, namely the methods of the professional intellectuals. . . : this is an 'enlightenment' error. The ability of the professional intellectual adroitly to combine induction and deduction, to generalize without falling into empty formalism, to transport from one sphere of judgement to another certain criteria of discrimination, adapting them to new conditions, is a 'specialization', a 'qualification'. It is not something given to ordinary common sense. (2000: 388-389)

In Gramsci's view, common sense refers to the whole cultural formation of a particular social group or class which is quite complex because it is composed of many contradictory elements. "He defines 'common sense' as containing fragmentary ideas, a collage of opinions and beliefs that fails to be not only coherent but also critical" (Landy, 1994: 29). To him "[c]ritical self-consciousness means, historically and politically, the creation of an elite of intellectuals" (Gramsci, 2000: 334); "the active man-in-the-mass" who has a practical activity, however, "has no clear theoretical consciousness of his practical activity" (Gramsci, 2000: 333). In Hoggart's view, "[T]he working-class splitting of the world into 'Us' and 'Them' is . . . a symptom of their difficulty in meeting abstract or general questions" (1966: 86) because "working-class people are only rarely interested in theories or movements" (1966: 89); working-class life is "the 'dense and concrete' life, a life whose main stress is on the intimate, the sensory, the detailed and the personal" (1966: 88). That is probably why melodrama, characterized by its emotional, sensational and personal way of representing social conflicts, is the most popular genre or style. The 'rich' villain in arabesk

films does not need always to be a factory owner; he may well be the owner of the grocery store in the neighbourhood. Important thing is that there is an obvious difference the villain and the hero in terms of their material wealth. This feature of arabesk films gives us some clues about how class difference is perceived by the lower-class people. Their consciousness does not contain the analytical differences between 'the classes', which the intellectuals use to explain the class conflict. They are more concerned with the practical or immediate, everyday experiences while conceptualizing their and others' class positions. Their is an 'empirical consciousness'. They are 'poor' and everyone else whose life conditions are better than them is 'rich'. "If a person has a good job, I consider him rich" (2002: 388); "Today, a person who owns a house is rich" (2002: 445); "I hated everyone who has nice clothes" (2002: 345). These sentences, quoted from *Yoksulluk Hâlleri*, show the signifiers of 'being rich' in the eyes of 'the poor': having a job, a house or nice clothes. 'Us'/'Them' opposition is frequently uttered by the 'poor' interviewees in this book. As Necmi Erdoğan remarks, the answers the poor-subaltern give to the questions concerning social-political problems in most instances go and come between the particular, the individual, the empirical and ready-made formulas, slogans, common-sensical reasoning. The social-political problems are reduced to the area of the everyday, ordinary, direct experience by making references to the personal stories, worries, events (2002: 57). Thus, the general and abstract reasoning coincide with the particular and direct experience. In the poor's minds, being poor is a significant part of their social identity i.e. it is an indicator of their 'class' position. And such conception of class is no less a part of the intellectual activity than more analytical conceptions of class. Gramsci states that "[a]ll men are intellectuals . . . but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals" (2000: 304). Although he thinks that subalterns, like other social groups, need to create their own intellectuals, what he calls

“organic intellectuals”, in order to raise a critical self-consciousness, “[t]his is not to say that [subalterns] have no understanding of their condition” (Landy, 1994: 26). Therefore, the conceptions of class by the subaltern classes on the basis of their everyday or empirical consciousness, which show themselves through dichotomizing the world between ‘the poor’ and ‘the rich’ or ‘Us’ and ‘Them’, are as much explicable of the class conflict as more analytical conceptions of the issue. Landy states that, in Gramsci’s view, “the subaltern is neither bereft of awareness of nor passive in the face of social conditions” (1994: 14); he does not establish “criteria of good and bad, correct and incorrect” in “his examination of certain literary forms, especially mass and popular forms such as melodrama” (1994: 33). By drawing on Gramsci, I would suggest that there is no one, ‘correct’ way of representing class or class conflict. The ‘poor’/‘rich’ opposition in arabesk films as well as in the classical Yeşilçam melodramas represents how the class position of the ‘poor’ people is refracted through their empirical consciousness, although the exploitation of the labour or an overtly political opposition between lower and upper classes is not shown in these films. I do not argue that ‘poor’/ ‘rich’ opposition in arabesk films is the representation of the class conflict in Turkey, because, as mentioned above, there is not a thing, a social entity, which we can call ‘the class’ that can be represented as such. However, I would argue, this opposition shows us how the class conflict is understood and conceptualized in the minds of popular classes.

5.3 A Paradigmatic Analysis of Arabesk Films

In my analysis of the paradigmatic structure in arabesk films, I will focus on the functions *exposition*, *love*, *conflict*, *determination*, *blow* and *arabesk songs* in order to show how ‘Us’/‘Them’ opposition is primarily encoded on the basis of the poor/rich paradigm. In addition to

the poor/rich paradigm, there are also other paradigms which are used to depict the social identities of 'Us' and 'Them'. Therefore, not only a class opposition which is represented through the poor/rich dichotomy, but also a cultural opposition is revealed in these films through modern/traditional or urban/rural dichotomies. At the end of my analysis, I will examine the interrelationship between multiple paradigms in arabesk films.

5.3.1 Exposition

As was mentioned before, all arabesk films start by introducing the hero and his environment, i.e. by *exposition*. It is usually indicated, in the initial *exposition*, that the hero lives in an environment, which is mostly marked by solidarity and 'poorness'. The initial *exposition* has some important effects on how the audience gives meaning to the upcoming story. First of all, it introduces the hero and his environment before the events have not started yet. Therefore, the people presented at this stage are perceived in their 'normal' conditions of life, which are not affected yet by the intervention of any new or unexpected event that would actually give a start to the story. That is why *exposition* seems to be the most 'natural', though not 'realistic', part of arabesk films. *Exposition* provides the audience, what Kress and van Leeuwen call "modality markers". They state that although it is generally argued that "the camera does not lie", the questions of

truth and reality remain insecure, subject to doubt and uncertainty, and even more significantly, to contestation and struggle. Yet, as members of a society, we have to be able to make decisions on the basis of the information we receive, produce and exchange. And in so far as we are prepared to act, we have to trust some of the information we receive, and do so, to quite some extent, on the basis of modality markers in the message itself, on the basis of textual cues for what can be regarded as credible and what should be treated with circumspection. These

modality markers have been established by the groups within which we interact as relatively reliable guides to the truth or factuality of messages, and they have developed out of the central values, beliefs and social needs of that group. (2003: 159)

Thus, Kress and van Leeuwen hold, although modality markers do not show the 'reality', they produce "shared truths aligning readers or listeners [or, audiences] with some statements and distancing them from others. [They serve] to create an imaginary 'we' [or, 'Us']" (2003: 160).

The distinction between (initial) *exposition*, as a function that serves at the textual level, and the subsequent functions which belong to the story level, seems important in order to understand the construction of 'viewpoint'⁵² in arabesk films. The story does not begin before somehow⁵³ introducing the hero and his environment. Therefore the relationship between the audience and the hero (and his environment) is established before and outside the story. Thus, the audience is engaged in the story through and together with the hero and his environment. This structural feature of arabesk films, along with the existing image of the singer-actor, creates an intimacy between the audience and the hero (and his environment). In other words, the audience is also included in the hero's 'natural' environment which is presented during the initial *exposition* and which is marked, above all, with its 'poorness'. The construction of 'viewpoint', on the one hand, positions the audience, and, on the other hand, secures 'poor so humane' image of the hero. There are some films in which the poor hero becomes rich afterwards. These films are *Derbeder*, *Batan Güneş*, *Sabuha*, *Yuvasız Kuşlar*, *Kara Yazma*, *Durdurun Dünyayı*, *Öksüzler* and

⁵² A brief definition of this term is as follows: "The position of the narrator in relation to his story; thus the outlook from which the events are related" (Cuddon: 970).

⁵³ In *Benim Gibi Sevenler*, *Vurmayın*, *Ayrılamam* and *Sensiz Yaşıyorum*, the film begins at some point in the midst of the story and the past events are shown through flashbacks. Nevertheless, however, *exposition* of the hero and his environment precedes the presentation of the story.

Ayrılamam. However, in all these films, the hero continues to be suffering from the villainy, which has taken place mainly because of his 'poorness', even though he becomes rich afterwards. What is more striking as regards these films is that, whenever the hero gets rich (and in most of them famous, as well), he loses his girlfriend or family with whom they were together or loving each other before, though they are poor. It is a recurrent paradox in these films with no exception. Below are two examples in relation to this recurring motif: In *Derbeder*, it is shown in *exposition* that the hero and his girlfriend (the heroine) are together and happy. Soon after we understand that they cannot get married because the girl's father does not let them unless the hero pays *başlık parası*⁵⁴. The hero goes to Germany to work so that he can earn this money. When he gets the necessary amount of money and establishes some relationships which will open him the doors to be rich and famous, he turns back. However, because of the villain's lies (*concealment*), the hero and the heroine separate. He is now 'rich' but 'lonely'. In *Öksüzler*, three siblings are shown in the initial *exposition* who are homeless but happy of being together. Whenever they are found by the police they are adopted by different families and thus have to separate. The hero's material conditions of life are much better now and he soon becomes a famous singer, however, he suffers this time from not being together with his siblings because he does not know where they are. Thus, 'poorness' does not leave arabesk hero, at least until the very end of the film, although he becomes materially rich. By using the term 'poorness' instead of 'poverty' I attempt to make it clear that the suffering of arabesk hero and/or heroine is not only related to the lack of material well-being, but their becoming lonely or their somehow losing each other is also encoded as a part of their 'poorness' within the narrative of arabesk films. Therefore, by drawing on Bourdieu, I will suggest that by not "using the material poverty as the

⁵⁴ Money paid by the bridegroom to the bride's family.

sole measure of all suffering”, arabesk films do not keep “us from *seeing* and understanding a whole side of the suffering characteristic of a social order” (1999: 4). Generally speaking, then, the eye (the viewpoint) through which the story is filtered, gets belong not only to the ‘poor’ hero but also to his environment as well as to the audience; and, hence, the first term of the opposition ‘Us/Them’ is constructed actually during the initial *exposition*. After that point, all events are related to one another in light of the viewpoint of ‘Us’⁵⁵.

The villain is the complete opposite of the hero; therefore, he⁵⁶ belongs to ‘Them’. The opposition between the hero and the villain is constructed right at the moment when we see the villain for the first time; and, because this is at the same time generally the starting point of arabesk story, which is full of the suffering of the hero and heroine (and, in a sense, of the audience who are identified with them), ‘Them’ is encoded as the major source of all grief and pain.

In general, in urban context, the villain is presented as a businessman (a factory owner, for instance) whereas in rural context, he appears as an *ağa* (a land-owner). In both cases, the villain is primarily identified through his ‘richness’. That most of the villains are ‘rich’ does not mean, however, every ‘rich’ is a villainous character. Similar to the Yeşilçam melodramas, there are sometimes ‘good’ characters in arabesk films who are also ‘rich’ or, at least, who does not belong to the ‘poor’ environment of the hero. However, such characters are very rare in arabesk films compared to the classical melodramas of Yeşilçam. The representation of richness in the Turkish melodramas and in the popular imagination of the social reality are quite similar to each other. As Necmi Erdoğan puts it, richness, in most instances is not

⁵⁵ This is called “primary effect”: “The text can direct and control the reader’s [the audience’s] comprehension and attitudes by positioning *certain* items before others. . . . Thus, information and attitudes presented at an early stage of the text tend to encourage the reader [the audience] to interpret everything in their light” (Rimmon-Kenan, 1989: 120).

⁵⁶ The villain in arabesk films is most of the time male.

regarded as being composed of an essential villainy or a villainy-in-itself by the poor-subaltern, but the forms of behaviour and the way of life it leads to are considered villainous. The typical answers the poor-subaltern give to the questions regarding how they treat the rich are like 'some of them are good, some of them are bad' or 'they are not all alike'. However, he adds, "undoubtedly, in the narratives of the poor, the dominant image regarding the rich is negative" (2002: 35, my translation). Accordingly, most of the rich characters in arabesk films are villainous figures; therefore, the rare existence of rich but good characters does not distort the correlation between 'richness' and 'villainy' in these films. In *Bir Teselli Ver*, for instance, the heroine's uncle takes the side of the heroine and the hero contrary to the rest of the heroine's rich relatives. Actually, we do not know how rich he is. Nothing (his house, his family, his job etc.) is shown about him throughout the film. Nevertheless, he is the uncle of the heroine and seemingly does not belong to 'Us'. However, at the very first scene the 'good' uncle appears on the screen, we understand that he also hates the greed for money of the other members of the heroine's family and he, too, constructs 'Us/Them' opposition in his angry utterances towards her other uncle. Right at the moment when the heroine and her 'bad' uncle talks about money the 'good' uncle enters:

- (*Bad uncle, to the heroine*) What is wrong with more money?
- (*Good uncle enters the living room –his first appearance– and immediately joins the conversation*) Absolutely wrong! All badly wrong! (*angrily*) You will make her just like yourself. (*to the girl*) What kind of villainy is this evil inoculating you?
- (*the heroine, to the good uncle*) All about money, my uncle. All the time, *they* talk about money.
- (*Good uncle*) *They* prefer money to everything, my girl. (Appendix A – 11)

As is exemplified here, the rare existence of 'good' rich characters in arabesk films, too, can be used to underline how 'being rich' plays a central role in the construction of 'Us/Them' opposition in these films.

There are also some arabesk films, in which some villainous characters are not 'rich'. *Utaniyorum* is a remarkable example in that sense. This is the only film among thirty films analyzed here in which the chief villain comes from the lower class whereas the hero and the heroine lead an upper-class way of life. We learn at some point in the story that he was once working as a mechanic when he saw the hero's wife and fell in love with her. Behind his villainy against the hero and the heroine is this unrequited love. I do not think, however, that this film completely contradicts my suggestion about how in arabesk films 'Us/Them' opposition is established mainly around class conflict. Firstly, it is for sure that the richness of the hero is not the same with how the richness in other films is encoded; the rich character in this film is, above all, Ferdi Tayfur (he uses his real name in the film), who, by the virtue of his already-established image is still one of 'Us' in the eyes of the audience. His real-life history and his previous films function as an unseen *exposition* in the minds of the audiences, which reminds them that he knows what it is to be poor. Therefore, I think, such a film can be regarded as the continuation of Ferdi Tayfur's some previous films (*Batan Güneş* or *Yuvasız Kuşlar*, for instance), in which the hero (Ferdî Tayfur), who was once poor, becomes a famous singer and at the end comes together with the heroine. What actually challenges my study in this film is the identification of the villain. We know almost nothing about him. He is presented at the beginning as one of the mafiatic typologies with whom the audience is already familiar; therefore, he does not actually need to be identified further. What is interesting is that he could have been rich or at least he did not have to be a *tamirci* (mechanic – every mechanic may not be poor, of course; however, the connotations of this word, the context, and the psychological state of the man while uttering it, all add to the idea that he is a member of the lower-class while the woman – the hero's wife – is from the upper-class): While threatening her with a drawn knife, the villain whispers to the woman in

anger and lust “Look at my face! Look at carefully! I was the mechanic. You would come by your car. I wouldn’t let anyone repair your car. I’d do it myself. I’d caress your seat all nights long. Remember me, huh, remember me?” (Appendix A – 12). This lust and anger towards the rich woman seems to make the villain, I suggest, the ‘alter-ego’ (the double and counterpart) of the romantic hero (and of the audience who are identified with the latter) in *Benim Gibi Sevenler* who is also a mechanic and in love with a rich woman. I also suggest that the openly-established class opposition between the villain and the woman stems from the conventions of arabesk films according to which at the core of the main conflict always exists class opposition. In my opinion, these conventions affect not only the encoding but also the decoding process of the film. Therefore, the villain’s rape of the woman, at least in this scene, prevents him from being perceived as identical with the rich villains of other films who rape the ‘poor heroines’.

According to Meral Özbek, there is a difference between arabesk songs of the 1970s and those of the 1980s in terms of their musical structure, lyrics, consumer profiles and their social meanings. This difference, for her, is related to some factors such as arabesk songs’ becoming popular among middle classes along with their popularity among subaltern classes, the development of music industry, changes in the urban population in terms of their density, (social) quality and tastes, and overall changes in economic and political structure of the country (2002: 119-120). A significant difference between arabesk films of 1970s and that of 1980s, too, can be recognized especially when the relationship between the hero and the villain as well as *blow(s)* from which the hero and/or the heroine suffer are examined in all these thirty films. The films in which only a few villains⁵⁷ are responsible for the whole suffering of the hero and the heroine are mostly of the 1970s;

⁵⁷ It has to be kept in mind that these villains are not identified as individual characters but as ‘types’ whose common indicator is their richness. And, most commonly used labels of them are *fabrikatör* (factory owner) and *ağa* (land owner).

therefore, the hatred against villainy fostered by the narrative of these films is concentrated on these villains. In these films, there is already a close relationship (an 'employer-employee' relationship as in *Bir Teselli Ver*, *Batsın Bu Dünya*, *Derbeder*, *Batan Güneş*, *Sabuha*, *Seven Unutmaz*, *Yuvasız Kuşlar*, *Kara Yazma*, *İsyankâr*, *Huzurum Kalmadı* and *Haram Oldu*, and/or a private relationship as in *Benim Gibi Sevenler*, *Durdurun Dünyayı*, *Çile* and *Ayrılamam*) between the villain and the hero-heroine. Because of this close relationship, villainy has an open and direct effect on the material conditions as well as on moral values or psychological state of the hero-heroine. Similarly, in *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, *Dertler Benim Olsun*, *Hatasız Kul Olmaz* and *Son Sabah*, which were shot in the 1970s, one or a few villains directly threatens the livelihood of the hero. Thus, an obvious link is established between different kinds of *blows* (being raped, insulted, fired, beaten, killed etc. by the villain) that the hero and/or heroine are subject to. In other words, the villain who insults/beats/kills the hero mainly because of the love relationship between the hero and the heroine, is at the same time in such a position (the heroine's father⁵⁸, the hero's/the

⁵⁸ The 'father' of the hero or the heroine comes out to be a significant figure in most of arabesk films as a very central cause of the hero's and heroine's suffering. First of all, in all of these films either the hero or the heroine is, and sometimes both of them are fatherless. In some of them there is a direct, and in some others an indirect causal relationship between the villainy and the 'father' figure/fatherlessness. In *Bir Teselli Ver*, *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, *Dertler Benim Olsun*, *Batsın Bu Dünya*, *Benim Gibi Sevenler*, *Derbeder*, *Batan Güneş*, *Son Sabah*, *Seven Unutmaz*, *Kara Yazma*, *Dil Yarası* and *Gülüm Benim*, the father of the hero or heroine is either one of the chief villains or his/their supporter. Therefore, in these films, the hero and heroine struggle against the 'father' as well as the villains (if there are any other). If we do not take into account the examples in which the hero has no one from his real family at all (*Hatasız Kul Olmaz*, *Sabuha*, *İsyankâr*, *Durdurun Dünyayı*, *Huzurum Kalmadı*, *Utaniyorum*, *Haram Oldu*, *Kul Kuldun Beter*, *Öksüzler*, *Aşıksın* and *Sensiz Yaşıyorum*), in the rest of the films (*Yuvasız Kuşlar*, *Çile*, *Mavi Mavi*, *Vurmayın*, *Ayrılamam*, *Acı* and *Allahım Sen Bilirsin*) the hero's having no father is so apparent that his 'loneliness' or 'defencelessness' is symbolically linked to his 'fatherlessness'. The fatherlessness of the hero is even openly declared by an extradiegetic narrator ("a narrator who is 'above' or superior to the story" (Rimmon-Kenan, 1989: 94)) at the beginning of *Acı*: The film begins with the screams of a woman who is in labour. Right at the moment the child is born, the film freezes for a while and we hear a voice from background saying that "He is named Emrah. His mother's name is Fatma, his father's Adem. The father's name of all fatherless children is always Adem. Emrah, too, is born out of

heroine's boss, etc.) that he can directly affect the hero's and/or the heroine's material life conditions. In many arabesk films, like in melodramas, 'raping' or 'attempting to rape' is one of the common ways of showing the villainy. At this point when I am trying to make clear how the villain's representation as being very close to and directly effective on the hero's-heroine's life establishes a symbolic link between different kinds of *blows*, a concrete example might be very helpful: The villain in *Dertler Benim Olsun* is a rich young man. The hero and heroine are in love with each other and dreaming about their future at the beginning of the film. In the villain's first appearance, which is at the same time his first encounter with the heroine, we immediately understand that he is the villain because he is insolent, spoiled, impudent, and, above all (or we can definitely say 'because') he is rich, and also that he has coveted the heroine. The hero and the villain do not actually have a direct relationship. However, at some point in the story, the villain destroys the hero's stand where he sells watermelons, and soon after that, the villain rapes the heroine. The close temporal relationship between these two events in this film strengthens the symbolic link between the material suffering of the hero and the suffering due to losing his honour, which is, as Elsaesser remarks in relation to melodrama, a widely used and symbolic way of signifying the class conflict in melodramas.

wedlock. He has already had the burden of being 'a child of sin' on his shoulders" (Appendix A – 13). I suggest that 'the villain father' or 'fatherlessness' in arabesk films has some symbolic meanings, which is highly related to the 'loneliness' or 'defencelessness' the subaltern classes feel when they confront all kinds of suffering that are "characteristic of a social order". The primary organizer of the social order, especially when the economic structure (though it has been continuously changing since the 1980s) and political culture in Turkey is concerned, is the state. Therefore it is the state, in the eyes of the subaltern classes, which can restore the order and make their lives better. At the same time, however, there is always a mistrust in the state in popular minds, the reason of which, again, is the idea that the state is primarily responsible for this social order. '*Devlet Baba*' (State Father) is a very commonly used phrase in our daily political language. Besides, 'father' is the nickname of Süleyman Demirel, who has been very influential in the political life of Turkey both as the head of the government and as the head of the state. This symbolic link between 'father' and 'state', especially in the minds of the subaltern classes, I think, is echoed in arabesk films through establishing a link between the hero's 'suffering', 'loneliness' or 'defencelessness' and 'the villain father' or 'fatherlessness'.

The films in which villainy is largely dispersed instead of concentrated on one or two villains, or in which there are mafiatric villains the identity of whom are blurred as opposed to the clear identities of the villains in the 1970s (i.e. either a factory or a land owner) were made mostly in the 1980s. In *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm* and *Hatasız Kul Olmaz*, which were made in the 1970s, too, we see quasi-mafiatric villains, however their identity is much clearer than the mafiatric villains in *Kul Kuldun Beter*, *Aşksın* and *Sensiz Yaşıyorum*, which were made in the 1980s: the audience is informed of, for instance, how they became rich or what kind of a job they are exactly doing. In other words, the villains in these two films are presented as more tangible or accessible as opposed to the much darker villains of the latter group. In the films of the 1980s, the villains are not factory or land owners any more, but they are obviously engaged in some dark business about which the audience can have no idea. Therefore, it seems that, in these three films, compared to the others, the link between the villain and his class identity is relatively unclear⁵⁹. That this link gets blurred can be detected in some other films of the 1980s, as well. In *Mavi Mavi*, the heroine's family environment (and up to a point, the heroine herself) and her friends are depicted as villainous; however their villainy does not become a direct or physical one, therefore it does not threaten the livelihood of the hero. In *Öksüzler*, we see three homeless siblings in the initial *exposition* but no one is pointed out in the film as the villain who might be responsible for their misery. Moreover, when these three children are separated, the hero greatly suffers from that and his main objective throughout the film becomes finding his siblings; although the family who has adopted the hero's siblings is introduced indirectly as villains, however, no indicator about these people's identity is given to us. In other words, a link between their identity and their villainy is not established. In *Vurmayın*, we see many villainous people: a prostitute,

⁵⁹ As I will suggest below, however, it does not mean that such a link is totally absent.

her pimp, a man we see just once who comes to the hotel, in which the hero's father works as a janitor, with a seemingly young and innocent girl, the people in the apartment building in which the hero and his family live and work as caretakers, a mafiotic casino owner, an old man with whom hero's sister lives as his mistress etc. *Acı* is a quite exceptional film because it directly attempts to point out (just like a documentary film) the reason behind the sufferings of the homeless children, and it is sometimes directly declared throughout the film that 'the society' is responsible for this suffering; therefore, the villainy is dispersed and at the same time blurred. *Allahım Sen Bilirsin* is also an exceptional film in that while constructing the second term of the 'Us/Them' opposition, 'Them' is not clearly identified. In this film, the hero falls in love with a girl who is a worker in the factory where the hero also works. However, we see within the story of the film that the girl is actually a journalist who secretly does some research about the life of the workers. The hero understands the true identity of the girl while her research is being advertised on television: "News-flash from SABAH! An undercover report of the year! I've written it for you. SABAH! I've experienced the little worlds, little joys and happiness of the factory workers. SABAH! I've been with them for days Their is an honest, spotless and naive world. The world of the little people who love, are loved and preserve their own values. The world of the people who live for their honour, who get a different perspective on life. I've written it for you. You have to read it! SABAH! This is a must read, a must!" (Appendix A – 14). 'Them' is encoded at this point as the target audience of this advertisement, but it is not presented at all who these people are to whom the advertisement speaks. So, in arabesk films of the 1980s, the identity of the villains becomes relatively blurred compared to those made in the 1970s. However, I also suggest that the central opposition between 'poor hero' and 'rich villain' which eventually becomes the decisive indicator of the 'Us/Them' duality does exist in

these films, as well. In all of them, like the rest of these thirty films, the poorness of the hero is encoded as the primary indicator of his identity⁶⁰ and from the initial *exposition* on 'Us' is defined on the basis of this identity. If we consider especially, as I have tried to explain above, how the initial *exposition* functions to position the audience in relation to the hero and his environment in these films, just like in the films of the 1970s, it can be clearly seen that the audience is still included in 'Us' in the films of the 1980s as well⁶¹. Although the villainy is dispersed and the villains' identity is relatively blurred in these films, their 'richness' is also preserved. For instance, in *Mavi Mavi*, the ones who insult the hero (including, at the beginning, the heroine herself) are all rich (they have very luxurious houses or elegant cars etc.); in *Kul Kuldun Beter*, *Aşıksın* and *Sensiz Yaşıyorum*, the mafiatric villains, though we do not exactly know about their business, are all apparently rich; in *Vurmayın*, all villainous figures are presented as 'rich' through, again, their nice houses, cars, clothes etc.; and, the symbolic link between villainous figures' being members of the 'upper class' and their villainy is established: while collecting the garbage of each flat in the upper floors of the apartment building, the hero's father has an heart attack and falls down when he is on the stairs. The hero, his mother and his sister immediately come from the basement (on which is their flat) to help the father. While they are trying to help him stand up, a woman opens her flat's door and scolds them because of the noise they make. Meanwhile, we see a man descending the stairs. The angle of the

⁶⁰ Except for *Aşıksın*.

⁶¹ In *Allahım Sen Bilirsin*, the audience's positioning at the textual level of the film as if they were one of 'Us' is strikingly apparent. When the hero and his friends from his neighbourhood and the factory he is working in have been sitting in their *kahvehane* (coffeehouse) they suddenly notice the girl and then the advertisement (which I have mentioned above) on television, and they start to watch it carefully. The camera first focuses on the face of the hero who is utterly shocked. Then, it shows the television just from behind the head of the hero, slowly focuses on the television and stays showing television until the advertisement ends. Thus, the hero's (and others' in *kahvehane*) 'angle of vision' becomes at the same time the audience's 'angle of vision'. In other words, the audience's position as 'one of 'Us'' becomes much more obvious.

camera is positioned in such a way that we see the *bond çanta* (a business briefcase) he carries more clearly than his face. While the hero's father is still lying on the stairs, the man with *bond çanta* says angrily:

- What the bloody hell has happened here? This is a real disgrace!
- (*Hero*) Um, my father is not well!
- Ok! Clean the stairs later. (Appendix A – 15)

Such unbelievably cruel and unconcerned attitudes of these two people from the 'upper floors' towards the hero's father while he is having a heart attack, and the details like *bond çanta* which signifies further the man's being from 'the upper floors' obviously emphasize the class difference between these villainous people and the hero's family, who are from the lowest floor of the apartment building. Thus, generally speaking, the primary indicator of 'Them' in the films of 1980s is still their 'richness'. The class opposition is encoded as the central motive behind the conflict between the hero-heroine and the villain(s) in arabesk films of both the 1970s and the 1980s.

5.3.2 Love

Nezih Erdoğan avers that,

[t]he Yeşilçam melodrama repeatedly returns to the 'boy meets girl' plot: they unite, they split, they reunite. In one particular variation, the boy from the urban upper class and the girl from the lower class have an affair and then the boy leaves the girl. The girl finds him again, but learns that he no longer wants her. She comes back in disguise (urban, rich, sophisticated) and the boy, having failed to recognize her, falls in love. This time the girl takes her revenge and leaves him. In the end, her identity is revealed and the boy learns his lesson. (1998: 265)

Arabesk films, like melodramas, are generally about the love between the hero and the heroine, therefore their emotional atmosphere, which

is intensified by coming together and becoming separate of the protagonists, along with other similarities, makes them highly melodramatic. However, contrary to the classical Yeşilçam melodramas, whose plot structure are, most of the time, in tune with the one described by Nezih Erdoğan, in arabesk films, from the very moment they meet on, the hero and heroine fall in love with each other. In melodramas, too, the class conflict is encoded as the most primary determinant behind the separation of the protagonists (that is why their love is generally described as 'rich man-poor woman' love). However, this conflict is experienced largely between the hero and heroine, although their opposing environments are also included in the story. In arabesk films, because *love* (as a personal relationship) is not problematized as a source of tension between two people (the hero and heroine), what is emphasized is rather the conflict between the people who 'know', 'understand' and 'exalt' *love* (i.e. 'Us' including the hero, his environment, the heroine) and the ones who 'are not (cannot be) aware of', 'suppress' and 'rape' it (i.e. 'Them' including the villain(s)). Although the class conflict is metaphorically represented through *love* between the hero and heroine in both classical Yeşilçam melodramas and in arabesk films, its social dimension is emphasized more in the latter compared to the more personally encoded emphasis in the former. As mentioned before, because the two sides of the opposition (the hero – his environment– vs. the villain(s), or 'Us' vs. 'Them') are represented through typical features of their social identity rather than their individual, character-traits, the representation of the conflict around *love* as the main object to be protected against villainy becomes a metaphorical representation of the (beyond individual) tensions between two diametrically opposed social identities. In her analysis of arabesk songs by Orhan Gencebay, Özbek states that in Gencebay's songs (especially in the ones which are close to 'folk music' rather than 'classical Turkish music' as regards their structure), love is coincided

with social problems; love, in these songs, has a metaphorical quality in that because 'to love' is concerned to be identical with 'to live' and 'to be happy', it is presented something to be defended and protected against suppressing and destructive effects of the social order (2002: 186). These arguments are relevant for the status of 'love' not only in Gencebay's but also in other singer-actors' arabesk films. Stokes regards *love* as a metaphorical representation of the "lover[s]" (the hero's) socio-spatial existence: "The focus of arabesk drama is not the actual conclusion but the progressive state of the protagonist's decline, a state which is metaphorically represented by the social and spatial peripherality of the lover" (1992: 156). I suggest, contrary to Stokes, that how arabesk films end does matter. However, it is for sure, that "the progressive state of the protagonist's decline" is underlined throughout the story. Therefore, as much as the presentation of the hero's (and the heroine's) sufferings mainly because of love, how (because of whom) these sufferings are experienced is also presented and emphasized. In other words, as Stokes himself puts forward, the conflict between the hero and the villain stemming from the love between the hero and heroine becomes a metaphorical representation of a social (class) conflict between these two oppositional identities. Contrary to the 'abstractness' of arabesk lyrics (Özbek, 2002: 105), in which why the lover suffers from his emotions is not clear, the villainy i.e. the cause of the hero's and heroine's sufferings is concretized in arabesk films. Moreover, the hero and heroine do not remain unresisting against villainy but they struggle against it to be or to stay together. Therefore, Stokes' argument regarding these films that "[t]he protagonist is portrayed as a passive victim of his emotions[;] . . . Love and fate are thematically intertwined" (1992: 156) seems flimsy and biased, hence not quite laudable. Against this one of the basic criticisms of arabesk culture in general, I would argue by drawing on Özbek's argument regarding arabesk songs (2002: 11-12) that arabesk films are criticized

for being totally fatalist only on the basis of a few lines; these films, however, also contain enthusiasm and resistance.

According to Nezih Erdoğan, in the Yeşilçam melodrama, it is the “upper class, which is fixed as the object of desire”, because the hero falls in love with the heroine only when she “comes back in disguise (urban, rich, sophisticated)” (1998: 265). The idea that the upper class is encoded as the “object of desire” in the Yeşilçam melodramas does not seem quite laudable because, as Nezih Erdoğan himself points out, the signifiers of the upper class, i.e.,

[l]uxurious American cars, blondes wearing revealing dresses, crazy parties and whisky all connote moral corruption” and they are “in sharp contrast with the virtues (simplicity, loyalty, correctness and chastity) of the woman [the heroine] from the rural area/lower class. (1998: 265)

It can be argued that not in all, but in some Yeşilçam melodramas, the heroine’s moving upward in terms of her class position makes the realization of love relationship between the hero and the heroine possible. However, not in some, but in all of arabesk films analyzed here the hero and the heroine can come together when they belong to the lower class. In these films, we either see that there is not a class difference between the hero and heroine (most of the time both of them are from the lower class), or when there is, the heroine of arabesk films (the ‘rich’ one of the pair), as opposed to that of some Yeşilçam melodramas, prefers moving to a lower class of which the hero is a member.

Stereotypical ‘rich man/poor woman love’ of the Yeşilçam melodramas is used in the stories of some arabesk films, as well, but this time generally the man is poor and the woman rich, basically because most of arabesk stars are male⁶². However, the rich-poor love

⁶² There are also some female arabesk stars, such as Küçük Ceylan. Although in Ceylan’s films the protagonist is the heroine rather than the hero, the basic paradigmatic relationship between the poorness (of the protagonist) and the richness (of the antagonist) is still preserved.

is not a typical characteristic of these films. In thirteen of arabesk films analyzed in this study, there is an apparent difference between the hero and the heroine in terms of their classes; these are *Bir Teselli Ver*, *Dertler Benim Olsun*, *Benim Gibi Sevenler*, *Derbeder*, *Son Sabah*, *Seven Unutmaz*, *Yuvasız Kuşlar*, *Kara Yazma*, *Dil Yarası*, *Haram Oldu*⁶³, *Mavi Mavi*, *Gülüm Benim* and *Allahım Sen Bilirsin*. However, in fourteen of them, the lovers are of the same class – generally, both of them are poor⁶⁴; these are *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, *Batsın Bu Dünya*, *Hatasız Kul Olmaz*, *Batan Güneş*, *Sabuha*, *İsyankâr*, *Durdurun Dünyayı*, *Huzurum Kalmadı*, *Çile*, *Utaniyorum*, *Kul Kuldun Beter*, *Aşıksın*, *Acı* and *Sensiz Yaşıyorum*⁶⁵. In the latter group, because the heroine is from the same class with the hero (i.e. mostly from the lower class), the sides of the conflict between two opposing classes, ‘Us’ and ‘Them’, (marked with their ‘poorness’ and ‘richness’) are much clearer and mutually exclusive. For instance; in *Batsın Bu Dünya*, both the hero and the heroine work for the villain’s father, one on his boat and the other in his olive groves; in *Hatasız Kul Olmaz*, both the hero and the heroine build their lives by their own labour and the difference between them and the villain is very obvious in terms of material wealth; in *Batan Güneş*, both the hero and the heroine are farm workers of the villain’s father; in *Sabuha*, both the hero and the heroine are the villagers under the rule of the villain (*ağa*); in *İsyankâr*, both the hero and heroine are poor, one is a musician and the other is a factory worker; in *Durdurun Dünyayı*, *Çile* and *Acı*, both the hero and heroine are from the same poor neighbourhood; in *Huzurum Kalmadı*, both the hero and heroine

⁶³ This is an exception in the sense that in this film the hero is rich whereas the heroine is not.

⁶⁴ Except for *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, *Utaniyorum* and *Aşıksın*. In *Utaniyorum* and *Aşıksın*, the hero and heroine are both rich. In *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, although the hero and heroine are not presented as ‘rich’ during the initial *exposition*, it is obvious that they are not ‘poor’ either.

⁶⁵ In this part of the discussion, three films, in which *love* is either not present or not at the centre of the story, are excluded. These films are, as mentioned before, *Öksüzler*, *Vurmayın* and *Ayrılamam*.

work in the factory of the villain's father; in *Kul Kuldun Beter*, the hero is unemployed while the heroine works in the villain's night club; in *Sensiz Yaşıyorum*, both the hero and heroine lead moderate lives, both of whom are threatened by a 'rich' mafiatic gang. Because, in these films, the hero and heroine are of the same class, unlike melodramas, the conflict in relation to *love*, which metaphorically represents the class conflict or, of which the class opposition becomes an apparent paradigm when the indicators of the identities as 'types' provided to the audience are concerned, is not experienced between the hero and the heroine. Therefore, instead of representing the class conflict as the primary opposition through a 'personalized' love relationship, *love* more directly becomes, in these films, a site to be preserved and protected against the villainy of 'Them'.

In the former group of arabesk films, in which the hero and heroine belong to different classes, the heroine 'prefers to' (and even 'has to') move downward to be united with her lover as opposed to the heroine in some Yeşilçam melodramas with whom the hero falls in love only when, as Nezih Erdoğan puts it, "she comes back in disguise (urban, rich, sophisticated)"⁶⁶. For instance; in *Bir Teselli Ver*, the protagonists get married when the heroine escapes from her rich environment and takes shelter in the neighbourhood of the hero. 'To love' and 'to be loved' is possible only in this 'poor' neighbourhood because where the heroine comes from, in the heroine's words, is "a hell" where "no one can feel free herself/himself" whereas the hero and his neighbours are "simple but emotional people"; in *Dertler Benim Olsun*, the heroine suggests the 'poor' hero to run away together, because her 'rich' father wants her to get married with the 'rich' son of

⁶⁶ In the three of these arabesk films, *Derbeder*, *Yuvasız Kuşlar* and *Kara Yazma*, the hero becomes rich afterwards, i.e., similar to the heroine in melodramas, the hero, this time, moves to the upper class. The hero becomes a famous singer in all of them. However, in *Derbeder* and *Kara Yazma*, although the hero is rich now, the lovers cannot reunite. In *Yuvasız Kuşlar*, on the other hand, they can, but when the hero starts to lead his former poor life again.

one of his friends; in *Benim Gibi Sevenler*, when the heroine learns that the hero is a mechanic, we hear the following dialogue:

- (*the hero*) You see, I'm only a mechanic. Now you know who I am, what I do.
- (*the heroine*) I don't love you for your job. Why do you think so little of yourself? I don't measure people by their job or how much money they've got. We have a close relationship. We have a cosy, trustworthy relationship. Let's go. Let's go to my home. I want you to meet my uncle. (Appendix A – 16)

They go to her uncle's home. The heroine's uncle is actually her step-father. He is a rich man. At this home, the hero is scorned by the step-father and another 'rich' man who wants to get married with the heroine. The hero leaves their home angrily, and the heroine runs after him. When she catches him we hear the following dialogue:

- (*the hero*) Did you bring me here to make me feel ashamed? Go, go to him! He is polite and noble; he has both status and money. Why would you leave such a life for me? Why are you with somebody who is only a mechanic? How can somebody as poor as me make you happy?
- (*the heroine*) I've planned for everything Ferdi. I don't want a single penny from you. My money is more than enough for us.
- (*the hero, angrily*) Your money! Your money! (*He slaps her*). I'm not for sale. Do you think I am? Do you?
- If you're gonna hit me, hit me! If you're gonna kill me, kill me! Just forgive me! What I said was wrong; we would survive whatever. Don't get upset! I'm sorry. I can't live without you, Ferdi. (Appendix A – 17)

The slap makes her realize that *love* becomes possible only when she leaves her 'wealth'; in *Yuvasız Kuşlar*, the poor hero falls in love with the rich heroine, who visits his village with her friends. When she goes back to İstanbul, the hero, too, leaves his village and goes to İstanbul. He becomes a famous singer there, and coincidentally meets the girl. However, they cannot unite there although both of them are rich. When the hero turns back to his village as a blind man and starts to lead his former 'poor' life again, the heroine, too, comes after him, and starts to live with him by disguising her real identity. Only when both of them

become 'poor', can they live together; in *Gülüm Benim*, the heroine prefers living in a poor home with his lover, the hero, who is a truck driver, to getting married with a 'rich' man whom she does not love. Generally speaking, in all of these films (except for *Allahım Sen Bilirsin*), the heroine is ready to leave her 'rich' life in order to reunite with the hero because, as a generic feature of melodramatic narratives, *love* is emphasized as an ultimate value in arabesk films, too; but, as regards the possibility of finding love, arabesk films underline the class opposition more clearly and, by the help of *love* relationship as a metaphorical representation of social conflicts, exalt the 'lower class' while degrading the 'upper class'.

5.3.3 Conflict

During the presentation of *conflict* and the hero's and/or the heroine's reactions to it when the tension or suspense reach its climax, 'Us' and 'Them' are directly uttered by the protagonists of the story, so that on the basis of which identity traits this opposition is constructed by the narrative becomes much clearer. In other words, *conflict* is, in a sense, the manifestation of the most predominant paradigmatic relationship as heard directly from the hero, the heroine and/or the villain(s), around which the opposition between 'Us' and 'Them' is encoded by the narrative. Below are provided some sample dialogues during or just after *conflict*, in which the opposition between 'Us' and 'Them' is clearly uttered.

In *Bir Teselli Ver*, the heroine apologizes for the attitudes of her uncle and 'rich' friends who makes fun of the hero the previous day. This *conflict* occurs at the heroine's home, and we see 'Them' – the heroine's uncle and friends - as a group, who listens and dances to the western music, and all are apparently 'rich':

- (*hero*) Why are you going to apologize?
- (*heroine*) For what has happened yesterday. I didn't want to put you in such a hellish situation, but I couldn't help it.
- Yes, it was very upsetting for me; but after thinking about it I knew I shouldn't be upset by this herd of people, you call friends.
- Herd yes; I'm one of *them*.
- Yes, you're one of *them*, but you're different. It is easy to notice these things for a shepherd.
- How did you notice it then?
- Because I was a shepherd when I was young. (Appendix A – 18)

In *Benim Gibi Sevenler*, the hero declares to the heroine's step-father and her 'rich' suitor that he wants to get married with the heroine. This *conflict* occurs at the heroine's 'rich' home where she lives with his step-father:

- (*hero*) No, it's my mistake. I shouldn't have come.
- (*father*) Your main mistake is that you don't know where you belong!
- (*suitor*) You are getting angry for no reason, Mithat Bey. Look who are you talking to! He's worthless.
- (*hero*) Worthless? Who are you talking to? Of course! A mechanic! Someone so small, but someone who works bloody hard for his money. [. . .]
- (*suitor*) He's being too dramatic to make you feel sorry for him. But, his main purpose is to take Selma's money, Mithat Bey. Does he think he can fool us?
- (*hero*) Be careful of what you say, Mister! *We're* not as low as taking money from other people! (Appendix A – 19)

In *Hatasız Kul Olmaz*, the heroine and her little daughter pass through the coffeehouse where the men from neighbourhood are sitting and staring at these two because they are incited by the 'rich' villain against the heroine who was once a prostitute. Although the source of the conflict is related to the question of honour, it turns out to be a matter of 'poorness' in the little girl's words:

- (*heroine's daughter*) Mom, why are *they* looking at us like that?
- (*heroine*) It only seems like it, my girl.
- We haven't done anything bad to them, have we?
- No, we haven't my girl.
- Mommy! Mommy! Why are *they* looking at us like that, then?
- Don't worry about *them*.

- Whatever *they* say, you're the best mom in the world. *They* don't know you, do *they*? *They* wouldn't look like that if they did. *They* are so good! If *they* were, *they* would help us. Good people always help the poor⁶⁷. (Appendix A – 20)

In *Kara Yazma*, the hero and one of his friends clean the sewer of a 'rich' house while the owners of the house – a fat man and a two women – are sun bathing. These are not the actual villains of the film, but this *conflict* shows what kind of difficulties the hero is faced with to earn *başlık parası* he needs to be able to get married:

- (*hero, to the fat man*) I hope your house burns down; you're very tight-fisted. You can keep your money; you can keep your shit, as well (*he pours the dirty water on the fat man*)
- (*hero's friend*) Well done; *they* can clean their own shit from now on.
- (*hero, on his own*) Ah Emine! All this will be over, and we will soon be together. (Appendix A – 21)

In *İsyankâr*, the villain – the son of the factory's owner where the heroine works – drives the other worker friends of the heroine away in order to be alone with her:

- (*villain*) Don't misunderstand me. I have to be like that with *them*.
- (*heroine*) I'm one of *them*; I also work for your father.
- You're different Selma; you're very precious to me.
- I want to go to my friends, now.
- Wait a sec; I like you. All you have to do is say yes and your life will be complete.
- Please let me go, Kâmil Bey! You disgust me; take your proposal to some other women who would listen. All I want to do is earn my living. (Appendix A – 22)

⁶⁷ In this dialogue, we can also see an example regarding the existence of a dual image about the rich in the poor's minds. In the little girl's words, who is meant by "good people" who are supposed to help the poor are the rich. As I have mentioned before, to the poor-subaltern, not all the rich are bad people; there are also some good ones among them. However, again as mentioned before, in most of arabesk films, including this film, the rich are generally encoded as villainous characters. Moreover, although we can detect a possibility for being 'good' of the rich people in this dialogue, the little girl nevertheless identifies themselves on the basis of their poorness as opposed to richness of the other people.

In *İsyankâr*, the boss of the hero fires one of his friends. The boss is not the actual villain of the film, but this *conflict* seems important regarding especially how the identity of the hero is established:

- (*hero's friend, to the boss*) You merciless man! Why did you have to do that? I wouldn't be that cruel to my dog.
- (*hero*) Only human beings wouldn't do that, Fahriye!
- (*boss*) Do you think I'm some kind of animal?
- (*hero*) You've got the wrong end of the stick, boss. I meant people who behave inhumanely.
- (*boss*) You talk out of your ass! I fired Fahriye. I am the boss; it's my decision.
- (*hero*) It's not about you being the boss, it's your conscience talking. Don't think you own *us*!
- (*hero's friend*) Don't poke your nose into my business, Müslüm!
- (*hero*) No, Fahriye. It's *our* business; it's the workers who make the business. (Appendix A – 23)

In *Çile*, the hero beats his brother, who will be one of the villainous characters afterwards, because of his gambling habit. The brother cries and explains why he has to gamble instead of going to his school. Although his main problem is related to 'poorness' (not having enough money), it is understood that 'their' poorness is not only a monetary but also a cultural problem:

- It's easy being a doctor, but it's not so easy being modern. To them we will always be country boys. Today I was going to meet a city girl, rich and cultured, for a date. I was going to rent a car. That's all, bruv. *We'll* never have enough; even if *we* become doctors. (Appendix A – 24)

In *Haram Oldu*, during the initial *exposition*, it is understood that the hero is a rich and famous singer; however, we learn soon, through a quarrel between him and his 'rich' wife, that in fact he was once one of 'Us' and he hates 'Them':

- (*hero's wife*) Get out of here! I never want to see you again. Who you to leave me behind in the dressing room like some piece of shit! Who do you think you are? [. . .]
- (*hero*) Enough! Before I met *you* corrupt people I was a waiter but, at least, I was human. I won't be like *you*; I won't allow this to happen. Now, I'm leaving; and, I will never be back again. (Appendix A – 25)

In *Mavi Mavi*, in different scenes of *conflict*, 'Us' and 'Them' opposition is uttered by different persons throughout the film. In the first one, the hero – the driver of the school bus – is explaining to the heroine, in her very 'rich' home, what her sister was doing with a young 'rich' man in a car, and the heroine's 'rich' friends are also listening to their quarrel; in the second one, the hero's mother is crying and telling the hero that 'this rich girl' – the heroine – cannot be her daughter-in-law; in the third one, the heroine is explaining to her 'rich' father and mother why she has fallen in love with the hero:

(The first dialogue from Mavi Mavi)

- *(heroine)* Behave yourself, watch your language!
- *(hero)* Do you lot thank people in this way! I'm warning you again, keep an eye on your sister.
- *(heroine)* Leave now, or I'll call the police!
- *(hero)* No, no, no, I'm sorry. It's my mistake. I should not get involved in the business of dishonourable people. Excuse me!
(Appendix A – 26)

(The second dialogue from Mavi Mavi)

- *(hero's mother)* Tell me son! What can you possibly give her? Houses, servants, huh? You think she can live here? In this house, in this neighbourhood? Away from everything she's used to; do you think she can come down to our level? *They* are rich, son. We should stick to our own. *They* have different tastes to us. *They* always look down on our clothes.
- *(hero)* Enough mom!
- *(hero's mother)* No, it's not enough! Look at her! She's wearing next to nothing. How can we introduce her to our friends like that? How do you expect me to treat her as my daughter-in-law, my son's wife? We can never be a family with somebody from the rich class. (Appendix A – 27)

(The third dialogue from Mavi Mavi)

- *(heroine)* It's not enough dad! What I've learned from so-called 'kidnap' is that we are all living in a lie. It seems the rich you are, the more honourable you are.
[. . .]
- *(heroine's father)* I'm ashamed of you! It's obvious that that bus driver not only raped you, but brainwashed you, as well.

- (*heroine*) You're wrong, Rıza Bey! The man you look down on as a bus driver did not rape me. He could have but he didn't. He taught me the real meaning of honour. He taught me how to be a human. (Appendix A – 28)

The number of these examples can be easily increased. Except for *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, *Batan Güneş*, *Son Sabah*, *Huzurum Kalmadı*, *Dil Yarası*, *Utaniyorum*, the opposition between 'Us' and 'Them', which is established in all films (including these six) at the textual level, is underlined further during *conflict* at the story level as heard directly from the hero, the heroine, a villainous character or any other person. *Conflict* does not only operate at the story level, but it also shows the opposition at the textual level which can be derived from how the setting is created and how the shots are taken. For instance, in *Bir Teselli Ver*, *Dertler Benim Olsun*, *Hatasız Kul Olmaz*, *Sabuha*, *Kara Yazma*, *Isyankâr*, *Mavi Mavi*, *Vurmayın* and *Allahım Sen Bilirsin*, the neighbourhood or friends of the hero or of the villain are also included in the setting while they directly come face to face. In these scenes of *conflict*, the hero and his friends (the neighbours, villagers etc.) are positioned in such a way that they look like opposing the villain and his friends who stay at the other side of the screen. More strikingly, in all of these scenes the angle of the camera at the beginning (the angle from which the audience start to observe the opposition) is always identical with the hero's and his friends' angle of vision; in other words, the camera shows firstly the villain from a horizontal angle at the beginning of *conflict*, so that the audience see him and other villainous characters ('Them') from the angle of the vision of the hero and his friends ('Us'). Thus, the shots, which belong to the textual level, in such scenes of *conflict*, do not only support 'Us'/'Them' opposition through their counter positions on the screen; although 'Us', too, is shown from a horizontal angle afterwards during *conflict*, at the beginning of the interaction between these two opposite sides, the audience is also included in 'Us'

by the placement of the camera behind or next to the hero and his friends before the villain makes his first attack on 'Us'.

5.3.4 Determination

During the presentation of *determination*, especially through the dialogues between the hero and the heroine, their problem is again encoded as an opposition between 'Us' and 'Them'. Below are provided some examples to that:

In *Bir Teselli Ver*, the heroine comes to the hero's neighbourhood, and the hero wants her not to go back to her family's home; secondly, we see another dialogue between the hero and one of his neighbours, after the heroine decides to stay with the hero:

(The first dialogue from Bir Teselli Ver)

- *(heroine)* I missed this atmosphere, this cozyness.
- *(hero)* Please stay!
- *(heroine)* How can I? *They* are strong; *they* have enough power to do anything they want.
- *(hero)* Ok, let them! I'll sort it. (Appendix A – 29)

(The second dialogue from Bir Teselli Ver)

- *(hero's neighbour)* *They* are strong, my son.
- *(hero)* What about *us*?
- *(hero's neighbour)* Don't think with your fists; in this case they're not strong enough. (Appendix A – 30)

In *Kara Yazma*, because the heroine's father (*ağa*) does not allow his daughter to get married with the hero (a shepherd), they are trying to decide what to do:

- *(hero)* We'll never escape Emine [*the heroine*], never! All the pain, all the sufferings; whatever happens we'll confront them.
- *(heroine)* We'll fight hand in hand until we die. (Appendix – 31)

In *Durdurun Dünyayı*, because the heroine is raped by a 'rich' man, the hero wants to take revenge, and an old man from his

neighbourhood offers him help; in this dialogue, we also see how 'being dishonourable' is intertwined with 'being rich':

- (*old man*) Is this about the woman that you're gonna get married to?
- (*hero*) Her mom betrayed her. He's so strong; nobody can touch him.
[. . .]
- (*old man*) He beat you before because you're too weak. In the past, it was the world of man-power. Nowadays those bastards with the money have the real power.
- (*hero*) It doesn't matter who *they* are. They are not gods, are they? My life is devoted to being honourable. My life has finished, and now I will finish theirs. (Appendix A – 32)

In *Çile*, an old but 'rich' man brings the heroine to his home to get married with her, although she does not actually want it. The hero comes to the villain's home to take his lover back, but the villain's men beat him on the street. The hero, being wounded, cries out the following lines to the apparently 'poor' people who come there in order to help him:

- Friends, we all suffer the same kind of pain. We'll endure, be beaten, be repressed. This is our torment. But, we'll safeguard our labour, bread and honour. We won't allow *them* to steal these things from us. We die first! (Appendix – 33) (*After telling these, he re-enters the villain's home*).

In *Öksüzler*, the hero does not give up looking for his brother and sister, and for him, 'they' are responsible for this separation; however, it is not quite obvious who this 'Them' is; the only thing we know is that the family who has adopted his brother and sister is seemingly 'rich':

- My heart will always be broken until I find them. I don't know if they are hungry, or if they are in pain. I've never seen my mommy; my dad died in an accident. The three of us loved each other so much but it was never enough. We're all blown away; *they* trod on us. (Appendix – 34)

In *Vurmayın*, a rich man from their apartment building, in which the hero and his family work as caretakers, rapes the hero's sister, and his family is expelled from their apartment. Here, again, the hero

accuses 'Them' of all sufferings. In this film, there are many villainous characters, the only common characteristic of whom is their 'richness':

- Let it happen, mom. If it's bad to protect one's honour, let *them* do it. Everyone is beating us. One day, we'll beat them. My poor mom, please don't cry. (Appendix – 35)

5.3.5 Blow

In some films, after *blow*, too, the opposition between 'Us' and 'Them' is revealed, so that the conflict between the hero (as a member of 'Us') and the villainous character (as a member of 'Them') is encoded again as the main problematic of the narrative:

In *Bir Teselli Ver*, the hero and one of his neighbours, who is an ironworker, have a dialogue after the heroine's 'rich' fiancée – the owner of the factory where the hero works – fires the hero:

- (*the hero's neighbour*) Why didn't you argue with *them*?
- (*hero*) Huh, it does no good to argue with them.
- (*the hero's neighbour*) Do you not know why this happened to you? What point is there in meddling with these people? Come on boy, take this hammer! Whatever happens we'll sing our song. Come on! (Appendix A – 36)

In *Kara Yazma*, after the villain's – *ağa* – men beat the hero in the middle of the village, the hero, being seriously wounded, says to one of his friends who wants to help him that

- My friend, leave me! When I die people will hopefully realize why? I'm not dying only for love; to die is better than to live a life of slavery. (Appendix A – 37)

In *Mavi Mavi*, the heroine – as a 'rich' girl, when she is not in love with the hero yet – deceives the hero (the hero thinks that she loves him, therefore he attempts to kiss her), and they (the heroine and her other 'rich' friends) make fun of him:

- (*heroine, to her friends*) The leopard has now shown his true spots; a man of honour, huh! He tried to show *us* his honourable

ways, he insulted us. This small man who questions our ways, yes him, forgot all about honour and instead tried to have me when I did lead him on a bit. (*They laugh*) This is what *they* call honour. A bus driver and me, huh! What a lovely couple! What a great love! Such a love only takes place in pulp fictions. Everybody should know their place. You are a bus driver! You are a bus driver! Get it? (Appendix A – 38) (*The hero slowly approaches her, and gives her a resounding slap*)

Immediately after this scene, we see the hero and his friend while drinking 'raki'⁶⁸; his friend says to hero that

- I thought she was Ok! I believed her intentions. But she was messing with us. What can we do about it? This hypocritical world belongs to *them*. In their eyes *we* are merely poor people. They made fun of us. They played with us. (Appendix A – 39)

5.3.6 Arabesk Songs

'Us' and 'Them' are frequently addressed in arabesk songs, as well. We can detect them in the very titles of some songs, such as *Benim Gibi Sevenler*, or *Vurmayın*⁶⁹. Although in the songs who is addressed by these pronouns is not quite clear, in the films the identities of these two oppositional groups are revealed. Thus, while the hero is singing the previously 'abstract' song within the narrative of the film, the audiences/the listeners know this time why he calls out to 'Us' or 'Them' and who these people are. I will try to exemplify how the songs are included in the narratives of arabesk films through a detailed analysis of *Bir Teselli Ver*⁷⁰.

Bir Teselli Ver starts with the music of a hit song by the actor-singer, so that the song coincide with the other textual elements of the

⁶⁸ An alcoholic drink.

⁶⁹ These are at the same time the titles of the films.

⁷⁰ It does not matter a lot which film is selected here to analyze, because 'intertextuality', as I try to apply the term in order to explain the interrelationship between arabesk songs and arabesk films, is an inevitable process in all of these films. Although *Bir Teselli Ver* has some peculiar characteristics in terms of the use of music, it generally is in tune with the other films in that sense. I have chosen *Bir Teselli Ver* also because it is accepted to be the first example of 'arabesk films' which has pioneered in making these films more popular (Özgüç, 1985: 14).

initial *exposition* – his home, his neighbourhood, his relationship with the others for this neighbourhood etc. Almost all arabesk films either immediately start with a song by the actor-singer, or during the *exposition* an arabesk song is heard from the background. When the songs are given from the background they turn out to be an element from the narration level. In some films, however, we see the hero singing on the stage at the beginning of the film (e.g. *İsyankâr*, *Haram Oldu*, *Ayrılamam* or *Aşüksin*); likewise, in some films, we see the hero singing, not as a singer, but, for instance, as a prisoner (e.g. *Kul Kuldan Beter* or *Allahım Sen Bilirsin*). In these films the song does not only belong to the narration level, but it functions as one of the textual elements which takes part in the identification of the hero like other textual elements of initial *exposition*. In many scenes of arabesk films, while the hero is singing we hear the voices of all the instruments although we do not see them. In other words, when the hero as a prisoner sings his song to his friends (thus the song takes part in the identification of the hero like other textual elements of the initial *exposition*), the music, the voice of the instruments, is given from the background (thus, instrumental parts of the song actually belong to the narration level). Thus, the songs in arabesk films may (and, most of the time, do) belong to more than one level of the narrative. This characteristic of the songs can be seen not only in the initial *exposition*, but also in other parts of the film in which the hero openly sings the song. The accompaniment of the song to the other elements of the initial *exposition*, which point out, above all, the ‘poorness’ of and ‘friendly relationships’ between these people, makes it also a signifier of the social identity of these people. In other words, the use of a song by the actor-singer during the initial *exposition* encodes this song as a part of these ‘poor’ people’s lives, i.e., as a part of ‘Us’. Therefore, each time

the song is used again throughout the narrative, it serves for the signification of 'Us' in every context⁷¹.

In *Bir Teselli Ver*, after the hero meets the heroine and falls in love with her, he comes to his neighbourhood, to the place of one of his neighbour's who is an ironworker. The hero seems lost in thought. His neighbour asks "What's up with you, Aşık?" (Appendix A – 40). The hero replies "Nothing!" (Appendix A – 41). His neighbour says "Ok, then! Listen to our music! This music will uplift you" (Appendix A – 42). Their 'instruments' are the hammers in their hands. Two workers start to hit a piece of iron with their hammers. Right at this moment, a music by the actor-singer comes from background and accompanies to the voices of the hammers. The rhythm of the hammers, and the rhythm of the music is the same, and they coincide with each other. The camera first shows the workers hitting the iron, and then zooms into the face of the hero who is sitting there, and the scene lasts about thirty seconds. Here, the music, which is actually an element of the narration level (because it comes from the background), suddenly becomes an element of the story level. It is included in the everyday life of 'Us', as it is encoded through the context (the place where the ironworkers from the hero's neighbourhood work) and the words of the ironworker: the hammer in the ironworker's hand turns out to be "our instrument" for playing "the music" coming from background.

The following day, the hero (a worker in the heroine's father factory) meets the heroine again. He sings the hit song – the song played at the beginning of the film – to the heroine, while they are going to a shore. This is the scene in which the feelings of the two towards each other become more open. The song, in this scene, functions as an element of both the text and the narration, because, while the voice of the music comes from the background, we see the hero singing the

⁷¹ These contexts include not only other parts of the film, but also the real life of the audiences who listen to this song after watching the film.

song to the heroine⁷². On the shore, the heroine asks the hero “Why are you so quiet?” (Appendix A – 43). The hero replies her “I’m listening to a song” (Appendix A – 44). Right at that moment a music (again, from one of the songs by the actor-singer) comes from background. The heroine says “What kind of song?” (Appendix A – 45). She cannot hear the music but the hero can, and also, we (the audience) can. Here, through the use of the music, a direct connection between the hero and the audience is established. After they leave the shore, the heroine takes the hero to her ‘rich’ home. At home, there are her ‘rich’ friends, who are having a party. When her friends learn that the hero is a musician (it is shown, during the initial *exposition*, that the hero is an amateur composer), one of them stops the music coming from the record player (this is a ‘western music’ to which these ‘rich’ friends dance) and says that “Hey guys, we have got a musician here, and his name is Orhan” (Appendix A – 46). Everyone in the group starts to laugh and applause, and they want the hero to sing to them. The heroine takes him to the piano.

- (*hero*) I don’t know how to play this. My music is different.
- (*heroine*) Ok, let me have a go. You do the singing.
- (*hero, by pointing her friends*) To them?
- (*heroine*) They won’t let you go until you sing to them. (Appendix A – 47)

⁷² Such scenes are very common in arabesk films. These are the happy moments of the hero and the heroine, when the hero (the actor-singer) sings one of his songs to the heroine; thus, the song – generally the hit song which is known also by the audience very well – becomes a part of *love*, the most valuable thing for ‘Us’. A notable point as regards such scenes is that they are always shot in the public areas (shores, parks, streets, picnic places etc.), not in the private areas (i.e. homes). Therefore, I would argue, these scenes, which belong to the textual level rather than to the story level because during these moments the story is not pushed forward but only how happy the lovers are is shown, support to encode *love* as not something personal but it belongs to the ‘public’; in other words, the settings of these scenes (the public places where, not the ‘rich’, but most of the time the ‘poor’ – the ‘people’ – go) can be understood as a metaphore to underline that *love* in these films is not only experienced between these two individuals (the hero and the heroine) but it is a ‘common site’ which is shared by all of ‘Us’.

The heroine starts to play the song. The camera first shows the hero, standing in front of the heroine's friends with his dirty clothes (*'işçi tulumu'*), and then shows the others (the heroine's friends, her 'rich' uncle and fiancée) as a group, who wear nice clothes. While the heroine is playing the melody and when the hero has not started to sing yet, it is shown that the 'rich' friends start to talk with each other; they do not listen to the music, and suddenly the 'western' music, and their dance to it starts again. The heroine stops playing the hero's song. The hero, angrily, bends his head, and leaves the home. In this scene, the song is directly used as a part of the story, through which the class conflict between 'Us' and 'Them' is revealed⁷³. In the following scene, we see the hero playing a song to his neighbours, and the neighbours, as opposed to the 'rich' friends of the heroine, carefully listens to him. Thus, the opposition between 'Us' and 'Them' is emphasized further.

Another notable point in the film regarding the use of the music is that, following the separation of the hero and the heroine within the story, the hero sings one of his songs (which, is also, one of the actor-singer's well-known songs) to his neighbours. He is full of grief while singing this song, and his sad feelings are also shared by the neighbours who listen to him. A part of the lyrics is as follows: "Wherever you see a *garip*,/don't look down on him; you don't know about his trouble./What secrets are hidden behind his being *garip*;/there must be someone responsible for the way he is" (Appendix A – 48). The words like '*garip*' or '*dert*⁷⁴' are commonly uttered in most of arabesk songs. *Garip* or *gariban* perfectly identifies arabesk hero, because

⁷³ Konuralp states that the music is used as an indicator of the class difference in the Yeşilçam melodramas, as well. Although not every time the song functions as an element of the story level, as in *Bir Teselli Ver*, in arabesk films, like in the other melodramas, the class difference is emphasized through playing different kinds of music in the presentation of different groups of people. For instance, as Konuralp holds, while the upper-class is accompanied by the western classical or jazz music, the presentation of the lower-class is accompanied by the folk or arabesk melodies (1999: 66).

⁷⁴ Which literally means 'trouble'.

these words connote two primary identity traits of him: 'poorness' and 'loneliness'. The two literal meanings of the word *garip* underlines these two identity traits of arabesk hero: in the Turkish-English dictionary of Redhouse *garip* is defined as a person who is 'needy' and 'stranger'. Stokes argues that

[a]rabesk is essentially concerned with the plight of the alienated and uprooted migrant, the *garib* or *gariban*, who is separated from the bedrock of village life, without friends, and money and completely at the mercy of the unscrupulous. The focus of the drama is the powerlessness of the protagonist to choose his or her own destiny. The only moral resource of the *gariban* is a sense of honour, which is portrayed as inadequate and inapplicable to the situations in which they find themselves. (1992: 149)

For Stokes, being *garip* or *gariban* is related to the powerlessness, because of which arabesk hero blames nothing but fate for his sufferings:

[T]he ultimate fall of the protagonist of arabesk film is not portrayed as an issue of justice *per se*, but as a statement about powerlessness. The drama states that, whatever happens, we will find ourselves in situations where we are forced through powerlessness to act in ways . . . for which we will eventually suffer. The penalty is isolation, alienation, and loneliness, but the actions which lead us to this state are our only alternatives, and we cannot be blamed. . . . Fate decrees isolation and alienation, and this fact cannot be escaped. (1992: 151)

However, *garip* does not only mean 'stranger' but it also means 'strange', as it is stated in the Redhouse dictionary. It is obvious that a *gariban* person is primarily characterized by his/her poor and lonely existence as a stranger. Interestingly, however, the other meaning of the word *garip*, which is 'strange', illuminates the other, contradictory side of arabesk hero. Arabesk voice is 'strange' or 'ambivalent' because on the one hand it declares the powerlessness of arabesk hero and thus announces being *gariban* as an inescapable aspect of his life, as

his destiny, but on the other hand it points out the reason of being *gariban*, which seems to be more concrete than fate, by saying that “there must be someone who is responsible for his [*garip*’s] situation”. Within the ‘abstract’ narrative of the song, we cannot understand who this ‘*garip*’ is, what his trouble is or why (because of whom) he suffers from this trouble. However, when the narrative of the song is coincided with the narrative of the film, all these questions have an answer. It is no more only ‘fate’ which is responsible for the trouble of the voice in the song. “So,” Stokes himself avers,

arabesk presents a quite explicit form of social critique, in which the bad characters systematically exploit the powerlessness of the central character for their own sexual gratification and material gain, in which the lot of the poor but honest man and woman is a poverty-stricken and anomic existence on the periphery of the city, and in which official justice and legality are seen to conspire against the integrity of fundamentally honest and honourable people. (1992: 151-152)

The word ‘*garip*’ still connotes the ‘poorness’ or the ‘loneliness’ (the indicators of the social identity) of the voice, but, s/he is not the victim of “his or her own destiny” any more. Because, throughout the film, the people (‘Them’) who are responsible for his/her sufferings are clearly represented⁷⁵. We can ask that if arabesk contains a message like ‘bad people are our fate’ or not. As mentioned in the previous chapter while discussing on *determination*, in arabesk films, the hero’s and heroine’s first reaction when they face with the *conflict*, is always to resist against the villainy rather than simply to submit to it. However, because of some misunderstandings, coincidences or deceptions, they cannot stay being

⁷⁵ In most of arabesk films, following *blow* (the separation of the hero and the heroine), the hero sings a song (by the actor-singer). Therefore, arabesk songs do not only accompany the identification (in *exposition*) or presenting the happy moments (in *love*) of the hero, but they also become a part of explaining his grief. In these scenes, too, the narration level (the closest level to the position of the audience because both the audience and ‘the music coming from background’ are included in the story and the text from outside) and the textual level are intertwined. Moreover, as in *love*, the setting of these scenes, too, is most of the time the public places.

determined. Thus, *determination* of the hero and the heroine to be together in spite of the villainous acts does not turn out to be a rational or conscious struggle against 'Them'. Otherwise, we would not call these films 'arabesk'. Therefore, the villain(s) appears to be a fate-like reality of arabesk narratives. That is why Stokes thinks that "arabesk has never become the focus of explicit political protest" (1992: 152). Although it is true that arabesk films, in accordance with other popular-culture products, do not have an overtly political character, they nevertheless identify the villainy; they concretize the abstract 'Them' in arabesk songs, so that we can see as what kind of a social identity the source of grief and pain embedded in arabesk songs appears to be. Therefore, arabesk hero, who is encoded as one of 'Us' throughout the film, is no more the victim of an 'abstract' fate, but he is the victim as well as the opponent of 'Them', who are represented by the 'rich' villain, although 'Us'/'Them' opposition does not lead to an openly political struggle between these two social groups.

Finally, as in other arabesk films, at the end of *Bir Teselli Ver*, too, we listen to a song by the actor-singer. Like in initial *exposition*, in the final part of the film, too, the song functions as a textual element, which accompanies the hero's and/heroine's happiness or grief. As was mentioned before, most of arabesk films have a 'partially realized poetic justice' and 'half finished *dénouement*' which create discomfort and uncertainty on the part of the audience. Through the accompaniment of the song to such a situation, I would argue, these ambivalent feelings are transposed into the song and accompany it when the audiences listen to it in their everyday lives after watching the film.

5.4 Multiple Paradigms in Arabesk Films

There is usually more than one paradigm in arabesk films. The distinct identities of the hero and the villain are indicated through some layered oppositions and these oppositions are articulated into the general opposition of 'Us/Them'. Nezhir Erdoğan states that these layered oppositions are present in the classical Yeşilçam melodramas, as well:

Yeşilçam exploits melodrama in articulating the desires aroused not only by class conflict but also by rural/urban and eastern/western oppositions. . . . The possibilities of crossing from one class to another and from village to big city provide the ground upon which melodrama plays and activates its machinery of desire. Hence the formulation: lower class/rural = East/local culture vs upper class/urban = West/foreign culture. (1998: 265)

The table below shows which paradigms are generally used to depict the opposing identities in arabesk films analyzed in this study:

Table 4: Frequently Used Paradigms in Arabesk Films

1. Poor/Rich	All films
2. Traditional/Modern (Eastern/Western)	<i>Bir Teselli Ver, Dertler Benim Olsun, Batsın Bu Dünya, Seven Unutmaz, Çile, Mavi Mavi</i>
3. Rural/Urban	<i>Derbeder, Sabuha, Yuvasız Kuşlar, Kara Yazma, Dil Yarası, Vurmayın, Ayrılamam, Acı</i>
4. Love/Social (Traditional) Norms-Customs	<i>Bir Teselli Ver, Dertler Benim Olsun, Derbeder, Batsın Bu Dünya, Hatasız Kul Olmaz, Batan Güneş, Son Sabah, Seven Unutmaz, Kara Yazma, İsyankâr, Durdurun Dünyayı, Dil Yarası, Haram Oldu, Mavi Mavi, Gülüm Benim</i>
5. Justice/Legal system-the State (the police, court etc.)	<i>Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm, Dertler Benim Olsun, Batsın Bu Dünya, Benim Gibi Sevenler, Huzurum Kalmadı, Kul Kuldun Beter, Vurmayın, Acı, Sensiz Yaşıyorum</i>

The fourth paradigm in the table indicates why in some films the hero's environment (sometimes the heroine herself) opposes him about his desire to be together with the heroine. In such situations, the hero remains 'lonely'. The articulation of 'loneliness' to the 'poorness' of the hero makes him more vulnerable to the villainy, which increases the emotional intensity of the film.

Regarding the fifth paradigm, in almost all of arabesk films, the hero himself punishes (killing, beating etc.) the villain. In that sense, he commits a crime, thus, although it is not shown (because *defeat* takes place towards the end of the film), he gets into trouble with the legal system or the State. In some films, however, we see the hero in the prison, or in the court as a suspect. As Stokes remarks "a number of [arabesk] films focus on the question of legal justice" (1992: 149). Prison is a powerful metaphor which adds to the 'poorness' of the hero through emphasizing the 'imprisoned' status of him (as a 'type') as opposed to the 'privileged' status of the villain. "Imprisonment represents a final state of social dislocation, a kind of death" (Stokes, 1992: 150). In these films, either the hero is totally innocent and who is guilty is actually the villain, or he commits the crime because of the villain, i.e., in fact, the villain is ultimately responsible for this illegal act of him. But in either case, it is the hero who is prisoned and it is the villain who remains free. This paradigmatic relationship between the hero and the legal system in these films turns out to be a metaphorical representation of the social order from the point of view of the hero's identity, who solves his own problem with the villain without the help of the State (i.e. the police, court etc.). In these films, the State is never encoded as something to fight against, i.e., as an enemy of the hero. It is included in the story only indirectly. "It is therefore," Stokes holds, "arabesk songs dwelling on the theme of imprisonment . . . do not question the issue of justice, but focus on themes of loneliness and isolation" (1992: 150). However, it is wrong, I suggest, to argue that the

issue of justice is not problematized by arabesk narratives. It is true that the State or the official legal system is not questioned per se. It is also true that, however, most of the time the hero becomes the victim of the legal system. The State never arrests the villain, or it arrests him at the end of the film after the hero suffers a lot from his villainy. The same thing is true for Yeşilçam melodramas as well: The police arrives after everything has happened. Moreover, while the villain, who is actually responsible for the crime of which the hero is accused, is regarded as an 'honourable' person by the 'society', the hero is already marked as a 'guilty' person both by the 'society' and by the 'legal system'. In *Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm*, for instance, the villain kills two people (one of them is the hero's brother) and commits a robbery, but, somehow, the hero is accused of these crimes and he is prisoned. After he is released, he finds the villain in his luxurious office. The villain threatens the hero with his gun, as well as with 'calling the police' because he is in the villain's office and this is a crime. The hero accidentally kills the villain and runs away. The following day, he sees the headline of a newspaper: "A Millionaire Has Been Murdered In His Office! The Murderer Escaped! The Reason Is Unknown!" (Appendix A – 49). In the rest of the film, the hero escapes the police. Likewise, at the beginning of *Acı*, we see the hero in the prison. He is 'fatherless'. His mother is a prostitute, but the hero does not know that. We learn that the hero's mother could not tell his father that she was pregnant because she was poor whereas the man was rich. After being released, the hero finds her mother, but she commits suicide because she does not want her son to know that she is a prostitute. The hero lives on the streets. Meanwhile, his father appears. He wants the hero to live with him, but the hero refuses him because, according to him, the father is responsible for all his and his mother's sufferings. The hero meets a girl (the heroine). A former friend of the hero, the boss of whom is a mafiotic man, sells the girl to 'rich' men as a prostitute, and to save her, the hero attempts to

kill his friend. And he is prisoned again. Ironically enough (and this is also very meaningful), the hero's father is a lawyer and he wants to defend him in the court; but the hero does not accept his offer, because the father is ultimately responsible for the crimes that the hero has been committed; how come can he defend the hero now? At the end of the film, we learn (through a voice coming from the background) that "Ekrem [*the hero's friend*] became extremely rich; he has gone through a long life as a respectful man; his being a pimp has not been considered important due to his money" (Appendix A – 50) whereas "Emrah [*the hero*] died in the prison; he was twenty-eight; the state buried him, because, just like her mother, he could not save enough money for that" (Appendix A – 51). In these films, then, 'the legal/social system', 'the father figure' and 'the actual guilt' coincide with each other and are articulated to the 'richness' which always comes out to be the primary indicator of the villainy, and the hero (as a 'type') is identified as the victim and/or as the opponent of them.

Thus, the identities of the hero/the heroine and the villain(s) are designated through layered oppositions, such as poor/rich, traditional/modern, rural/urban etc., which, somehow, overdetermine the opposing personalities, such as virtuous/evil, honest/dishonest, humane/cruel etc. As mentioned before, according to the most of the critics, traditional/modern and rural/urban dichotomies explain to a large extent the social dynamics lying behind the emergence and popularity of arabesk culture; arabesk culture (songs, films etc.) is regarded as the reflection of the disability of the traditional-rural masses to adapt to the modern-urban way of life. Such modernist approaches either totally disregard the class dynamics of arabesk culture or they consider it an ineffective factor. Contrary to these approaches, I would argue that, among the layered oppositions used in the narratives of arabesk films, 'poorness'/'richness', which depicts, above all, a class opposition, is common to all arabesk films analyzed in this study and, hence, the most

predominant one. What I suggest here is not the imposition of class as a grand paradigm to which all other identities must be subjugated. Class conflict in arabesk films emerges together with other paradigms. In some films, it is openly uttered, but it never appears to be the main problematic of the story. For instance, in *İsyankâr*, the hero talks about the exploitation of the workers while quarrelling with his boss; or, in *Vurmayın*, as it is clearly uttered in the following dialogue, the hero's brother separates from his girl friend because of the class difference:

- (*hero's brother*) Did you talk to your father about me?
- (*his girlfriend*) Yes, I did.
- What did he say?
- What can he say? He told me that you were a liar.
- What?
- It's simple. You once told me that your father was a businessman.
- Well?
- You are still lying. Dad knows that your father is just a caretaker.
- Look, yes, I told you a lie, but I don't know why I did so.
- I do. My father is one of the richest businessmen in this country. You couldn't have told the daughter of such a man that you were the son of a caretaker.
- Is class difference so important? Don't you love me?
- I don't want my friends to laugh at me. Do you know why I am on a date with you today? To tell you that we have to split up.
- Well, I'm guilty of being poor then? Guilty of being the son of a caretaker?
- Enough! You and I! Can you imagine? Find yourself someone like you, the son of a caretaker! (Appendix A – 52)

After this dialogue the hero's brother only aim becomes to get rich. For this purpose, he leaves his school and engages in some illegal acts, and becomes one of the major sources of the hero's and his family's sufferings. Although "the class difference" is uttered here as the only problem between these two people, in the rest of the film, the story is more focused on the problem of honour. In arabesk films, class conflict, which, most of the time, shows itself through the 'poor'/'rich' opposition, is reduced to a moral problem or is transformed into other paradigms such as modern/traditional or urban/rural. Below are

provided some other examples which show how the central ‘poor/rich’ opposition in arabesk films is accompanied by oppositions like ‘honourable/dishonourable’, ‘traditional/modern’, ‘virtuous/immoral’ etc.: In *Benim Gibi Sevenler*, after being insulted by the villain, the hero swaggers towards him and says “Who are you talking to? Of course! A mechanic! Someone so small, but someone who works bloody hard for his money” (Appendix A – 53). In *Gülüm Benim*, the hero objects to the woman who implies he must forget the heroine by saying that “Look, doctor! Is it only you lot who know about love and being loved? All these things are peculiar to you? Look, doctor! It is us who know what customs and traditions are. Nobody knows better than us the meaning of love, being loved and being scorned” (Appendix A – 54). In *Vurmayın*, the hero consoles his brother who wants to be rich by saying that “Do we need bread? We’re not rich, yet we are honourable” (Appendix A – 55). These examples, in which some layered oppositions coincide with each other as the indicators of the oppositional identities, can be easily multiplied. As I mentioned above, class is not a ‘thing’ which can be explored and conceptualized as a separate entity, but it is a part of everyday life which people experience as a composite of many individual and social problems. Therefore, it takes part in the popular imagination through its complex relationship with other dimensions of social reality. That is why, class does not appear in arabesk films as a ‘naked reality’, but it always transforms into and/or is accompanied by other social paradigms. In my opinion, to discuss whether or not class plays a role in the formation of popular culture is in vain because, in a class society, it inevitably leaks into the popular imagination. What we can do is, as I have tried in this thesis concerning arabesk films, to examine in which way class issues are experienced by ‘the people’ and transformed into the symbolic domain of popular culture.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In this study, by analyzing thirty arabesk films made in the 1970s and the 1980s, I have attempted to show how the poor/rich opposition is encoded as the primary paradigm in them, which calls for a class-based perception of the main conflict in the narrative. By departing from a syntagmatic structure which, I assume, is more or less common in most of arabesk films, I have examined how the opposition between the protagonist(s) and the antagonist(s) is encoded again and again primarily on the basis of the poor/rich paradigm in the story, text and narration levels. What I would suggest at the end of this analysis is that these films are primarily, if not exclusively, nourished by and address to a class-based 'affect' (*hissiyât*).

To arrive at such a conclusion about arabesk films, which can be regarded as a subgenre of the classical Yeşilçam melodramas, I have firstly dealt with the generic features of melodrama. Genres are important for socio-cultural analysis because they are contracts between the author/director and the readers/audience. They become popular and a conventional way of representation through time. The use of certain elements in a narrative in terms of form and content instead of some others again and again tells something to us about, in Gramsci's terms, the "philosophy of the age" (1996: 313). Then, by departing from these generic features we can ask some questions in order to understand why they were chosen and recurrently used. For instance, there were always a hero, a heroine and a villain in the western

melodramas of the early nineteenth-century but why was the hero or the heroine most of the time from the lower-class (i.e. bourgeoisie at that time) whereas the villain was from the upper-class (i.e. aristocracy)? Why, was in the early twentieth-century melodramas, “the aristocratic seducer . . . transformed into the figure of the selfish capitalist” (Cawelti, 1991: 41)? As I have mentioned before, the first question can be explained on the basis of the idea that the class conflict between aristocracy and bourgeoisie in the early nineteenth-century was metaphorically represented through the opposition between the hero or the heroine and the villain. Then, the transformation in the villain’s identity from an aristocratic figure to a capitalist one in the early twentieth-century can be explained by considering the changes in the class composition of the society. Melodrama is generally about a personal love story between the hero and the heroine; but why is this love always threatened by one or more upper-class figure? When we take into account that the melodramatic figures are not autonomous individuals who act according to their own decisions but rather they are stereotypes who seem to be ‘acted upon’ in accordance with some pre-established codes that are associated with their social identity (i.e. if they are poor or from lower-class they are generally good or humane, and if they are rich or from upper-class they are generally bad or cruel), we can suggest that social conflicts resonate in the personal conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist in melodramas. Therefore, melodramas, which are generally criticized for being escapist because of the personalization of social conflicts, can be on the contrary regarded as foregrounding social conflicts in a metaphorical way in its emotional, dream-like world. I have discussed the generic features of melodrama and how they are generally considered to be serving for the interests of bourgeoisie in the second chapter. As opposed to these criticisms against melodrama, I have argued that melodrama cannot simply be regarded as an ideological tool of the dominant forces. I do

not suggest to ignore the fact that, generally, a bourgeois morality incorporates into the melodramatic texts and a middle-class way of life is idealized. I rather suggest that because melodramatic texts are 'heteroglot' narratives they are not simply composed of one dominant discourse but are made up of contending discourses.

We can ask similar questions regarding the Yeşilçam melodramas and arabesk films, as well. For instance, we can ask why the protagonists in Turkish melodramas are most of the time poor whereas the antagonists are rich. Why did the poor/rich paradigm become the most evident characteristic of the Yeşilçam melodramas after the 1950s? Or, why did the dreams about leading a middle-class life in the Yeşilçam melodramas relatively disappear and the conflict between the poor hero and the rich villain gain a more antagonistic accent in arabesk films? In order to deal with these questions, I have examined the traumatic effects of modernization process on the social life in Turkey in the third chapter. Arguing that the grand paradigm which aims at reducing the social traumas experienced by the Turkish society to a cultural dichotomy between the modern vs. traditional or urban vs. rural ways of life has a limited explanatory power as regards the question raised above, I have offered the necessity of using the notion of class. I have suggested that as the modernization process accelerated in Turkey, a class perspective became more and more dominant in popular culture, and it found its expression in the recurrent use of the poor/rich paradigm in the Yeşilçam melodramas as well as in arabesk films.

In the fourth and fifth chapters I have tried to show how the narrative in arabesk films is encoded so as to motivate the audience to perceive the conflict between the hero and the villain as stemming primarily from a class opposition. I have argued that the most prominent indicator of the hero's identity is his 'poorness'. At the beginning of every film, the hero is introduced within a context in which he has

friendly, happy or seemingly strong relationships with some other people. In other words, the indirect presentation of the hero during the initial *exposition* includes also the presentation of his girlfriend/wife (the heroine), his home/family, his neighborhood/friends and/or his job. Thus, it is usually indicated, in the initial *exposition*, that the hero lives in an environment, which is mostly marked by its solidarity and its 'poorness'. I have suggested that the initial *exposition* has some important effects on how the audience give meaning to the upcoming story. It is during the initial *exposition* when the viewpoint of the narrator is constructed at the textual level. Because the actual conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist is not revealed during the initial *exposition*, the audience only see the humane relationships between the hero and his environment, which creates the feeling of sympathy on the part of the audience towards these characters. Therefore, the presentation of the hero and his environment, which is marked, above all, with its 'poorness', during the initial *exposition*, motivates the audience to perceive the rest of the film from the viewpoint of the hero. The construction of the 'viewpoint', on the one hand, positions the audience, and, on the other hand, secures 'poor so humane' image of the hero. Thus the first term of the opposition 'Us/Them' is constructed at the very beginning of the film. After that point, all events are related to one another in light of the viewpoint of 'Us'.

I have suggested that the villain is the complete opposite of the hero; therefore, the primary indicator of villainy in arabesk films is 'richness'. The presentation of the villain is not a part of the initial *exposition*. The moment he first appears is most of the time the starting point of the story because we are provided with the sign of a *trouble* soon after we see the villain. In other words, the narrative is transferred from the textual level to the story level at this point. Therefore, the villain is not given a chance to be introduced during the initial *exposition*. We do not see his relationships with his family or his friends outside the

story; thus, the audience are not permitted to be identified with him as they are with the hero.

In arabesk films, the social identities of the hero and the villain become the primary indicator of the two sides of the actual conflict which develops around or in relation to the love between the hero and the heroine. Thus, the conflict in these films, which develops in relation to this love relationship, functions as a metaphorical representation of the social conflicts because the (potential) tension between the hero and the villain(s) is primarily constructed on their opposing social identities. In most of arabesk films, the love between the protagonists seems to be taken for granted. Therefore, the main question is not whether these two people will fall in love with each other or not. Instead, the main question is always how come the hero and heroine will suffer due to their relationship although they love each other. Because *love* (as a personal relationship) is not problematized as a source of tension between two people (the hero and heroine), what is emphasized is rather the conflict between the people who 'know', 'understand' and 'exalt' *love* (i.e. 'Us' including the hero, his environment, the heroine) and the ones who 'are not (cannot be) aware of', 'suppress' and 'rape' it (i.e. 'Them' including the villain(s)). Therefore, I have argued, although the class conflict is metaphorically represented through the love between the hero and heroine both in the classical Yeşilçam melodramas and in arabesk films, its social dimension is emphasized more in the latter compared to the more personally encoded emphasis in the former. Unlike most of the Yeşilçam melodramas, in many arabesk films that I have analyzed, the hero and the heroine are of the same class. In these films, because the heroine is from the same class with the hero (i.e. mostly from the lower class), the two sides of the conflict, 'Us' and 'Them', (marked with their 'poorness' and 'richness') become much clearer. This is another important feature of many

arabesk films which add to their emphasis on the class difference that lies behind the conflict between the hero and the villain.

I have suggested that 'poorness' is pointed out as the only possible site for the realization of love, i.e., 'poorness' is encoded as a 'possibility' in arabesk films. However, 'poorness' is encoded at the same time as an 'impossibility' because, most of the time, the desire to be together turns out to be a matter of life or death for the lovers. This dual encoding of the 'poorness' is one of the main characteristics of these films which makes them 'arabesk'; in other words, the 'arabesk hero's misfortune stems from this paradox. Contrary to the dominant idea about the passivity and fatalism of arabesk protagonists, I have argued that, in arabesk films, we do not see the hero and the heroine as if they were absolutely prisoned in and submitted to the hopelessness of this paradox. Although his 'poorness' as an impossibility is revealed, the hero does not give up struggling against the villain(s) because his 'poorness', at the same time, comes out to be the necessity for the realization of love. We also see the heroine's struggle against the villainy, which is encoded by the narrative as the primary source of the lovers' suffering. Therefore, arabesk films are not simply the narratives of submission, but they can also be regarded as the narratives of resistance. Moreover, I have argued, the audience know that it is the villainy, but not an unknown reason, like 'fate', lying behind the separation of the lovers. Although somewhere in the middle of the story, the hero and the heroine separate as a result of a seemingly miraculous coincidence and a concomitant misunderstanding, or of their unexpected trust in the deceiver, they, in the end, realize the villainy lying behind their separation so that coincidences are not presented to be the ultimate reason for their sufferings. Rather than 'fate', the conflict between the hero and the villain, which is encoded primarily as a class conflict since the very beginning of the narrative, is emphasized as the ultimate reason behind the separation of the hero and the heroine.

I have also underlined a considerable difference between arabesk films of the 1970s and those of the 1980s, which is generally related to the identification of the villain. In most of arabesk films made in the 1970s, only a few villains are responsible for the whole suffering of the hero and the heroine; therefore, the hatred against villainy in these films is concentrated on these villains. Conversely, in arabesk films which were made in the 1980s, villainy is largely dispersed instead of concentrated on one or two villains; or there are generally mafiatric villains the identities of whom are blurred as opposed to the clear identities of most of the villains in arabesk films of the 1970s. In the 1980s, the villains are not factory or land-owners any more, but they are obviously engaged in some dark business about which the audience can have no idea. Therefore, it seems that, in many of these films, the link between the villain and his class identity is relatively unclear. However, I have also suggested that the central opposition between 'poor hero' and 'rich villain', which eventually becomes the primary indicator of the 'Us/Them' duality, does exist in arabesk films of the 1980s, as well. Although the villainy is dispersed and the villains' identity is relatively blurred in these films, their 'richness' is preserved. Therefore, the primary indicator of 'Them' in arabesk films of the 1980s is still their 'richness'. Moreover, the poorness of the hero is encoded as the primary indicator of his identity in all of arabesk films, and from the initial *exposition* on 'Us' is defined on the basis of this identity. Thus, the class opposition is encoded as the central motive behind the conflict between the hero-heroine and the villain(s) in all of arabesk films analyzed in this study.

One final remark regarding my analysis of arabesk films is related to the question who watch these films. I have suggested that although we cannot determine definitely who the 'real' audience of arabesk films are, it is possible to discuss to whom these films primarily addressed to, i.e., who the 'implied' audience of these films are. And, I

have argued that because arabesk narratives are encoded in such a way that the gaze of the poor protagonist(s) become the gaze of the audience in arabesk melodramas, the 'implied audience' of arabesk films are the poor, subordinate classes. In other words, the viewpoint of the narrator in these films is in tune with and affected by the viewpoint of the lower-class people on the social issues. However, I also think that this relationship between arabesk narratives and their lower-class audience is a reciprocal one; i.e., these narratives also have constructive effects on the audience's imagination of the social reality. Necmi Erdoğan states regarding the poor-subaltern people with whom he (along with some other academicians) recently carried out interviews, that "we can claim that the image in the poor-subaltern's minds concerning the rich is strikingly similar to the degenerate, merciless and opportunist bourgeois stereotype in the Yeşilçam melodramas" (2002: 35, my translation). When we think that this stereotype also defines the 'rich' villain in arabesk melodramas, we can argue that this observation is valid for these films, as well. Necmi Erdoğan also remarks that the poor – especially the unemployed women – who can hardly go out of their neighbourhood or who can hardly meet with the rich during their daily practices, get their knowledge about them almost only through television (2002: 37). On the basis of this remark, it can be argued that in the past, cinema, rather than television, had such an effect on the audience. Undoubtedly, I do not suggest that arabesk films (or the Yeşilçam melodramas) absolutely determine the imagination of the lower-class people regarding the social reality. However, the idea that these films more or less have influenced the popular imagination adds to their importance for our socio-cultural history.

I am aware of the fact that this study has a limited scope when the complexity of the popular culture is taken into account. As I have mentioned before, although they are strongly interrelated, the terms

'class' and 'popular' cannot be considered substitutes for each other. However, I find it important to consider the cultural products in light of the notion of class because class has generally been (and today more than ever) ignored in such analyses. In my view, it still provides (perhaps more than ever) a quite valid perspective in order to understand cultural sphere. For instance, an analysis can be carried out regarding the recently broadcasted TV serials in which today's popular arabesk artists act. Even the videos of arabesk singers may be a subject of similar analyses. Recently, for instance, a video of one of the latest songs by Orhan Gencebay, *Seven Affeder*, has been shot. In this video, Perihan Savaş accompanies Orhan Gencebay. The story of the video is presented as the continuation of an arabesk film again by Gencebay and Savaş, *Dertler Benim Olsun*, which was made in 1973 and has been included in my study. As I have mentioned in the fourth chapter, in this film, *dénouement* is left half-finished because the narration of the story is cut at such a point that the audience is left with the feeling of discomfort; they are not permitted to have a 'sense of ending'. In this video, in a sense, the *dénouement* is completed. Throughout the video, some scenes from the film as well as the present situations of the hero and the heroine are shown. However, we see that the poorness of the film's hero has totally disappeared and the lovers reunite with one another in a very luxurious house. I think, to contemplate on such differences between the film and the video is quite meaningful in order to throw light on the socio-cultural transformations that have been experienced in the last thirty years in Turkey⁷⁶. I hope that this thesis can be a helpful source for such studies.

⁷⁶ Such differences can be observed between arabesk songs of the 1960s-1970s and those of the 1980s-1990s, as well. For example, in one of the earliest songs by Orhan Gencebay, *Hor Görme Garibi*, which was composed in the late 1960s, it is understood that the reason behind the hopeless love of the voice in the song is his being a *garip*, which connotes, along with other things, a class difference between the lovers. However, in one of Gencebay's latest songs, *Ayrılık Nikâhı*, which was composed in the 1990s, we see that the difference between the lovers is transformed from class

Finally, I would like to briefly point out why the analysis of arabesk films from a class perspective seems important to me. Similar to the mainstream modernist conception of the popular culture, the Turkish left generally considered the people and their culture essentially reactionary or traditionalist and lack of a class perspective. While criticizing the leftist movements in Turkey, Akdere&Karadeniz state that the main reason why the Turkish left could not be influential on the working class in the 1970s is that there was a distance between them and the working class. The working class had always been regarded as a mass into which 'consciousness' should be injected from 'outside' (1994: 253). Most leftist thinkers distanced themselves from arabesk, "which they viewed as a traditional (read, backward) genre that promoted a fatalistic viewpoint, provided a false, easily manipulated consciousness, and was devoid of the element of social protest" (Özbek, 1997: 224). Thus, in tune with the dominant ideology thesis, 'people' are regarded by the Turkish left mostly as the passive victims of the social order, who are unaware of their own class interests. However, Akdere&Karadeniz further remark, "the cultural environment of the period which started in 1968, generally, can be characterized by the reactions of the lower classes against the social consequences of the capitalist development" (1994: 293, my translation). To me, the Turkish left ignored the existence of such a subversive potential in arabesk culture; their attitudes towards it were almost identical with the modernist attitudes of the official ideology. Therefore, they missed from the very beginning the chance of articulating the "progressive [or revolutionary] potential" (Özbek, 2002: 136) in arabesk with their counter-hegemonic projects. I do not simply argue that popular classes can be easily mobilized in favour of such a social transformation project. I do not also want to romanticize arabesk culture or suggest a populist

difference into a difference between their horoscopes: "I wish our horoscopes were compatible/Unfortunately, I am a leo but you are a cancer" (*Seninle burcumuz tutsaydı keşke/Aslanlar bir başka, yengeç bir başka*).

strategy. However, what I would like to suggest is that, such an approach (by the Turkish left) to arabesk culture, “is a deeply unsocialist perspective” (Hall, 1981: 232). In the 1980s, arabesk culture is generally associated with the neo-liberal ideology of the government; and, this situation has been explained on the basis of an essentialist perspective according to which arabesk has always had a submissive character. However, when we consider popular culture as a battle field in which oppositional ideologies continually face with one another and try to make their own meanings dominant, to argue that arabesk has always been rightist in terms of its essential characteristics does not seem to be well-grounded. Rather, I would suggest, the situation should be considered as follows: In the 1980s, the Turkish new-right succeeded in something (which the leftists could not realize) by articulating arabesk culture with their own political project and used arabesk’s popular appeal in favour of their political movement. As Özbek remarks, during the 1980s, “the new political rulers played a conscious game of hegemony that revolved around manipulating and winning the support of the *gecekondü* masses, who were now seen as worth wooing for their votes” (1997: 219). It is true that the products of arabesk culture became more subject to the consumerist policies of the 1980s and in that sense it has been incorporated more into the neo-liberal ideology of the period. According to Gürbilek, the request for social justice in arabesk of the 1970s has been replaced by the request for the satisfaction of individual desires in the 1980s (2001: 24). Still, however, as I have tried to show in my analysis, a popular sensitivity which depends on the social inequalities can be observed in arabesk films of the 1980s⁷⁷. Besides, as Özbek puts it,

⁷⁷ Arabesk films of the 1980s that I have included in my analysis are more or less in tune with those of the 1970s in the sense that the protagonists and the antagonists are identified as opposed to each other on the basis of their economic (poor/rich), cultural (traditional/modern or rural/urban) as well as moral (honourable/dishonourable etc.) characteristics. In these films, the heroine is a virtuous woman who deserves to be the lover of the hero. However, in some of arabesk films which were made in the 1980s,

[a]lthough arabesk culture was neutralized and its subversive elements marginalized, the state of poverty and subordination from which it sprouted has not been eliminated. Resistance and protest persist, in various forms, on the fringes of the urban landscape and in the corners of the dominant culture. (1997: 227)

Similarly, Necmi Erdoğan states that throughout the interviews they carried out with the poor-subaltern people, social hierarchies and differences were frequently mentioned and emphasized by these people, which is indicative of the fact that these hierarchies or differences have not been fully internalized or naturalized; in other words, it indicates that social-class hierarchies, at least in the political and cultural unconscious of the poor-subaltern, still, have not been normalized or digested but continue to be a ‘bleeding wound’ (“historical trauma”) (2002: 61). Therefore, arabesk culture, or popular culture in general, should not be regarded as an arena which has been totally manipulated by the dominant (official or upper-class) ideology. In the current situation, there are many reasons for being pessimist. However, I believe that if the leftist intellectuals can manage to become, what Gramsci calls ‘organic intellectuals’, articulation of the popular culture with the counter-hegemonic projects, or, in Necmi Erdoğan’s words, to establish “a popular – but not populist – pedagogy” can still be possible (2003: 62). If ‘optimism of the will’ cannot be preserved in spite of ‘pessimism of the intellect’, I think, not only political projects but also academic studies become meaningless. That is why the studies on popular culture are still important to me. As Hall remarks “[popular

the heroines (acted by well-known actresses such as Ahu Tuğba, Banu Alkan or Serpil Çakmaklı) contradict this virtuous image; they seem similar to the rich-spoiled-loose-woman stereotype of the previous melodramas. In such arabesk films, the heroine is transformed into a sexual object; thus, the conflict in arabesk films analyzed in this study, which mainly stems from the love between the poor hero and the virtuous heroine, and which is backed by the poor/rich opposition between the hero-the heroine and the villain, loses its emphasis on social hierarchies in this kind of films. Therefore, these arabesk films, which address individual (sexual) desires of the audience, seem more incorporated into the neo-liberal environment of the 1980s. I did not include such films in my analysis; but I think they should also be the subject of similar studies.

culture] is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured. It is not a sphere where socialism, a socialist culture – already fully formed – might be simply ‘expressed’. But it is one of the places where socialism might be constituted. That is why ‘popular culture’ matters” (1981: 239).

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APPENDIX A

ORIGINAL (TURKISH) DIALOGUES

1. "Ben onlardan bir parçayım"
2. "Ben de babanla evlenirken anneme böyle demiştim. N'oldu sonra? Bizi bıraktığında sen bacak kadardın. Nerde kaldı o mutluluk rüyaları, aşk yeminleri? Bana bakkalın kasabın borcuyla, boş tencereler kaldı. Yalan mı ha, yalan mı?"
3. "İki ayrı dünyanın insanlarıyız biz. Ait olduğumuz yerler farklı. Hani sizin yazlık evde söylediğin bi laf vardı ya, sen ve ben ucuz aşk romanlarındaki gibiyiz. Aslında orda sen haklıydın. Sana kızmıyorum. Ama bütün bu olanlardan sonra biz mutlu olamayız. Senin yolun ayrı, benim yolum ayrı."
4. "Sen bana istediğim, özlediğim hayatı yaşatamazsın. Ben İstanbullu zengin bi kızım. Senin gibi biri ne verebilir bana? N'apmamı istiyorsun? Mercedesten inip köyündeki eşşeğe binmemi mi? Herkes yerli yerine. Sen de memleketine dön, özlemişsindir oraları".
5.
 - Kötü kader bizi ayırdı Ferdi.
 - Hayır İpek, yaşayacaksın!
 - Olmadı Ferdim olmadı. Ayırdılar bizi. Kıydılar yüce sevgimize.
6. "Ergun abi! Evlenmek üzereydik. Yine yaşatmadılar. Yine kıydılar. Nasıl kaderdir bu? Yaşamaya bizim de hakkımız yok mu? Kul kuldand beter midir ki?"
7. "Dur Esen, öldürürüm onu!"
8. "Bundan sonra hep beraber olacağız Hakkı; bana sadece kalbin ve aşkın yeter."
9. "Neden, neden yaptın bunu bana? Ben sana tertemiz duygularımı verdim. Ama sen oynadın benimle. Kırdın beni. İnsanlarla oynamak bu kadar kolay mı?"

10. "Yapma Ferdi abi, n'olur, beni annesiz bırakma! Öyle bir yere varamazsın. Hem, ben de büyüyünce yazar olacağım. Seni yazacağım. Annemi yazacağım. Beni bu hale koyan şoför abileri yazacağım. Haksızlıkları yazacağım. N'olur anneme bir şey yapma! N' olur!"

11.

- Paranın fazlası göz çıkarmaz ki!
- Çıkarır, çıkarır. Hem de fena çıkarır. Kötü nasihatlerinle kızı kendine benzeteceksin. Ne kötülükler aşıyor gene bu habis?
- Para da para diyor dayıcığım. Bunların da başka bir şey konuştuğu yok.
- Bunlar su yerine para içinde yüzmeye karar vermişler kızım.

12. "Bak yüzüme! Dikkatli bak! Tamirciydim. Arabanla gelirdin. Kimseye bırakmazdım arabanın tamirini. Kendim yapardım. Oturduğun koltuğu okşardım geceler boyu. Tanıdın mı ha, tanıdın mı?"

13. "Emrah diye yazdılar doğum kağıdına. Ana adı Fatma, baba adı Adem. Babasız doğan çocukların baba adı Adem'dir her zaman. Emrah da bir yasak ilişkinin sonucu gelmişti dünyaya. Daha şimdiden bir günah çocuğu oluşunun dayanılmaz yükü binmişti omuzlarına."

14. "SABAH'tan yepyeni bir haber. Yılın gazetecilik olayı. Gittim, gördüm, yaşadım ve sizler için yazdım. SABAH! Fabrika işçilerinin küçük dünyalarını, küçük sevinçlerini ve mutluluklarını yaşadım. SABAH! Günlerce onlarla birlikte oldum. Yalansız, saf, tertemiz bir dünya. Değerlerine sahip çıkan, seven, sevilen, küçük insanların dünyası. Gururları için yaşayan, yaşama farklı bakan insanların dünyası. Sizler için yazdım. Mutlaka okuyun, mutlaka. SABAH! Mutlaka okuyun! Mutlaka okuyun!"

15.

- N'oldu burada yahu, bu ne rezalet?
- Şey, babam fena oldu da.
- İyi iyi, sonra buraları hemen temizleyin.

16.

- Gördün işte, arkadaşlık ettiğin insan bir tamirci parçası. Kimdir, nedir öğrendin.
- Ben seni işin için mi sevdim? Kendini niçin bu kadar hakir görüyorsun? İnsanları ben mevkiyle, parayla mı ölçerim sanıyorsun? İlişkilerimiz son derece samimi. Sevgimiz

sıcacık, apaçık. Seni almaya geldim. Yürü Ferdi gidelim. Bize gidelim. Amcamla konuşmanı istiyorum.

17.

- Beni rezil etmek için mi getirdin buraya? Git kızım, ona git. O kibar, o asil, mevki, para sahibi. Bir tamirci parçasıyla işin ne? Benim gibi bir fakir seni nasıl mutlu etsin, nasıl? Neyle seni refah içinde yaşatabilirim düşünsene?
- Herşeyi düşündüm Ferdi. Senden hiçbir şey, tek kuruş istemiyorum. Benim servetim bize bir ömür boyu yeter.
- Servetin ha? Senin servetin! Sen satın almak istiyorsun beni! Senin servetin beni satın almaya yeter mi ha? Yeter mi söyle?
- Dövmek istiyorsan döv, vur, öldür Ferdi. Yeter ki affet. Yanlış konuştum, bir lokma ekmeği nerde olsa buluruz. Kırılma, darılma. Affet. Sensiz yaşayamam Ferdi.

18.

- Niye özür dileyeceksin?
- Dün olanlar için. Cehennemi göstermek istemedim ama istemeden sana da bulaştı.
- Ağırırma gittiği doğru, ama sonra düşündüm ki bu sürünün yaptığına bakılmaz.
- Sürü evet, ben de o sürüdenim.
- O sürüdensiniz ama, onlardan değilsiniz. Bir ayrıcalık var. Bir çoban bunu hemen farkedebilir.
- Sen nasıl farkettiler?
- Çocukken çobanlık yaptım biraz.

19.

- Hayır, hata benim. Gelmemeliydim.
- Sen asıl hatayı kendini bilmemekle yaptın.
- Boşuna sinirleniyorsunuz Mithat Bey. Muhatabınız kim ki? Değer mi?
- Değer mi ha? Hıh. Muhatabınız kim ki? Tabi bir tamirci parçası. Bir hakir, ama namusu şerefiyle ekmeğini taştan çıkaran bi hakir. [. . .]
- Böyle tiyatro, roman edebiyatı sözleriyle kendine acındırmaya çalışıyor. Ama asıl hedefi, Selma Hanım'ın servetidir Mithat Bey. Kime yutturuyor o?
- Sözünü bil efendi! Biz kimsenin servetine göz dikecek kadar aşağılık insan değiliz.

20.

- Anne, niçin bize öyle bakıyorlar?
- Sana öyle geliyor yavrum.

- Biz onlara bi kötülük yapmadık ki!
- Yok yapmadık yavrum.
- Annecim! Annecim! Öyleyse niçin kötü kötü bakıyolar.
- Sen onlara bakma.
- Kim ne derse desin, sen dünyanın en iyi annesisin. Seni tanımıyorlar değil mi? Tanısalar öyle bakmazlardı değil mi? Onlar sanki çok mu iyi? İyi olsalardı, bize yardım ederlerdi. İyi insanlar fakirlere hep yardım ederlermiş.

21.

- Evin batsın ulan senin, gözün bize vereceğin yüzelli lirada. Paran da senin olsun, pisliğin de!
- İyi yaptın; biraz da kendi pisliklerini kendileri temizlesin.
- Ah Emine ah, bu çektiklerimiz bir gün biter; kavuşacağız.

22.

- Yanlış anlama sakın, onlara böyle davranmak zorundayım.
- Ben de onlardan biriyim, babanızın bir işçisiyim.
- Sen farklısın Selma, benim gözümde değerlisin.
- Arkadaşlarımın yanına gitmek istiyorum.
- Dur biraz, senden hoşlanıyorum; evet dersen hayatın kurtulur Selma.
- Lütfen bırakın Kamil Bey! İğrenç tekliflerinizi de satılık kadınlara yapın. Ben sadece alın terimi istiyorum.

23.

- Ulan Allahsız, insan kedisini bile sokağa atmaz be!
- O dediğini insan olanlar yapmaz Fahriye Abla.
- Ne demek yani, biz hayvan mıyız?
- Niye alındın patron? Bizim lafımız insanca davranmayanlaraydı.
- Laf ebeliğini bırak Müslüm! Fahriye'yi işten çıkardım. Kimse keyfimin kahyası değil.
- Keyif meselesi değil, vicdan meselesi bu. Patron olmak herkesi sana kul yapmaz ağa. Bi miktar tazminatını verir çıkartırsın.
- Sen karışma Müslüm! Benim meselem bu.
- Hayır Abla, hepimizin meselesi, emekçilerin meselesi bu!

24.

- Doktor olmak iş değil, iş modern olmak! İnsan arasına karışmak, çevre tutmak. Bugün zengin, kültürlü bir kızla buluşup arkadaşlarla tur atacaktık Bir araba kiralayacaktım. İşte böyle abi. Bizim hep bir şeylerimiz eksik olacak. Doktor olsak da...

25.

- Defol bu evden! Seni bir daha bu evde görmek istemiyorum! Sen kim oluyorsun da beni bok gibi kuliste bırakıyorsun? Kimsin sen? [. . .]
- Yeter! Doğru, sizin gibi canavarları tanımadan önce garsondum ama insandım ben. Beni kendinize benzetemeyeceksiniz; buna müsaade etmeyeceğim. Şimdi gidiyorum, hem de bir daha geri dönmek üzere.

26.

- Terbiyesizlik etme, doğru konuş!
- Sizlerin teşekkür tarzı böyle demek ki! Sizi tekrar ikaz ediyorum; kardeşinize sahip olun.
- Hemen gidin buradan, yoksa polis çağırırım!
- Yo, yo, yo, özür dilerim! Kabahat bende. Sizler gibi namus fukaralarının işlerine karışmamam lazımdı. Kusura bakmayın!

27.

- Konuşsana oğul! Ne verebilirsin ona? Pahalı elbiseler, arabalar, köşkler, uşaklar ha? O burda yaşayabilir mi oğlum? Bu evde, bu mahallede? Bütün alışkanlıklarından uzak, bir pabuçla seneler geçirebilir mi? Bunlar sosyete oğlum. Davul bile dengi dengine. Onlar bizim yediğimiz gibi yemez. Giydiklerimizden utanırlar.
- Yeter ana!
- Hayır yetmez! Hem şunun haline bak. Yarı çıplak. Nasıl çıkaracağız insan içine? Nasıl işte gelinim, oğlumun karısı diyeceğim? Sosyete kızından bizlere yar olmaz.

28.

- Yetmez baba! Sizin kötü dediğiniz şu kaçırılma olayı bana anlattı ki bizler sahte bir çevrede yaşıyoruz. Bizim şeref, namus dediğimiz şeyler, menfaatlerimizle ölçülüyor.
[. . .]
- Senden utanıyorum! Sonuç belli. O şoför parçası seni iğfal etmekle kalmamış, aklını da başından almış.
- Yanıldınız Rıza Bey! Sizin o şoför parçası deyip küçümsediğiniz adam, beni iğfal etmedi. Edebilirdi ama etmedi. Bana namus şeref dediğiniz şeyin gerçek yüzünü gösterdi. İnsan olmayı öğretti.

29.

- Bu havayı özledim, bu sıcaklığı.
- N'olur kal, gitme!
- Nasıl olur, onlar güçlü, dünyayı ayağa kaldırıyorlar!
- Kaldırınsınlar, ben varım!

- 30.**
- Başka şeyler de var. Onlar güçlü oğlum.
 - Biz?
 - Evet, sen bileğine güvenirsin ama bu işte bilek sökmez.
- 31.**
- Kaçmayacağız Eminem, kaçmayacağız! Tüm acılar, kötülükler, kancıklıklar üstümüze örelense de, onlara karşı koyacağız!
 - Savaşacağız, ölene dek, el ele!
- 32.**
- Karı dalgası değil mi? Evleneceğin kız mı?
 - Annesi satmış onu. Çok ama çok güçlü biri baba; yanına bile varılmıyor.
- [. . .]
- Zayıf olduğun için ezdi geçti seni evlat. Eskiden bileği kuvvetli olanlarınmış bu dünya. Şimdi kesesi kuvvetli olan puşt pezevenk alayının.
 - Kim olursa olsun baba! Allah mı bunlar? Yaradanın verdiği bir can, onu da namus yoluna koydum. Benim hayatım söndü, yemin ederim ki onların hayatını da söndüreceğim.
- 33.**
- Bu bizim gibilerin çilesi kardeşler! Çekeceğiz, dövüleceğiz, ezileceğiz. Çilemiz! Ama terimizin, lokmamızın, namusumuzun bekçisi olacağız. Kaptırmayacağız. Kapattırmayacağız. Ösek de!
- 34.**
- Onları bulana kadar böyle hergün yanacağım. Açlar mı, dayak yiyorlar mı...? Anacığımı hiç tanımadım; babam bir kazaya kurban gitti. Biz üç kardeş tüm sevgimizi birbirimize verdik, yetmedi. Hepimiz bir tarafa savrulduk, çiğnediler bizi!
- 35.**
- Öyle olsun anne. Namus peşinde koşmak rezaletse, namus onlara kalsın. Yalvarmayacağız. Önüne gelen vuruyor bize. Bir gün, biz de vuracağız. Çileli anam, ağlama sen, ağlama.
- 36.**
- İtiraz filan etmedin mi?
 - Hıh, kime ne anlatacaksın?
 - Sen bunun nereden geldiğini anlamadın mı? Bunlara bulaşmak hayır getirmez oğlum. İşte, kayalar yıkılıverdi

başına. Tut bakalım şu çekici. Biz kendi türkümüzü kendimiz söyleyelim. Davran.

37.

- Gardaş, bırak öleyim ben! Belki ölümüm aşılmamış uçurumları aşar, bizden sonrakiler uyanır da neye öldü diye düşünürler. Bu sadece gönül yarası değil Selim gardaş, boynu eğri yaşamaktansa başım dik öleyim.

38.

- İşte namus timsalinin sonu. Bizlere namus dersi vermişti, hakaret etmişti. Bizlerin namusuna dil uzatan bu namus abidesi zavallı, evet evet bu küçücük adam, biraz yüz verince namusu mamusu unutup bana sahip olmaya kalktı. İşte bunların namusu! Minibüs şoförü ve ben. Ne güzel bir ikili, ha! Ne güzel bir aşk! Tıpkı ucuz aşk romanlarındaki gibi. Herkes haddini bilmeli. Sen bir minibüs şofürsün. Sen bir minibüs şofürsün. Anladın mı?

39.

- Ben de sevmiştim be usta. Seni sevdiğine de inanmıştım. Meğer bizimle oynamış. Ne yapalım be usta! Bu kahpe dünya onların dünyası. Bizi gariban gördüler. Dalga geçtiler. Oynadılar.

40. "Neyin var Aşık?"

41. "Yok bi'şey!"

42. "Olmadığı daha iyi! Bizim sazı dinle öyleyse; gönlün ferahlasın!"

43. "[Neden] susuyorsunuz?"

44. "Bir şarkı dinliyorum."

45. "Nasıl bir şarkı?"

46. "Çocuklar aramızda bir müzisyen var; adı da Orhan."

47.

- Bu sazdan anlamam. Benim müziğim başka.
- Ben çalarım. Siz söyleyin.
- Bunlara mı?
- Söyletmeden bırakmazlar.

48. "Nerede boynu bükük bir garip görsen,/hor görme, kim bilir ne derdi vardır!/O garip halinde ne sırlar gizli;/onu bu hallere bir koyan vardır."
49. "Bir Milyoner İşyerine Gelen Katil Tarafından Öldürüldü! Katil Kaçtı! Cinayet Sebebi Belli Değil!"
50. "Ekrem, çok zengin oldu; toplum içinde saygın biri olarak uzun süre yaşamını sürdürdü; parası, kadın satıcısı olduğunu sildi, unutturdu."
51. "Hapishanede öldü Emrah; yaşı yirmisekizdi; cenazesini devlet kaldırdı, anası gibi kefen parasını biriktirememiştii çünkü."
- 52.
- Beni babana anlattın mı?
 - Anlattım.
 - Ne dedi?
 - Ne diyecek, senin bir yalancı olduğunu!
 - Anlamadım!
 - Çok basit. Bana babanın bi tüccar olduğunu söylemiştin.
 - Evet.
 - Hâlâ yalanlarına devam ediyorsun. Babam, senin kapıcının oğlu olduğunu öğrenmiş.
 - Bak Oya, evet yalan söyledim, ama neden böyle söyledim, bilmiyorum.
 - Ben biliyorum. Babam piyasanın en büyük tüccarlarından biridir. Böyle bir adamın kızına, kapıcının oğlu olduğunu söyleyemezdin.
 - Sınıf farkı çok mu önemli? Sen beni sevmiyor musun?
 - Kendi cemiyetim içinde küçük düşmek istemem. Seninle bugün niçin buluştum biliyor musun? Seninle ayrıldığımızı söylemek için.
 - Yani suçum fakir olmam ha, kapıcının oğlu olmam öyle mi?
 - Kapatalım. Sen ve ben! Düşünebiliyor musun? Sen kendine göre birini bul kapıcının oğlu.
53. "Muhatabınız kim ki? Tabi, bir tamirci parçası. Bir hakir, ama namusu şerefiyle ekmeğini taştan çıkaran bir hakir."
54. "Bakın doktor hanım! Sevmeyi sevilmeyi bir tek sizler mi bilirsiniz? Yani bunların hepsi size mi özgüdür? Bakın sayın doktor! Örfü da âdeti de biz biliriz. Sevmeyi de sevilmeyi de hor görülmeiyi de bizden iyi bilen yoktur."
55. "Ekmeğe mi muhtacız? Zengin değiliz, ama namusluyuz."

APPENDIX B

LIST AND PLOT SUMMARIES OF THE FILMS

1. Acı (by Küçük Emrah)
2. Allahım Sen Bilirsin (by Ferdi Tayfur)
3. Aşkınsın (by İbrahim Tatlıses)
4. Ayrılamam (by Küçük Emrah)
5. Batan Güneş (by Ferdi Tayfur)
6. Batsın Bu Dünya (by Orhan Gencebay)
7. Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm (by Orhan Gencebay)
8. Benim Gibi Sevenler (by Ferdi Tayfur)
9. Bir Teselli Ver (by Orhan Gencebay)
10. Çile (by İbrahim Tatlıses)
11. Derbeder (by Ferdi Tayfur)
12. Dertler Benim Olsun (by Orhan Gencebay)
13. Dil Yarası (by Orhan Gencebay)
14. Durdurun Dünyayı (by Ferdi Tayfur)
15. Gülüm Benim (by İbrahim Tatlıses)
16. Haram Oldu (by Ferdi Tayfur)
17. Hatasız Kul Olmaz (by Orhan Gencebay)
18. Huzurum Kalmadı (by Ferdi Tayfur)
19. İsyankar (by Müslüm Gürses)
20. Kara Yazma (by İbrahim Tatlıses)
21. Kul Kuldun Beter (by Müslüm Gürses)
22. Mavi Mavi (by İbrahim Tatlıses)
23. Öksüzler (by Küçük Emrah)

24. Sabuha, Toprağın Oğlu (by İbrahim Tatlıses)
25. Sensiz Yaşıyorum (by Orhan Gencebay)
26. Seven Unutmaz (by Hakkı Bulut)
27. Son Sabah (by Ferdi Tayfur)
28. Utanıyorum (by Ferdi Tayfur)
29. Vurmayın (by Küçük Emrah)
30. Yuvasız Kuşlar (by Ferdi Tayfur)

Film: Acı

Year: 1988

Director: Kaya Ererez

Scriptwriter: Erdoğan Tünaş

Cast: Küçük Emrah, Şehnaz Dilan, Turgut Özatay, Yusuf Çetin

Plot Summary:

Emrah is born out of wedlock. He is sent to a reformatory at the age of ten because he wounded the landlord who wanted to rape his mother who could not pay the rent. When he grows up, he commits some other crimes, too, so he is imprisoned. Out of financial difficulties, his mother begins to work in a brothel. Emrah lives on the money she sends without knowing how she earns the money. When he is released, Emrah starts to look for his mother. He decides to spend his night together with his friends, who are homeless children staying at an abandoned old house. One of Emrah's friends, Ekrem, has been working as a photographer but in fact his main aim is to find young women for a mafiotic man to sell them as prostitutes. Emrah goes to Ekrem's office where he meets Elif, one of the girls Ekrem deceives. Emrah advises her go back to her home. But Elif is determined to stay in İstanbul. Ekrem takes her to one of his rich customers, Hamza. Realizing Hamza's intentions, Elif runs away from him. Ekrem beats her terribly. Emrah brings her to his own house to keep her away from Ekrem. His aim is to persuade her to return her home. But Elif does not

wont to go back because her stepfather does not want her. Elif and Emrah soon fall in love with each other. They begin to live together happily. One day, Emrah discovers that his mother has been working as a prostitute. The mother commits suicide out of shame and dies before Emrah's eyes. When the mother dies, Emrah's father, to whom her mother could not get married because she was poor whereas he was rich, comes to the graveyard, finds Emrah and tells him that he is his father. Very angry with him, Emrah tells him that he does not want to see him again and runs. Because his mother dies, Emrah begins to experience financial difficulties. Elif does not want to put more burden on Emrah's shoulders so she decides to go to Ekrem and work as a prostitute. Emrah helplessly accepts the situation. His father finds him one more time, but he again sends him away. Elif's mother comes to Istanbul to look for her daughter. She meets Emrah, who helps her find Elif. Elif decides to go back home together with her mother. Ekrem and another man attempt to prevent her from leaving but Emrah stops them. They begin to fight; Emrah kills the man and when he is about to stab Ekrem, the police come and Emrah is arrested. His father visits him in the prison too; but Emrah again does not forgive him. In pain, his father commits suicide. Emrah dies in the prison, too, at the age of twenty-eight.

Film: Allahım Sen Bilirsin

Year: 1989

Director: Faruk Turgut

Scriptwriter: Safa Önal

Cast: Ferdi Tayfur, Meral Konra, Tuncer Sevi

Plot Summary:

When he is released from prison, Ferdi goes to visit his mother in a hospital. She does not recognize him because she is insane. Ferdi begins to work in a factory. He puts aside most of the money he earns

to be able to pay for the medicine his mother needs. In the factory, he meets Meral, one of the women workers. He soon falls in love with her. They begin to date. Meral meets his mother, too. Meral is actually a journalist; her aim is to conduct a research about workers. Therefore, disguised as a worker, she works in a factory and observes the workers' lives. None of the workers, including Ferdi, knows about her real identity. Realizing that Ferdi is in love with her, Meral decides to give up her research because she does not want to hurt his feelings. Yet, she cannot because she needs money for her son's operation. Nobody knows that she has a son, either. Her son stays in her real house which is in a rich neighbourhood. Completing the research, Meral tells Ferdi that she has to leave İstanbul to go back to her hometown. To stop her, Ferdi proposes her. Meral stays silent because she cannot tell him the truth. The following day, she leaves Ferdi's neighbourhood as soon as possible without talking to him. Ferdi hopelessly looks for her; he cannot understand what is going on. One day, while sitting together with his friends in the coffeehouse, he sees Meral on TV: She is advertising the newspaper for which she has conducted the research. Very disappointed and angry, Ferdi starts to look for her. He finds out where she lives. He is determined to kill her to take his revenge. When he is about to stab her, Meral's son appears and begs him to stop. Yielding to the boy's cries, Ferdi leaves their house in pain.

Film: Aşksın

Year: 1988

Director: İbrahim Tatlıses

Scriptwriter: Erdoğan Tünaş

Cast: İbrahim Tatlıses, Hülya Avşar, Osman Cavcı, Cengiz Sezici

Plot Summary:

İbrahim is a very famous singer. After one of his concerts, his fans run to him to have his pictures signed. Deniz is one of his fans, too. Seeing

her, Ibrahim is impressed by her beauty and suddenly proposes her. Deniz does not take him seriously. Deniz is a rich woman, too. Her father is a businessman. But he is now in some financial difficulties. Deniz and Ibrahim begin to date. Ibrahim insists on marrying her; but Deniz still cannot be sure whether or not he is serious. Ibrahim goes to her father's office to talk about his plans to marry his daughter. When he is there, the mafiotic men that the father owes huge amounts of money, enter and say that they soon want the money back and leave. The father decides to go on a business trip. While he is driving his car, the mafiotic men stop him and shoot him at his leg. Deniz decides to talk to the leader of the mafiotic gang, Tekin, who is impressed by her beauty, as well. She wants them to stay away from her father. Tekin talks to her father and tells him that he can forget about his debts if he allows Deniz to marry him. The father accepts the deal. Deniz and Ibrahim go to a very poor neighbourhood and there Ibrahim shows her how her father has deceived a lot of people. Although he has received money from these people, he does not build their houses. In the meantime, Tekin learns that Deniz is together with Ibrahim and begins to look for them. His men kill one of Ibrahim's best friends, Şevket, who does not give them his address. They can at the end find out where Ibrahim and Deniz live. When they get out of the house, Tekin and his men shoot Ibrahim and kill him.

Film: Ayrılamam

Year: 1987

Director: Temel Gürsu

Scriptwriter: Erdoğan Tünaş

Cast: Küçük Emrah, Nuri Alço, Coşkun Göğen

Plot Summary:

Emrah is now a rich and famous singer. But he has suffered a lot until he becomes rich. His father, who went to Germany as a worker, returns

to Turkey together with a German woman and a son. In Turkey, they have a traffic accident; both the father and his German wife die. Emrah's mother, Nazlı, has to look after her husband's son, Ali, too. Emrah calls his uncle, Şehmuz, to tell him that his father died. Şehmuz comes to their village. Learning that his brother has left a lot of money, he decides to take care of the money. He is interested both in the money and in Emrah's mother, Nazlı. He persuades them to go to İstanbul with him. In the meantime, Emrah's younger sister, Yonca, has long been sick. When they arrive in İstanbul, they take her to the hospital and learn that she soon needs to be operated. They decide to spend the money left by their father on Yonca's medical treatment. Şehmuz, however, is determined to take this money himself. He gets money from Emrah telling him that he will be business partners with Arif, who runs a car repair shop. But in fact Şehmuz gets most of the money himself and Emrah only works as a mechanic in the shop. When Yonca's illness becomes much severe, Şehmuz persuades the family that she should be sent to Germany for treatment. They accept his suggestion and give him the money needed for all the expenses. One day, Şehmuz and his friend, Davut, come to their house, take Yonca and leave. They bring the little girl to a woman's house, who live in terrible conditions. Şehmuz reads the family fake letters from Davut, who, he tells them, accompanies Yonca in Germany. The woman Yonca stays with treats her very badly. She has to do all the chores. One day, Şehmuz rapes Nazlı. She cannot tell anything to Emrah. Arif fires Emrah and does not give him his money back. Hopelessly, Emrah begins to look for another job. Şehmuz, in the meantime, has been taking money from Nazlı, telling her that he is sending it to Germany. He gets all the money they have got. One day, Emrah catches his mother and uncle having sex. Extremely upset, he takes Ali and leaves the house. He hates both Nazlı and Şehmuz. The two brothers spend the nights under bridges. Emrah finds a job in a restaurant. One day,

the police collect the homeless children and place them to an orphanage. Emrah finds his brother, Ali, and wants him to stay in the orphanage. Hearing Emrah sing, the owner of the restaurant admires his voice. With his encouragement and helps, Emrah is discovered and soon becomes a star. Ali is adapted by a family but Emrah loses his address. As for Yonca, he does not know her address, either. Emrah goes to see Şehmuz and learns from him where he can find his sister. He finds her and rescues her. Later on he finds out Ali's address. He discovers that Ali is together with Nazlı. Thus, the family unite again. But in a very short time Yonca dies. Şehmuz comes to Emrah's house. When he attempts to rape Nazlı again, Emrah kills him.

Film: Batan Güneş

Year: 1978

Director: Temel Gürsu

Scriptwriter: Hulki Saner

Cast: Ferdi Tayfur, Necla Nazır, Coşkun Göğen

Plot Summary:

Ferdi is a farm worker. He is in love with Nazlı, who is also a farm worker; and they are planning to get married soon. Ferdi has been trying to put aside some money for *başlık parası*. He decides to go to Germany, for which, Sait, the *ağa* (land-owner)'s son, encourages him because he has himself coveted Nazlı and wants Ferdi to leave her alone. The *ağa* talks to Nazlı's father, Asım Çavuş and asks for Nazlı's hand for his son; and Asım Çavuş allows his daughter to marry him. But Nazlı talks to the *ağa* and tells him that she is in love with Ferdi and that she is pregnant by him. Hearing this, the *ağa* wants Asım Çavuş to let Nazlı marry Ferdi but Asım Çavuş gets angry and expels Nazlı from their house. She takes refuge in Ferdi's house where Ferdi's mother and brother, Kemal, live. Learning of this, Sait spreads around the rumour that Nazlı and Kemal are having a love affair. The village people

believe him and they all drive Nazlı, Kemal and Kemal's mother away from the village and burn their house. They begin to live together in a house in the mountain. Nazlı gives birth to a girl. In the meantime, on his way home back to Turkey Ferdi has a traffic accident and is taken to a hospital. He gets seriously injured but people in Turkey are wrongly informed that he is dead. Ferdi stays in the hospital for long years. When he finally goes out of the hospital, he goes back to his village at once. In the meantime, Nazlı's daughter has grown up believing that Kemal is her father. When Ferdi comes to the village, Sait sees him first and tells him that in his absence Kemal married Nazlı and that now they have a daughter. He takes Ferdi to the mountain-house. Seeing them together, Ferdi believes Sait's lies. When Nazlı and Kemal leave the house, Ferdi goes in, takes his mother, who cannot speak because she is paralysed, and they go to İstanbul. When Kemal and Nazlı come back home, Sait tells them that Ferdi has come back to the village accompanied by a German woman, taken his mother and gone to İstanbul. Kemal goes to İstanbul to talk to his brother. But, Ferdi does not listen to him. Then, Nazlı and her daughter go to Ferdi's house in İstanbul. He does not listen to her, either. Extremely upset, Ferdi decides to commit suicide. But suddenly his mother begins to speak and tells him all the truth. Ferdi immediately goes to the village to be with Nazlı again. In the village, Sait attempts to shoot them both, but Ferdi kills Sait. At the end, Nazlı and Ferdi get married.

Film: Batsın Bu Dünya

Year: 1975

Director: Osman F. Seden

Scriptwriter: Erdoğan Tünaş

Cast: Orhan Gencebay, Müjde Ar, Kadir Savun, Yaşar Yağmur

Plot Summary:

Orhan works as a captain of a boat. He carries workers to olive groves that belong to the richest man in the town, who also wants to be an MP (and he does become one by the end of the film). Orhan is one of the very loyal men of the rich man. The rich man's son, Ferit, cause problems all the time with his villainious acts resulting from his irresponsible and egotistical life style. One day, Ferit and his rich friends rape one of the women workers, Seher, on Orhan's boat and beat Orhan. Learning of the rape, the rich father persuades Orhan to marry Seher to protect her honour as well as his own reputation as a prospective MP. First, both Orhan and Seher lead an extremely unhappy life due to this arranged-marriage. Seher attempts to kill herself. Yet, later on, the two fall in love with each other; Seher becomes pregnant. However, Ferit threatens their happiness one more time by attempting to rape Seher again. This time, he cannot reach his aim because Seher's neighbours beat him terribly and save her. And, at the end Orhan takes his revenge on Ferit by killing him.

Film: Ben Doğarken Ölmüşüm

Year: 1973

Director: Yücel Çakmaklı

Scriptwriter: Safa Önal

Cast: Orhan Gencebay, Necla Nazır, Kerem Yilmazer

Plot Summary:

Orhan is a musician. He is about to marry his fiancée, Sevim. On their wedding day, his brother, Mete, calls him to ask for his help because he is included in the robbery of the company he has been working for. Orhan goes to the company as soon as possible and tries to prevent the robbery. However, during the quarrel Mete is killed and Orhan is wounded. And, one of the robbers who shot Mete runs away with the money he steals. Finding Orhan in the company, the police arrest Orhan and he is sentenced to imprisonment. Because he is imprisoned,

Orhan lies to Sevim saying that he is really guilty of the robbery and that he does not love her anymore. He lies to her in order to drive her away from himself so that she can lead a better life. When he is still in the prison, Sevim finally yields to Orhan's deliberately cruel attitude and marries another (rich) man. When he is released, Orhan finds the man, Cemil, who is responsible for his imprisonment and his brother's death with the help of one of his friends, Reşit, he has met in the prison. They argue and Orhan accidentally kills Cemil, who is now a very rich businessman, in his office. He escapes Cemil's office at once and goes to Reşit's house. There he finds Reşit with a small boy, Ali, whom Reşim has kidnapped from a rich family – Sevim and her husband. When Reşit is arrested by the police because of one of the previous crimes he has committed, Orhan has to take care of the child unaware of the fact that Sevim is his mother. Ali loves Orhan so much and calls him 'Dad'. They make money by singing on the streets for years. One day, while Ali is passing by Sevim and her husband's house, they see him and call him in. They love the boy because he is at the same age with their missing son. When Orhan gets sick, Ali goes to Sevim's house to pawn his golden medallion so that he can get the money needed for Orhan. Ali's father recognizes the medallion they bought for him before he was kidnapped and realizes that Ali is his real son. He talks to Orhan and he accepts to give Ali to his real family. Both Orhan and Ali feel so sad due to their separation. One day Ali escapes from home and goes to Orhan's house. He finds Orhan lying in his sickbed. Thinking that Ali has gone to Orhan, both Sevim and her husband follow their son. In Orhan's house, both Sevim and Orhan recognize each other. But they keep their silence and Orhan dies before their eyes.

Film: Benim Gibi Sevenler

Year: 1977

Director: Temel Gürsu

Scriptwriter: Hulki Saner

Cast: Ferdi Tayfur, İtir Esen, Erol Taş, Abdurrahman Palay

Plot Summary:

Ferdi is born out of wedlock. His father, Mithat, leaves his mother, Zehra, and goes to İstanbul to become rich. His mother takes Ferdi and goes to İstanbul, too, to stay with her brother, who is an evil robber. When Ferdi grows up, the evil uncle makes him take part in his robberies until the day he is caught by the police and imprisoned. As a grown-up man, Ferdi makes money by working as a mechanic. One day he meets a beautiful girl, Selma, who is a young lawyer. They fall in love with each other. Selma lives together with Mithat, whom she calls 'uncle' and is now a rich businessman. Before dying as a result of a traffic accident, Selma's father wants his close friend, Mithat, to look after her. Mithat wants Selma to marry a rich young man, Kenan, who has a secret love affair with Mithat's wife. Therefore, Mithat scolds and expels Ferdi from his house when Ferdi goes there together with Selma to meet him. Selma hates Kenan and wants to marry Ferdi despite Mithat's protests. In the meantime, Ferdi's evil uncle is released. Learning that Ferdi has a rich girlfriend, the uncle attempts to persuade Ferdi to rob her house. Ferdi yields to him when his uncle threatens to beat his mother. Selma catches Ferdi and his uncle in act in their house. She feels extremely upset but does not call the police. Instead, she tells Mithat that she will marry Kenan if he does not call the police. At home Ferdi decides to take all the money and jewellery back from his uncle and give them back to Selma. They argue and the uncle stabs him; but Ferdi manages to take from the uncle all the jewellery and the money they have stolen and goes to Selma's house although he is terribly wounded. There he witnesses the row between Kenan and

Mithat's wife. The woman kills Kenan but puts the blame on Ferdi. During the trial, Ferdi is defended by Selma, who learns the truth about Ferdi from his mother, Zehra. Zehra too comes to the court so that both Zehra and Mithat recognize each other and Mithat confesses the truth. Thus, Ferdi realizes that Mithat is his father. At the end, Mithat apologizes both from Zehra and from Ferdi; both the mother and the son forgive the father.

Film: Bir Teselli Ver

Year: 1971

Director: Lütfi Ö. Akad

Scriptwriter: Safa Önal

Cast: Orhan Gencebay, Tülin Örsök, Kadir Savun, Aydın Tezel

Plot Summary:

Orhan, a factory worker, meets Nermin, the daughter of the factory-owner, when he is sent for fixing her car that has broken down. Both of them like each other at first sight. Later on that day Nermin finds the musical notes Orhan has forgotten in her car and thus learns that he is also a musician. She goes to the factory to give him the notes. Then, they decide to test her car one more time; Orhan sings one of his songs for her. When he drops her home, they come across Nermin's rich friends. They want him to sing a song but give up listening to him before he begins his song. Orhan leaves the place in anger. Nermin apologizes from him. Now, the love between the two becomes more explicit. At home, Nermin has a row with her fiancée, Vedat, because his sole interest is in the factory – Vedat and Nermin's father are partners – and making more money. Vedat, Nermin's father and her uncle are all aware of her interest in Orhan. Both the father and the uncle try to persuade her to marry Vedat as soon as possible. Vedat fires Orhan. Nermin leaves home and comes to Orhan's neighbourhood to live there. Some of Orhan's neighbours/friends go to Nermin's father

to ask for her hand but they are scolded and expelled. The father's lawyer accompanied by his men come to Orhan's neighbourhood to take Nermin back to her father's house. In order not to cause any harm for Orhan and his friends, Nermin tells a lie. Saying that she cannot be with Orhan and lead a life in poverty, she returns home with her father's men. When Nermin's lie is detected, Orhan and the neighbours decide to take her back. Just before Nermin accepts to marry Vedat, Orhan raises an objection. The neighbours come there to help them, too, and all together they take Nermin and go back to their neighbourhood. At the end, Orhan and Nermin get married.

Film: Çile

Year: 1980

Director: Remzi Jöntürk

Scriptwriter: Mehmet Aydın

Cast: İbrahim Tatlıses, Perihan Savaş, Hüseyin Peyda, Levent Çakır

Plot Summary:

İbo is a taxi driver. His brother, İsmet, is a medical student. İbo works hard to provide money for İsmet's education. But instead of studying, İsmet secretly spends most of his time and money on gambling. İbo has a girlfriend, Bahar; they plan to get married. However, Bahar's father wants her to marry Kamil Ağa, a rich man, so that they can pay for the medicines Bahar's sick mother needs with the *başlık parası* Kamil Ağa gives. The day they will get married, İbo comes to Kamil Ağa's house. Seeing him, Bahar decides to run away from Kamil and go with İbo. Kamil Ağa and his men try to murder them both but they fail in their attempts. Astonished by the deep love between İbo and Bahar, Kamil Ağa later on regrets what he has done to them. He even helps them financially so that they can marry. Yet, they cannot. İbo's brother, İsmet, is chased by the police because he has stolen some money. To prevent İsmet from being arrested, İbo tells the police that he himself is guilty.

He is imprisoned. Bahar promises him that she will wait for him. When İbo is in prison, İsmet rapes Bahar. She gives birth to a boy. When he is released, İbo learns the truth and starts to look for his brother. Finding him, he first tries to kill him but later on decides to let him go provided that İsmet accepts to marry Bahar. They get married. Frustrated and sick, İbo dies alone in a street.

Film: Derbeder

Year: 1977

Director: Erdoğan Tünaş

Scriptwriter: Hulki Saner

Cast: Ferdi Tayfur, İtir Esen, Erol Taş, Abdurrahman Palay

Plot Summary:

Ferdi, a poor farm worker, and İpek, the daughter of a rich landowner, are in love with each other. Ferdi lives in a village but İpek lives in the city together with her family. Ferdi goes to the city to be close to İpek. He is employed by her father as a servant. In the meantime, Ferdi comes across Tarık, one of his friends he has met during his military service, in the city. Tarık is the son of a rich man and unlike Ferdi he is a villainous man. Ferdi sends a letter to his parents in the village and wants them to ask for İpek's hand. His father comes to talk to her father, Abbas, who scolds the poor father bitterly and rejects his request. Ferdi decides to go to İstanbul to become rich so that he can marry İpek. In İstanbul he becomes a very famous singer especially with the help of a woman, Sevda, who is in love with Ferdi. But Ferdi still loves İpek. Tarık comes to İstanbul to visit Ferdi. Ferdi wants him to give İpek a letter when he goes back and Tarık accepts his request. Yet, because he covets İpek he does not give the letter to her. Instead he gives it to her father and writes a fake letter to İpek from Ferdi in which he says he does not love her anymore. Reading the letter, İpek goes to İstanbul to see if Ferdi is telling the truth. There, she sees him with Sevda sitting in

a restaurant and thinks that they are in love. Extremely upset, she accepts to marry Tarık. Learning of their marriage, Ferdi feels frustrated. He starts to lead a life in misery. Sevda persuades him to start working again. He listens to her and soon regains fame and success. In the meantime, İpek's daughter is born. But because of Tarık's gambling habit all the family suffers a financial breakdown. İpek's father goes into bankruptcy, too. Ferdi, now a very rich man, pays Abbas Ağa's debts and buys his house. But he gives it back to him later on. Abbas, now fully aware of his mistake, kills Tarık. İpek goes to Ferdi's house to say she is sorry but Ferdi does not listen to her. She commits suicide. Seeing her die, Ferdi decides to kill himself, too. But İpek's little daughter comes by him and wants him to look after her. Ferdi accepts her wish.

Film: Dertler Benim Olsun

Year: 1974

Director: Safa Önal

Scriptwriter: Safa Önal

Cast: Orhan Gencebay, Perihan Savaş, Kadir Savun, Selçuk Özer

Plot Summary:

Sabahattin lives with his brother, Hüseyin, who is a shoemaker. He earns money by selling watermelons. He is in love with Ayşe, who is the daughter of Sami Bey – a bankrupt businessman. Ayşe loves Sabahattin, too. They want to get married. Ayşe's parents, on the other hand, want her to marry Atilla, the son of their rich friends, Necdet and Serap because Necdet promises to pay Sami's debts if he allows his daughter to marry his son. When Sami does not allow Ayşe to marry Sabahattin, the lovers decide to run away to Germany. However, while Sabahattin is waiting for Ayşe at the train station, Ayşe is raped by Atilla. Consequently, she has to marry him. On the first day of their marriage, Orhan stabs Atilla to death.

Film: Dil Yarası

Year: 1984

Director: Yaşar Seriner

Scriptwriter: Suphi Tekniker

Cast: Orhan Gencebay, Yaprak Özdemiroğlu, Hayati Hamzaoğlu

Plot Summary:

When he is a small boy, Orhan's father is murdered before his eyes. When he grows up, Orhan and his family decide that he should take his revenge on Rıfat, the man who killed his father. To find Rıfat, Orhan goes to İstanbul. He meets Recep, who promises to help him find Rıfat. Rıfat is now a rich factory owner. One night, Orhan and Recep go to a night-club. Rıfat is there too; but Orhan does not recognize him. Recep steals Orhan's money and runs away. Because he cannot pay the bill, the waiters quarrel with Orhan. Seeing that he is in trouble, Rıfat helps him. He takes Orhan to his factory and allows him to stay in the factory's dormitory. Hearing that a man is after him due to the blood feud, Rıfat wants Orhan to protect himself and his family. Orhan accepts to protect Rıfat's daughter, Hülya, when he is away for a business trip. In the meantime, Orhan's family learns that Orhan has been working for Rıfat. So, his cousin decides to go to İstanbul to tell Orhan the truth. Orhan and Hülya fall in love with each other. When Rıfat comes back to İstanbul, they tell him about their love. He approves of their relationship; yet, realizing that Orhan is the man who wants to murder him, he wants Hülya to get rid of him. Hülya yields to her father lest he should not murder Orhan. She pretends that she does not love him anymore because he is poor. Orhan is kicked out of their house. He meets his cousin, Arif, in a night-club. Arif tells him who Rıfat and Hülya are. So, Orhan understands why Hülya has treated him so badly. He tells Arif that he does not want the blood feud to continue and that he loves Hülya more than anything. In the meantime, Hülya is about to

marry a rich young man, Bülent. Orhan secretly enters Rifat's house and goes to Hülya's room. He tells her that he knows everything; and he also talks to Rifat to tell him that he has given up the blood feud. However, suddenly Arif appears and shoots Rifat. He is taken to a hospital and recovers in a short time. Orhan and Hülya get married. They decide to go to Orhan's village together. There Orhan's youngest cousin kills Orhan.

Film: Durdurun Dünyayı

Year: 1980

Director: Osman F. Seden

Scriptwriter: Osman F. Seden

Cast: Ferdi Tayfur, Necla Nazır, Yalçın Gülhan, Suzan Avcı

Plot Summary:

Ferdi is a docker. He is engaged with Necla. Ferdi and Necla were close friends when they were children. Necla's mother does not want her to marry Ferdi because he is poor. Ferdi goes to Bodrum to work there for a month. In the meantime, Necla's mother meets Murat, who was Ferdi and Necla's close friend, too, but his family moved from the poor neighbourhood of his friends when he was a child. Murat is a rich man, and Necla's mother wants her to marry him. Murat gives frequently some money to the mother. One day, Murat invites Necla to a party and rapes her when she is asleep. When Ferdi returns from Bodrum, Necla's mother tells him that she has been living with Murat. Ferdi runs to Murat's house; Murat's men beat him terribly. Necla sees Ferdi but because she has been raped and also because Murat threatens her with killing Ferdi, she lies to him. Saying that she does not want him because he is poor, she sends him away. Ferdi decides to take his revenge on Murat. His friend, Osman, an experienced gambler, teaches him how to gamble. Their plan is to destroy Murat through gambling. They begin to run a gambling casino. Murat loses all his

wealth in Ferdi's casino. Murat and Ferdi decide to gamble for the last time in Murat's house. Seeing Ferdi, Necla wants to apologize from him, but Ferdi does not listen to her. By the help of an old photograph, Osman understands that Necla is his daughter. Osman wants Ferdi to make Necla happy. Then, Ferdi talks to Murat; he gives him all his money back and wants him to marry Necla. Murat and Necla get married.

Film: Gülüm Benim

Year: 1987

Director: Ibrahim Tatlıses

Scriptwriter: Aydemir Akbaş

Cast: Ibrahim Tatlıses, Derya Tuna, Hüseyin Peyda, Aydemir Akbaş

Plot Summary:

Kerim is a lorry-driver. When he and his friend, Cafer, arrive in İstanbul, they go to a dentist as soon as possible because Kerim has been suffering from a terrible toothache. At the dentist's office, they see a young woman, Cemile, and Kerim cannot take his eyes off her. Cemile is the daughter of a rich family. Her parents are trying to arrange a suitable marriage for her. Another day, Cemile goes to the dentist again, who is also her friend. Kerim and Cafer go there too because he wants to see Cemile. When the two women go out, they begin to follow them. Eventually, they meet and become friends. Cemile enjoys spending time with them. Kerim falls in love with her. Kerim and Cemile begin to date. Cemile is in love with him, too. One day, Cemile sends a letter to Kerim. She writes that they have to separate because she knows that her parents will not allow her to marry him. She soon gets engaged with the rich man her parents want her to marry. Both Kerim and Cemile are extremely sad because they are not together anymore. They both remember happy memories. On Cemile's wedding day, Kerim comes to the wedding, too. Seeing him Cemile gives up marrying

the rich man. She goes to the house Kerim has rented for them. They decide to stay together. Cemile's father, however, finds them and one of his men kills them both.

Film: Haram Oldu

Year: 1985

Director: Ferdi Tayfur

Scriptwriter: Ferdi Tayfur

Cast: Ferdi Tayfur, Deniz Akbulut, Hüseyin Peyda, Fatoş Sezer

Plot Summary:

Ferdi is a rich and famous singer. He is married to his boss's daughter, who is addicted to alcohol and has some psychological problems. Ferdi decides to divorce from her. Then he meets a young woman, Şerife, and the two fall in love with each other. Hearing of the young woman, Ferdi's wife gives up divorcing from him. She talks to her father so that he can persuade Ferdi to stay with his daughter. Şerife hears the father speak to Ferdi about his wife. Pitying the wife, Şerife decides to leave Ferdi and go to Germany. Ferdi accompanies her to the train station. Thinking that Ferdi too will leave with her, Ferdi's wife shoots him at the station. Ferdi dies.

Film: Hatasız Kul Olmaz

Year: 1977

Director: Osman F. Seden

Scriptwriter: Osman F. Seden

Cast: Orhan Gencebay, Fatma Girik, Kadir Savun, Yıldırım Gencer

Plot Summary:

Orhan works as a captain of a boat that belongs to Kamil. Orhan is very loyal to him. He protects him against the mafiatic gang led by Hikmet. Orhan gets married to Cennet, who previously works in a night-club. Cennet has a little daughter. Getting married, they decide to move to

Orhan's small town. There, they lead a very happy life until the mafia threatens Orhan's business. They want him to leave the town. When Hikmet recognizes Cennet, he begins to use her past as a threat to Orhan, too. The mafia provoke the town against Cennet and Orhan; and the people, seeing Cennet as a dishonourable woman, disturb them and want them to leave the town. One day, when the school kids led by Hikmet's son chase Cennet's daughter to beat her, she is hit by a bus and dies. This event creates a total change in the town and the people rebel against Hikmet and his gang. They raid his luxurious house. While trying to escape, Hikmet and his family have a traffic accident and Hikmet's son is badly injured. Orhan takes the boy to the hospital. He has to have an operation for which he needs a blood donor. Cennet is the only person who can give blood to the boy. She accepts to help the boy who is responsible for her daughter's death, which makes town's people completely sorry for what they have done to Cennet and Orhan. At the end, Cennet and Orhan are welcomed by the town's people and decide to stay in the town.

Film: Huzurum Kalmadı

Year: 1980

Director: Natuk Baytan

Scriptwriter: Natuk Baytan

Cast: Ferdi Tayfur, Serpil Çakmaklı, Adile Naşit, Coşkun Göğen

Plot Summary:

Ferdi works as a watchman in a factory. He falls in love with Zeynep who has recently moved to their neighbourhood. Zeynep begins to work in the same factory as the factory-owner Sabri Bey's secretary. Sabri Bey's son, Erol, covets her. Ferdi and Zeynep decide to get married. In the meantime, Sabri Bey leaves Zeynep half of his inheritance because he owes much of his wealth to Zeynep's grandfather who has helped Sabri Bey's father a lot to become a successful and rich businessman.

The only person who knows about Sabri Bey's inheritance is his assistant, Hasan. Ferdi and Zeynep get married. Zeynep gives birth to a girl. Hasan tells Erol that Zeynep will inherit half of his father's wealth when he dies. Hearing of this, Erol decides to get Ferdi murdered and marry Zeynep so that he can have both Zeynep and all of his father's wealth. Erol wants Turgut, a poor mechanic, to kill Ferdi. Turgut has to yield to Erol's offer because he needs money for his sick daughter. Turgut goes to Ferdi's house and accidentally kills Zeynep and drops his gun. Ferdi cannot see Turgut's face. Chasing Turgut with Turgut's gun, Ferdi accidentally kills one of his neighbours. Ferdi is arrested and imprisoned because it is believed that he has killed his own wife. Ferdi's daughter, Funda, is placed in an orphanage. In the meantime, Turgut's daughter regains her health. Years pass. Turgut is imprisoned too because he fatally wounded a woman resembling her to Zeynep; he is put in Ferdi's cell. Seeing Ferdi, Turgut suffers a lot. Yet, he does not tell him who he is. While talking, Ferdi and Turgut realize that Turgut's daughter is Funda's teacher in the orphanage. When Turgut is released from the prison, he visits Ferdi's daughter. Burning with a desire to see Funda, Ferdi escapes from the prison. Turgut and Turgut's daughter, Fatma, bring Funda to Ferdi. Fatma, Funda and Ferdi spend glorious time together. Fatma falls in love with Ferdi. Suffering from pangs of conscience, Turgut commits suicide, leaving a letter behind him in which he tells Ferdi all the truth. Reading Turgut's letter, Ferdi goes to Erol's house to take his revenge on him. He kills Erol. When Ferdi is about to leave Fatma and Funda, Fatma tells Funda that Ferdi is her father. Hearing Funda's call, Ferdi comes back and takes his daughter in his arms.

Film: İsyankâr

Year: 1979

Director: Temel Gürsu

Scriptwriter: Erdoğan Tünaş

Cast: Müslüm Gürses, Oya Aydoğan, Coşkun Göğen, Suzan Avcı

Plot Summary:

Müslüm is a singer. He works in a night-club. He lives together with his younger brother, Osman, who is a medical student. Müslüm suffers from tuberculosis but Osman does not know anything about it. Müslüm does not allow his brother to work because he wants him to study hard and finish his school successfully. Müslüm has been corresponding for a while with a woman, whose name is Selma. They are pen-friends. They are in love although they have never seen each other. Selma works in a factory. The factory-owner's son, Kamil, covets her. Müslüm sends a picture of his brother, Osman, to Selma because he is afraid that she will not find him young and handsome enough. Selma, being unaware of the fact that Osman is not the one she loves, likes Osman's picture so much. They decide to meet. Müslüm sends his brother to the date because he himself cannot dare to go and wants him to act as if he were Selma's pen-friend, and to tell Selma that he will soon have to leave the town. But Osman and Selma fall in love with each other. After some time, the two decide to get married; Osman introduces her to Müslüm, who, sadly, accepts the situation. On the day, Osman and Selma marry, Kamil and his men attempt to kill Osman. Trying to stop them, Müslüm is shot but he manages to kill Kamil just before he shoots Osman. Müslüm dies. His last wish is that Osman and Selma lead a very happy life together.

Film: Kara Yazma

Year: 1979

Director: Remzi Jöntürk

Scriptwriter: Mehmet Aydın

Cast: İbrahim Tatlıses, Perihan Savaş, Hüseyin Peyda, Ajlan Aktuğ

Plot Summary:

İbo is a poor man who lives in a village. İbo and Emine are in love with each other. But Emine's father, a rich *ağa* (land-owner), does not allow her to marry poor İbo. He wants her to marry rich Kadir Bey. Because İbo does not stay away from Emine, the *ağa*'s men beat him and torture him. But since the people in village support İbo against the *ağa*, he allows İbo to marry his daughter. Yet, he wants *başlık parası*, which is an age-old custom. To find the money the *ağa* wants, İbo goes to İstanbul. First he works as a labourer. Then he becomes a singer and begins to earn money. In the meantime, Kadir Bey asks for Emine's hand and her father accepts it because Kadir promises him to help him become an MP. Emine asks for help from İbo's best friend in the village, Selim. Together they go to İstanbul to find İbo. But Selim rapes Emine and takes her to a brothel to sell her. Time passes. İbo manages to collect the money he needs for *başlık parası*. The day he will go back to the village, Emine comes to the club İbo is working in as a singer. She tells him what has happened to her. İbo goes to the brothel and beats Selim terribly. Emine goes back to village and commits suicide. İbo comes to village too. Seeing Emine's dead body, he bursts into tears.

Film: Kul Kuldun Beter

Year: 1985

Director: Yılmaz Atadeniz

Scriptwriter:

Cast: Müslüm Gürses, Alev Sayın, Ergun Köknar

Plot Summary:

As soon as Şehmuz is released from prison, his enemies begin to follow him. Şehmuz's friend, Ergun, sends his men to pick him up so he is saved. Ergun is one of the owners of a night-club. In the club, Şehmuz meets Zeynep, one of the belly-dancers. They soon fall in love with each other. Ergun's business partner, Cemal, is a very cruel man. He treats the workers badly. He does not want Zeynep to spend her time with Şehmuz; instead he wants her to stay in the club and work more after her dance. Because they do not listen to Cemal, his men beat Şehmuz. To protest Cemal, Zeynep decides not to dance that night. This time, Cemal and his men come to her house and beat her. They want her to stop her relationship with Şehmuz. The same night, Şehmuz's enemies come to her house, too. They have long been trying to find his trace. Zeynep does not tell them where Şehmuz lives. As soon as they leave, she goes to his apartment and learns from Şehmuz that the two men after him are the sons of a man he killed. Şehmuz says that he killed the man because he had stolen Şehmuz's land and killed his entire family. Şehmuz and Zeynep decide to leave İstanbul. They go to one of İstanbul's islands and stay with Tahsin, a friend of Şehmuz from the prison. Zeynep and Şehmuz plan to get married. Yet, one day, his enemies, the two brothers, come to the island. They want to kill Şehmuz; but he talks to them and persuades them that he was right in killing their father. They forgive him. But, this time, Cemal and his men come to the island. They fight and at the end Cemal and his men are killed. Zeynep dies and Şehmuz is badly wounded.

Film: Mavi Mavi

Year: 1985

Director: İbrahim Tatlıses

Scriptwriter: Mehmet Aydın

Cast: İbrahim Tatlıses, Hülya Avşar, Pembe Mutlu

Plot Summary:

Kerim is a bus driver. He lives together with his mother. One day, he meets Sibel, whose sister, Şeniz, is one of the students using the school bus Kerim drives. As opposed to Kerim, Sibel is very rich. She works as an instructor in a fitness center. Kerim soon falls in love with Sibel, who, on the other hand, is determined to play a trick on him. Pretending that she, too, loves him, she invites him to her bedroom. Then she and her friends laugh at him and she looks down on him in front of her rich friends. Kerim slaps her on the face and leaves her house immediately. But, to take his revenge, he soon comes back. He kidnaps Sibel in front of her friends and brings her to his village. He is determined to keep her in the village as long as he wants. Sibel attempts to escape the village but she loses her way and soon Kerim finds her. When she tries to run away one more time, Kerim decides to send her back to her home. Although he is in love with Sibel, Kerim decides to marry a girl from his neighbourhood because he is aware that Sibel is too rich for him to think of marrying her. In the meantime, a rich man, Ruşen, wants to marry Sibel but she does not want him. She is now aware that she too loves Kerim. Very upset about what she has done to him, Sibel goes to Kerim to apologize from him. Kerim, however, tells Sibel that they belong to two different worlds so they cannot be together. They separate. Kerim marries his neighbour's daughter.

Film: Öksüzler

Year: 1986

Director: Temel Gürsu

Scriptwriter: Safa Önal

Cast: Küçük Emrah, Çeçilya, Ahmet Mekin, Turgut Özatay

Plot Summary:

Emrah has a brother, Yusuf, and a sister, Ayşe. Because both their mother and father died, they are homeless. The police find them and

they are placed into an orphanage. Emrah has to separate from Yusuf and Ayşe because they are adopted by a rich family. Later on, Emrah is adopted by another family. Years pass. He begins to work as a mechanic together with his stepfather, Sacit, in his repair shop. Emrah cannot see Yusuf and Ayşe because he does not have their address. One day, while he is singing in the repair shop, one of the customers, Nihat, admires him and gives him his calling card. He is the owner of many night-clubs in İstanbul. Emrah learns that Sacit is acquainted with Cemil, the man who adopted Ayşe and Yusuf. Sacit does not give him the address because he wants Emrah to forget about Ayşe and Yusuf, and accept himself and his wife as his family. They quarrel. Emrah leaves the house. Sacit and his wife feel so sad about the situation. In need of financial help, Emrah finds Nihat. He soon becomes a star. One day, Sacit comes to see Emrah and gives him Cemil's address. Thus, Emrah begins to follow his brother and sister's trace. He finds out that Ayşe has run away home and Yusuf has been working as a drug dealer. Emrah takes Yusuf under his protection and brings him to Sacit's house. Emrah starts to see him as his father. In the meantime, Ayşe finds Emrah. Ayşe, together with her husband, come to İstanbul. Thus Ayşe, Yusuf and Emrah manage to come together and be a family again.

Film: Sabuha

Year: 1978

Director: Oksal Pekmezoğlu

Scriptwriter: Osman F. Seden

Cast: İbrahim Tatlıses, Semra Alper, Erol Taş, Hüseyin Peyda

Plot Summary:

İbo's father, Toprak, is killed by the men of a cruel landowner and his mother, Sabuha, is raped by them when İbo is a small boy. Sabuha commits suicide later on. A shepherd, Recep, looks after İbo until he

becomes a grown-up man. Recep's daughter, Hatça, and İbo are in love with each other. Hatça goes to İstanbul to study. İbo, too, goes to İstanbul and works as a labourer for a while. One day, he is discovered by a rich woman, Semra, who is also a singer, while she is passing by the construction site where İbo is singing while working. In a short period of time, İbo becomes a rich and famous singer. İbo and Hatça start to see each other again. Yet, when Hatça learns that İbo is staying with Semra, she feels upset and leaves İbo to go back to her village. In the meantime, the cruel landowner, Kadir Ağa, still continues with his villainous acts. He wants to capture Recep's land, too. However, he fails all in his attempts because one night a man in black mask who rides a white horse comes to the village and gives money to the poor villagers so that they can pay their debts to Kadir Ağa. This mysterious man also kills Kadir Ağa's men and beats the ağa himself before the villager's eyes. It is revealed that the masked-man is İbo. Kadir Ağa is arrested. İbo and Hatça decide to marry.

Film: Sensiz Yaşıyorum

Year: 1989

Director: Ümit Efekan

Scriptwriter: Erdoğan Tünaş

Cast: Orhan Gencebay, Nilgün Akçaoğlu, Şeyda Paftalı, Ferdi Akarnur

Plot Summary:

Orhan is a famous singer. He is married and has a son. One day, both his wife and their son, Cengiz, are kidnapped. The kidnappers leave a note saying that the woman and the boy will be held until the ransom money is produced; they also warn Orhan not to call the police. Orhan listens to them and decides to give the money they want. Orhan's friend, Naci, however, goes to the police and tells them about the kidnapping. In the meantime, the kidnappers send Orhan's son back to his home with a message: They threaten to murder his wife if Orhan

does not bring them the money that day. Orhan goes to the spot they arranged. Yet, the kidnappers do not release the woman because they notice the police car that has been following them. They begin to escape from the police. They have an accident and everybody in the car, including Orhan's wife, dies. Cengiz blames Orhan because of his mother's death. Frustrated, Orhan becomes addicted to alcohol. Years pass. Cengiz grows up but he still hates his father. One day, Cengiz comes home wounded because he is shot by the police chasing him and one of his friends, with whom he has robbed an exchange office. His friend fires his gun, too, and kills the police officers following them. A woman, Ümran, and her daughter on the street witness this event. The woman describes, however, Cengiz as the murderer instead of his friend because the father of Cengiz's friend is the leader of a mafiotic gang and they threaten Ümran to kill her daughter if she describes the real murderer. Furthermore, Cengiz's friend calls the police and gives them Cengiz's address. In the meantime, Orhan wants his son to go to the police and tell them what has really happened. Cengiz does not accept it. When he is caught by the police, he thinks that Orhan has called the police, which adds to his hatred for his father. In the police station, Ümran confirms that Cengiz is the murderer; so he is imprisoned. Orhan finds Ümran and wants from her to help his son. She rejects his wish because her own daughter's life is in danger. Ümran has been living with her daughter. Her husband left her before their daughter was born. The little girl thinks that her father is working for them in Germany and one day he will come back. Orhan comes to Ümran's house one more time to persuade her but instead he finds the little girl alone in the house. Seeing Orhan, the child thinks that he is her father. Orhan does not deny it. Hearing about what has happened, Ümran gets angry and wants Orhan to stay away from them. The mafia sees Orhan talk to Ümran and they ask her who he is. To protect him, she lies. She tells them that Orhan is her husband. Moved by her

daughter's talk about Orhan as her father, Ümran takes the child and they go to Orhan's house. She says they have to stay together because she told the mafia that her husband is back from Germany. They begin to live together as a family. In time, Ümran falls in love with Orhan, who is still in love with his dead wife, Aysun. Realizing that Orhan cannot love herself, Ümran leaves his house. In the meantime, Cengiz has been awaiting trial for murder. The mafiotic men kidnap Ümran's daughter to guarantee that she will lie at the court. Orhan finds and rescues her daughter from their hands. Seeing her child, Ümran tells the truth at the court. Cengiz is released. They walk together happily as a big family.

Film: Seven Unutmaz

Year: 1978

Director: Çetin İnanç

Scriptwriter:

Cast: Hakkı Bulut, Suna Yıldızoğlu, Hüseyin Peyda, Enis Fosforoğlu

Plot Summary:

Esen, a little girl, wants to be friends with Hakkı, who is the son of a maid working in Esen's father's house, despite all the protests of her father. One day, the two children ride a horse together; but Esen hurts her arm when they fall off the horse. Hearing of the accident, Esen's father, Hulusi, gets mad and kicks Hakkı and his mother out of his house. While walking together aimlessly, Hakkı's mother falls down and dies because she has long been suffering from tuberculosis. People from a village nearby come to Hakkı's help; he begins to live with one of the families from the village. One day, Hakkı gets sick and loses his eyesight. Years pass; Hakkı grows up. He becomes a very talented *bağlama* player. Esen, too, grows up and becomes a beautiful young woman. Nevin, the daughter of the family Hakkı has been living with, is in love with him. Esen is engaged with a rich and young doctor whose

name is Kenan. One day Kenan comes to Hakkı's village. Deeply impressed by his singing, he wants to examine Hakkı's eyes to see if there is a possibility of his recovery from blindness. Kenan decides to operate Hakkı. Hakkı, accompanied by his friend, Sami, go to İstanbul. Kenan introduces him to Esen but she cannot recognize him. She is very much impressed by his singing, too. Esen wants Hakkı to stay in their house until the operation. After the operation, Hakkı begins to see again and tells Kenan that he wants to see again the girl he was once deeply in love with. Kenan learns that the girl Hakkı is talking about is Esen. He tells Hakkı that Esen is his fiancée and wants him to hide who he is from Esen. They return to Esen's house; there, Hakkı remembers the past. He finds an old photograph of his father in the house. Seeing him with the picture, the butler in the house understands who Hakkı is and tells that to Hulusi as soon as possible. In the meantime, Kenan decides to leave Esen because he does not want to separate Hakkı from her. Hulusi talks to Hakkı and wants him to stay away from his daughter. Hakkı leaves the house. Kenan talks to Esen and tells her who Hakkı really is. Esen goes out to look for him. She finds him singing in a night-club and brings him back to her house. Talking about his feeling of hatred toward Hakkı, Hulusi tells Kenan that he once fell in love with Hakkı's mother, who preferred one of the servants in the house to him. Hulusi tries to persuade Esen to marry Kenan, but, Kenan leaves Esen. Threatened by Hulusi, and upset due to Kenan's sufferings, Hakkı locks himself in his room and blinds his eyes. Despite Esen's cries, Hakkı leaves the house. Esen follows him; Hulusi threatens to kill Hakkı if she goes with him. Hulusi fires his gun but instead of Hakkı, Nevin, who has come to İstanbul to find Hakkı, is shot and killed. Esen decides to stay with Hakkı until the end of her life.

Film: Son Sabah

Year: 1978

Director: Natuk Baytan

Scriptwriter: Erdoğan Tünaş

Cast: Ferdi Tayfur, Oya Aydoğan, Aliye Rona, Macit Flordun

Plot Summary:

Ferdi comes back from Germany to his village. He is in love with Gülcan, who is from the same village. However, because there is a blood feud between Ferdi's family and that of Gülcan, they cannot get married. Moreover, Gülcan's brother, Kâzım, wants her to marry Seyit, who is a rich man. Gülcan and Ferdi decide to escape from the village. Learning of their plan, Kâzım and his men beat Ferdi and torture him. Gülcan saves him and they manage to get out of the village. But Kâzım and his men find them and take Gülcan back to the village. They cannot find Ferdi because a woman, Cemile, Ferdi and Gülcan meet, help Ferdi hide from them. But, since Cemile falls in love with Ferdi, she lies to him about Gülcan. She makes him believe that Gülcan left Ferdi. But, later on she confesses Ferdi the truth. In the meantime, because Gülcan becomes pregnant by Ferdi out of wedlock, her family members sentence her to death. The day her brother, Kâzım and Seyit will kill Gülcan, Ferdi comes to the village and saves her. Moreover, he persuades Gülcan's father, Haşım Ağa, to give permission to their marriage.

Film: Utanıyorum

Year: 1984

Director: Melih Gülgen

Scriptwriter: Erdoğan Tünaş

Cast: Ferdi Tayfur, Nilgün Akçaoğlu, Fatih Özses, Tuncer Sevi

Plot Summary:

Ferdi is a rich and famous singer. He is married to Sevil and they have a little son. One day three robbers break in their house. They threaten to kill Ferdi's family if he does not give them the money they want. The robbery has been planned by a man whose name is Naci. The robbers leave the house when they get the money. Ferdi and his family go on a holiday. They stay at a luxurious hotel. However, Naci is there, too. He secretly watches Sevil while she is swimming and sunbathing. One day, he breaks in their room when Sevil is alone because Ferdi has gone fishing with his son. Naci, who was previously working as a mechanic, tells her that he already knew her. He fell in love with her when he saw her bring her car to the repair shop he was working in. He rapes her and then runs away. Sevil cannot tell Ferdi what has happened. When they return to their house, Naci begins to phone and disturb Sevil. She is still ashamed of talking to Ferdi about the rape. She decides to murder Naci. She goes to a hotel with him. In the meantime, having heard her talking to a man on the phone, Ferdi follows her. While she is trying to stab Naci, Ferdi enters the room. While the men are fighting, Sevil runs away and goes to the top floor of the hotel. She jumps down out of shame and dies. Ferdi goes to the police and wants Naci to be arrested. Naci's friends call Ferdi and tell him where Naci lives. Ferdi finds Naci and begins to follow him. He catches him the moment he is about to rape a little girl. They fight and Ferdi stabs him to death.

Film: Vurmayın

Year: 1987

Director: Ümit Efekan

Scriptwriter: Erdoğan Tünaş

Cast: Küçük Emrah, Çeçilya, Süleyman Turan, Cem Özer

Plot Summary:

Emrah and his family members work as the caretakers in an apartment building in İstanbul. Everybody works hard to put aside the money

needed for Emrah's older brother, Mahmut's, education. Their father and Emrah do extra jobs. One of the tenants in the building, Leyla, is a prostitute and the man she works for, Cemil, wants her to persuade Zeliha, Emrah's sister, to work for him, too. In the meantime, Mahmut's girlfriend leaves him because she is rich but he is poor. Frustrated, Mahmut starts not to attend his classes; he begins to look for ways of being rich in a short time. He gambles but loses a lot of money. To pay his debts, Mahmut starts to work for Cemil. Cemil uses him as drug dealer. Mahmut meets Leyla, too. He frequently visits her apartment. The family soon learn that Mahmut has quit the school. Leyla introduces Zeliha to Cemil, who persuades her to be his girlfriend by lying her that he will marry her. Cemil takes Zeliha to a hotel, in which her father has been working as a cleaner. Seeing his daughter with a man in a hotel room, he slaps her on the face. Zeliha runs away. Very upset, the father has a heart attack and dies. Emrah's family is expelled from the apartment building. They move to a *gecekondu*. Mahmut has been long followed by the police. He wants Emrah to take on his crime and promises him that he will go back to school. Emrah yields to his brother and he is arrested by the police instead of Mahmut. When Emrah is released, he finds out that Mahmut has not kept his promise. He also learns that Zeliha has become a prostitute and Gülcan, his girlfriend, has married to a rich man. He begins to look for Mahmut; he is determined to rescue him. But he cannot; his brother is killed before his eyes. Emrah and his mother stay alone. They decide to leave İstanbul. They get on a bus to go back to their homelands.

Film: Yuvasız Kuşlar

Year: 1979

Director: Natuk Baytan

Scriptwriter: Erdoğan Tünaş

Cast: Ferdi Tayfur, Perihan Savaş, Aliye Rona, Turgut Özatay

Plot Summary:

Ferdi is poor and looking after his sick father. He falls in love with a rich girl, Tuba, who has come to Ferdi's village in her holiday. They become close to each other, but when her holiday is over Tuba goes back to Istanbul. When his father dies, Ferdi and his mother decide to go to Istanbul. They stay Ferdi's uncle's house in Istanbul, who is a poor fisherman. Ferdi soon becomes a rich and famous singer. One day, he comes across Tuba, but she does not recognize him because she has been suffering from amnesia as a result of a traffic accident she had. Tuba's father wants her to marry a rich man, Cem, whom Tuba does not like at all. Tuba tells Cem that she can have any man she wants and thus she does not need him. When Cem wants her to prove this, they decide to play a game: Tuba will show Cem that she can make Ferdi Tayfur marry her. Eventually, Tuba wins the game; Ferdi, deeply in love with her, wants to marry her. Tuba really falls in love with Ferdi, too, but, on their wedding day, Cem tells Ferdi about the game. Extremely upset, Ferdi leaves Tuba and on his way home has a traffic accident. He becomes blind. Together with his mother, he goes back to his village. Tuba follows him to the village. She is pregnant by Ferdi. She lives with him in the village without telling him who she really is. She works hard and looks after Ferdi, who thinks that she is a poor woman whose name is Fatma. When Tuba gives birth to her daughter, Hülya, Ferdi wants the baby to call him 'father'. Five or six years pass. Ferdi decides to have an operation for his eyes. He begins to see again. Learning who Fatma and Hülya really are, Ferdi decides to marry Tuba/Fatma again.