T.C.

KADİR HAS ÜNİVERSİTESİ

SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI

BLUES AND ARABESK

A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

YASEMİN YURDAKUL

TEZ DANIŞMANI: PROF. DR. CLIFFORD ENDRES

İstanbul-2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Clifford Endres for his guidance, patience and encouragement throughout the process of my studies.

I am grateful to Dr. Mary Lou O'Neil for her support, invaluable comments and above all her faith in me.

I wish to make a particular expression of my gratitude to my husband, Elşan Yurdakul, who has been with me all along the way, giving constant intellectual and personal support from the beginning till the end of my studies.

ABSTRACT

Music is a reflection of a culture. There is a vast collection of musical genres in human history as many as the cultures in the history of mankind. Blues and arabesk are only two examples. Is it possible that these two distinct musical genres formed on lands far apart have common traits?

This paper examines the parallelism of blues and arabesk in terms of the formation of the genres. Both blues and arabesk are the products of cultures of people located in a new land carrying their cultural traditions of the places they have left. The music is formed through interaction with the culture met, roots in the old tradition. Blues is not African music, it is African American. Arabesk is neither Turkish Folk nor Turkish Art music.

When themes are analyzed it reveals that the strength of these two musical genres in terms of the bonds, the solidarity they offer their audiences generates through the use of the ‘‘implied narrative’’(Stokes) which is known by both the singer and the audience. By dealing with the results of the conditions, the music eloquently fulfills its protest characteristic without protesting the authority directly.

In determining the parallelism of two musical genres so different, the cultures they were formed in and especially the experiences of people play an important role. Both blues and arabesk are the products of the culture of their people and the setting they were formed in.

I. INTRODUCTION

People have long been living in societies within a system of common goals and purposes which creates a certain way of life that we call culture. These learned meanings and behaviors are carried along and through experience and interaction, new ones are discovered, tested and adapted as the society develops (Raymond Williams).

Music, which is one form of the expression of these common meanings, is a reflection of its own culture. Music has been one of the most popular forms of art from the primitive societies to the most advanced ones. Music owes its popularity to a few factors, its entertainment quality and being easily imitated. Audiences can easily relate to the themes and in most cases find identification with the theme or the lyrics since music is human expression. Human voice alone can sometimes be the only instrument necessary; therefore, it is possible to create music without any other aid as long as there is a human being present. This leads to the importance of oral traditions in the history of mankind. We might not have had an idea of any of the tribal cultures if oral traditions did not exist. However, it is important to remember music by definition requires the element of rhythm. Rhythm is an aspect of nature and therefore every human being has a sense of rhythm. Music as a result is a valid account of a human culture because it can be preserved easily no matter what the conditions are as long as there are human beings with emotions and experiences to express. These human beings sharing the same culture carry their culture, contact other cultures, observe , test and apply the new meanings they develop. That was exactly how blues music was formed and that is why it reflects the African American culture so precisely.

African American culture developed in America but was founded on its African cultural heritage. However, it is not fully African since no African in Africa has experienced what the African American has. Nor is it fully American since no white American has been through the same experience. When Africans set foot in America as slaves brought against their will, they

were treated as savages with no human qualities, therefore no culture. They were deprived of their freedom, and any human need possible but one thing – the rich oral tradition of the African culture which they used to reflect their pain, joy and emotions, which in turn accounted for their painful experience: blues music. As Toni Morrison implies, blues is black. (Gilroy 181-182).

In the 1960s when economical and social factors drew the migrants from villages to big cities in Turkey, migrants arrived equipped with their cultural heritage and traditions. Their values were tested in the urban conditions where they were exploited and treated as second class citizens, resulting in a new ghetto culture which formed the sound of its own: arabesk music. Arabesk was an answer to the need of self-expression these masses sought for. It was the medium in which they found identity and solitary. They were not villagers anymore nor were they city people. The music was not the Turkish Folk music that they had been listening to in the villages, neither was it Turkish Art music nor Western music. It was arabesk, a new genre with lyrics, composition and an audience of its own. It was their own music.

Despite the fact that blues and arabesk are different music types, they have similarities in how they were formed and their cultural setting. However, the most striking trait that they share is the ‘‘implied narrative’’ (Stokes 143). That is, both the bluesman and his audience – African Americans – are aware of the racial segregation and oppression, just as the arabesk singer and his audience are aware of the poverty and mistreatment. In neither of the genres there is a direct challenge to the authority or a direct reference to the cause of the miserable conditions, the mistreatment and the system itself since that is all that they live. Both blues and arabesk draw on the existing knowledge that is commonly shared by their audience. By talking not about the slavery, racial discrimination and the oppression, but about the consequences, blues accounts for African American cultural history providing solidarity for its audiences. In the context of arabesk, it is the same approach that raises awareness to the

miserable conditions and accounts for the cultural change. The significance of blues and arabesk as music genres which helped their audiences in tenuous social position to find identities and express their emotions, lies in the quality of protesting the authority without referring to it directly. Their power lies in the sophistication with which they negotiate authority, build meaning and build identity. Keil argues:

> Regardless of the forces which have shaped Negro culture, it exist, and within this culture a number of individuals have already found viable identities as men and women. In this respect, the entertainers in general and today's bluesmen in particular are outstanding – they take a firm stance at the center of contemporary Negro culture (29).

Comparing blues and arabesk provides insights and appreciation for people who have preserved and revealed their identity through such refined musical expressions. As Orhan Gencebay the most outstanding arabesk composer and performer sings:

> Ben toprağın sinesinde
> insan denilen bir canım
> hem düşünür hem severim
> budur taştan farklı yanım
> her maddenin zerresini
> bedenimde taşıyorsam
> ben ne bir taş ne bir ağaç
> insanlığımla insanım
> ağaçların özgürlüğü
> ancak ağaç gibi olur
> benim özgürlüğüm ise
> düşüncemle hayat bulur (Özbek 288)

I translate this as:

In the bosom of the earth

a living being I am

I think and love

that is what makes me different than a rock

even though my body is composed of

all the atoms of all the forms

I am neither a rock nor a tree

Human I am by all means

freedom of a tree is as a tree’s can be

my freedom is realized

by my thoughts

II. THE ORIGINS OF BLUES MUSIC

2.1. THE JOURNEY

Music has always been a clear reflection of the culture that creates it. What is more it is the medium through which change and social movements as well as history and demographic movements of human beings can be detected. Blues music is a rich historical outgrowth of the African American culture. Blues music is genuinely African American since it is the result of the interactions of African slaves with white Americans in North America; it is formed through an experience no African in Africa has been through. It was born in the New World, originating from its African heritage in the slave bound, agricultural South, from where it traveled up to the Northern industrialized cities to take the form and the popularity we know today. The Blues conveys the long journey the African Americans had to go through – slaves in plantations, free sharecroppers and tenants in debt and the movement from the rural to the ruthless urban setting.

During the Atlantic slave trade many Africans were captured and dragged to America to serve the economic system of slavery. They were brought to satisfy the required labor needed for ‘‘primitive accumulation,’’ in Marxist terms necessary for the transition to capitalism, which is ‘‘…an accumulation not the result of the capitalist mode of production, but its starting point.’’ (qtd in Wrack 3). So the slaves along with the gold and silver found in America were the sources of the funds for capitalist investment. Since the New World slavery was happening at a time that it was coming to an end in Europe, the justification found was to relate it to skin color and race. As a result, the system had to degrade the slave to next to nothing to justify the status quo. The color of the slaves’ skin was different so were their features, therefore they were ugly, the slaves did not understand what they were told, they had to be stupid, and so God must have created them to be the slaves of the white man. This unfortunate reasoning was the pathetic excuse for the Atlantic Slave Trade to disguise its

economic causes and cover up the injustice and crime committed against an entire black race in America so late in history.

> As we know from slave narratives and other historical accounts, every effort was made to strip them of their cultural heritage, even their identity as human beings, so that their owners could more comfortably regard them not as people with rights but as property, mere aid to production (Endres 2).

The slaves deprived of any human rights had one way to express themselves –orally and that is when their traditional African cultural heritage the tradition of the ‘‘griots’’ came into effect again. The griots,

> . . . were the libraries of their tribe. They held the history and the culture of their tribe, often in songs, and passed that knowledge on to their descendants. The African Americans who synthesized the blues from earlier genres of black folk music were descendants of the griots. . . . Through their songs, they often expressed discontent with their situation and their hope for change (Crosby 3).

The new griots, the slave songsters accounted for their experience, sorrow and happiness through music, the only form of expression that they were allowed to possess. Frederick Douglass depicted the slaves accounting for their daily life, and experiences through music vividly in his slave narrative, *The Life of Frederick Douglass:*

> While on their way they . . . reverberate with their wild songs, revealing at once the highest joy and the deepest sadness. They would compose and sing as they went along consulting neither time nor tune. . . . Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy. . . I have often sung to drown my sorrow, but seldom to express my happiness…The singing of a man cast away upon a desolate island might be as appropriately

> considered as evidence of contentment and happiness, as the singing
>
> of a slave. . . (57-58).

The oral tradition of music was the one aspect of life that helped an entire enslaved race in America to survive. Slaves expressed their sufferings and what it meant to be a slave through music, carrying on the African tradition of griots. The white man overlooked the rich oral culture Africans had brought with them, their strength, and the strength they got from music. Whites thought that blacks were savages and did not have human identity and culture. But the white man could not chain the brain, heart and the creativity of the slave. On the contrary he made the blacks bond more closely to expose their wit and creativity. In *Small Acts,* Toni Morrison states: ‘‘Black Americans were sustained and healed and nurtured by the translation of their experience into art, above all in the music’’ (qtd.in Gilroy 181). This quotation sums up the essence of blues music and its strength. Blues is American, formed in that country with roots deep in Africa.

The oral tradition included field hollers and worksongs which the slaves had brought from Africa and given new meaning in America. Worksongs were used to pace the rhythm of work and coordinated the work in the fields. ‘‘The rhythms of the songs necessarily reflected the rhythms of repetitive labor, and these cross-rhythms found their way into the blues’’ (Crosby 5).

The lyrics of a work song named ‘‘Take This Old Hammer’’ by John Hurt are explicit in terms of theme which is common in early rural blues: a spike-driver exhausted and wishes to run away.

> Take this old hammer, take it to the captain,
>
> Take this old hammer,man take it to the captain,
>
> Tell him I’m goin’, tell him I’m gone.

If he asks you, was I runnin',

If he asks you, was I runnin',

Tell him I was flyin', man tell him I was flyin'.

Take this old hammer, take it to the captain,

Take this old hammer, man take it to the captain,

Tell him I'm goin', tell him I'm gone (qtd in Oliver 26).

Hollering on the cotton plantations was a form by which the slaves expressed their mood through music. The workers in the fields expressed their mood through music as field hollers and in time the phrases and lyrics became longer to form the basis for the earliest form of blues. According to Son House and Sonny Terry these were the songs made up on the spot in the fields to express discontentment of the situation, the events, and as a result having the blues (Crosby 4).

The oral traditions of African culture helped the slaves survive and account for their experience using the rythms which formed the basis for blues.

> Nevertheless, fragments of African tribal culture survived in oral expression- in the hollers of fieldwork, in the lullabies and courtship songs of a constrained domestic life, and in the fervent preaching and singing of religious congregations. Here could be found the rhythms, harmonies and imagery of African music… (Endres 2).

At this point it is worth talking about Spirituals and Seculars. Spirituals were the songs that expressed the sorrows and sufferings and hope for the divine justice to set things right. Seculars on the other hand expressed feelings of escape, complaints about the mistreatement of the slaves and the torment the slaves were subjected to (Crosby 3).

Frederick Douglass recorded this song in his autobiography:

We raise the wheat,

Dey gib us de corn,

We bake de bread,

Dey gib us the crust,

We sif de meal,

Dey gib us de huss,

We peel de meat,

Dey gib us de skin,

And dat's de way,

Dey take us in.

We skim de pot,

Sey gib us de liquor

And say dat's good enough for nigger,

Walk over, walk over,

Your butter and fat.

Poor nigger, you can't git over dat,

Walk over (qtd. in Crosby 4).

Slaves were deprived of all human rights, saw their children sold, saw them become slaves, worked to death in cotton fields, but never lost hope. They expressed their unbearable sorrow, their everyday matters, love, hate, longings and above all hope through one thing that could not be, or more realistically was not taken away from them – music and dance.

Music was the one thing that was not prohibited, on the contrary, it was deliberately allowed to give the slaves a way to release tension. Slaves worked six days a week and many plantation owners let them hold dances or even attend those at neigboring plantations. The first instrument required in the early forms of blues was the human voice which was

accompanied by a string attached to the wall and was played by running a bottle along the string known as ‘‘the one strand on the wall’(Ferris 37). This simplicity and the rhythms made it ideal for dancing. The white man never was aware of either the strength of the African cultural heritage or how rich it was. Never could the white men have dreamed that the African American experience would result in a music – blues – that would shake the whole world.

The strength of African American culture and the experience the music articulated is very clearly stated by Charles Keil:

> ‘The entertainment component of negro culture is significant in at least four basic respects. First it is the one area in Negro life that was clearly not stripped away or obliterated by slavery – the rituals I speak of have an undisputable West African foundation. Second, unlike the immigrant cultural traditions which have been either diluted or dissolved almost completely in the American context, this important cultural legacy linking American Negroes to Africa has not only survived but has thrived on adversity and grown stronger through the years.Third, it is now a full-fledged tradition in its own right. One does not have to be a specialist in African cultures ever on the alert for Africanism, or a psychologist of race relations studiously attuned to the marks of oppression in order to understand a performance by B.B. King, a sermon by Reverend C.L Franklin, a Moms Mabley comedy routine, or a John Coltrane saxophone solo. Familiarity (preferably intimate) with contemporary Negro culture and some sensitivity to the particular form of expression in question-music, rhetoric, choreography-are the only basic analytic prerequsites. Finally and most important, the entertainers are masters

> of sound, movement, timing, the spoken word. One can therefore find in their performances the essentials and defining features – the very core in fact-of Negro culture as a whole (Urban Blues 16).

2.2. THE CIVIL WAR

While in the South the agricultural system and slavery created by it were in effect, the North had become an industrialised society. The main and single crop that brought in money, in fact the capital to found a rich South, cotton production, required labor only, therefore, leaving no room for paid labor which is one of the aspects of Capitalism. This agricultural system did not need qualified or skilled workers so for most of the racist plantation owners it was perfectly appropriate to have slaves and even better to degrade and keep them in the dark. In the North, however, skilled workers were needed, not slaves. ‘‘There was also conflict on whether slavery should be practised in the Western territories recently acquired’’ (encarta). .One other issue was the ‘‘tariffs’’. The South did not produce much apart from cotton and tobacco so had to import a lot. On the other hand the North had to apply high tariffs so as not to be affected by foreign competition, especially British. North invested tariff money in roads and canals, which were necessary for the development and prosperity of capitalism (encarta).

All of the above were the economical and social conditions that led to the Civil War. The most important cause, however, was slavery. It was a destructive war for the South and the North which went on until 1865, after which slavery was abolished by the Emancipation Proclamation, the Thirteenth Amendment in 1868. The Black man was freed.

Economical systems and superstructures, let alone social values, do not change overnight. The South, since it never concentrated on industrialisation and had an agricultural structure, still needed to cultivate the land and produce cotton. Therefore, the South had to find ways of enslaving the ex-slaves to maintain the economic system which was damaged by the war.

> Defeat in the Civil War severely destabilized slavery-based social, political, and economic hierarchies, demanding in some cases that southerners develop new ones. After the Civil War, the southern ruling class was compelled to adapt to new exigencies of race relations and a restructuctured, as well as reconstructing, economic system. For African Americans, the end of slavery brought hope for unprecedented control of their own lives and economic prospects. After emancipation, however, most black southerners found themselves steadily drawn into an exploitative sharecropping system that effectively prohibited their becoming property owners with a chance to claim their share of the American Dream.Unlike many poor whites who also found themselves under the thumb of white landowners, the rural black masses in the post-Reconstruction South were gradually subjected to a cradle-to-grave segregation regime . . . (Andrews 2).

After the war African Americans thus faced new forms of exploitation. Many former slaves became sharecroppers who were always in debt, since the money they would have earned was not even enough to pay the rent for land and tools. Some tenants who were better off than sharecroppers also faced the difficulties of trying to sell their products in a highly segregated society which forced them to sell for very low prices. Some slave owners became landlords and some slaves remained working on farms for nothing, losing even the lifetime protection of the plantation owner. Jim Crow laws enabled the white man to imprison the black man for no reason at all. Many Black prisoners were rented to landowners, the prison guards got the money and the black man was a slave again (Oliver 190).

> Far from any legal constraints many plantation bosses were a law unto themselves, as Bessie Tucker, a Texas singer with one of the most dolorous

voices in the blues, indicated on Mean Old Master, recorded in Dallas in 1929.

Oliver supplies the lyrics:

Our boss may come here-we did not run,(twice)

Oh master got a pistol, he have a great big gun.

Master, Master aah-ah, please turn me a-loose,(twice)

I ain't got no money; I got a good excuse (13).

The freedom the blacks were given was not realized in the real sense of the word due to the system and the economy. The South could not survive without the manpower the agricultural system required, so slavery was disguised in new ways, namely, the sharecropping and tenant systems.

In the principal states producing cotton in 1930 there were a million and a half sharecroppers working under the system and of some 225,000 tenant families in Mississipi at that time-of whom more than seventy per cent were black-over 135,000 were in the lowest economic category (Oliver 16).

After the Civil War, free blacks were brought to the Mississipi Delta as workers who were promised money and rights, which were really rare in other parts of the South.
They were the ones who cleared the land and made it ready for agriculture. It was the black man who made cotton king again. It was the Black man who suffered a different type of torture –segregation, attacks of the Ku- Klux- Klan, poverty and lack of civil rights. Surviving under such circumstances requires a lot of strength, on which the African Americans relied since the day they set foot in the New World. They had to get along with the white men, which meant they could not oppose anything – social slavery marked their lives. It was the songs that told the story again just as they did during the slavery period before Emancipation.

Blues singer Jimmy Gordon spoke for many when he sang:

I drink to keep from worrying and I laugh to keep from crying, (twice)

I keep a smile on my face so the public won't know my mind.

Some people thinks I'm happy but they sure don't know my mind, (twice)

They see this smile on my face, but my heart is bleeding all the time (qtd in Oliver 20).

The new plantation system with its racial discrimination and inhuman conditions were only dealt with through the identity the African Americans had formed, supported by the communal lifestyle they had formed, as well as music and dance to tell their stories. In the early days of slavery their notion of family was taken away from them. Now though they had a better sense of family, they still lived close together and had not lost the feeling of being part of the bigger family: Black society. Tenants lived in small houses glued together and were out on the porch on long summer nights where music, dance, and human bonds were formed. They went to church on Sundays.Other social activities like picnics took place. ''As the preacher voiced the ethic of the church community, the blues singer expressed the aspirations of the blues culture'' (Titon 29).

The prohibition period in 1903 brought about a boom in music. When alcohol was banned in the South , bootlegging became common practice. Parties usually took place in the remote countryside or juke joints . Music was a catalizor for drinking longer hours, and blues by its improvisation characteristic could be carried on for longer periods of time,which made it popular both in the countryside and the urban areas, especially in Chicago (Titon 27). Many bluesmen, especially the country bluesmen have been through the Saturday night parties.

House himself, who said, '' I could near about call Charley (Patton) 'papa',''
recalls them fondly today as an old man in his seventies, and so do many musicians
of the next generation, like Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters, who grew up
during those decades and were indelibly influenced by the blues played
then at the Saturday night dances (Titon 28).

When the blues first appeared is a debatable subject. There are speculations that there were blues songs sung in New Orleans in1890s. However a more dependable estimation is that it comes out at around 1900s (Titon 25).

Another viewpoint is Barlow's: ''The first notation of Delta Blues lyrics was made in 1903 by Charles Peabody, a white archeologist who had hired a team of black diggers at a site near Stovall, Mississipi'' (qtd. in Crosby 6).

As to the development of the blues, Ferris states:

> Blues probably developed after the Civil War when black musicians were free to travel througout the South and develop their repertories. W.C. Handy and Big Bill Broonzy mention that the music was sung before 1900 and since the mobility so important to blues performers in this century was not possible before the Civil War, we can speculate that the music developed as a separate musical genre when the South moved from a plantation to a sharecropping economy (31).

Country blues was self- taught, and learned by listening to a master, and based on some old negro song that had helped the slaves keep up with the hard work. It was self-accompanied and sung with a guitar, sometimes accompanied by a harmonica.

The Civil War, the turning point in the life of African Americans –not the only one though – freed the blacks and gave them the chance of mobility and helped to spread out the most outstanding product of African American culture: blues. After the Civil War many ex- slaves migrated to the North and took their culture with them, spreading it to the whole country. Interaction with the culture they met and the conditions faced in the industrialised urban lifestyle, for which they were neither prepared nor ready found its expression in the blues music.

Among the reasons for migration was the devastation of the cotton economy by the boll-weevil. Many sharecroppers were unemployed, had huge debts, and went to the cities in the

North. Others who could not stand segregation moved to the North, with the hope of a more decent life. The black man, freed but with no skill other than that of working with physical power, got employment that required it. He was given the jobs nobody else would take (Oliver 18).

The appeal of the North was job opportunities and escape from segregation, Jim Crow laws and basically the journey to the realization of the freedom which the blacks had not yet felt. World War I was a time when immigration from Europe stopped and the need for labor in the North was desperate.That was when a great number of blacks were recruited and taken to the North. It was during the same time that Henry Ford needed more workers for the expanding business and offered five dollars per day and started employing blacks (Oliver 30). Blind Blake, who followed some migrants on their way to Detroit to work for the Ford Motor Company sang on their behalf:

I'm goin' to Detroit, get myself a good job, (twice)
Tried to stay around here with the starvation mob.

I'm goin' to get a job, up there in Mr. Fords place, (twice)
Stop these eatless days from starin' me in the face.

When I start makin' money, she don't need to come around, (twice)
'Cause I don't want her now, Lord I'm Detroit bound.

Because they got wild women in Detroit, that's all I want to see, (twice)
Wild women and bad whiskey would make a fool out of me (Oliver 30).

Most writers agree on the fact that the heart of the blues was the Mississipi Delta, which blacks brought to life, tamed and lived in. That is the place where what we could call rural blues emerged:

> From the first issues of race records in the 1920's, Delta blues singers were widely recorded, and some of the best-known names were Son House, Bukka White, Arthur ''Big Boy'', Crudup, Robert Johnson, and Charley Patton. More recent blues stars such as Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf and B.B. King are also from the Delta (Ferris 8).

And Peter Guralnick adds:

> For our purposes I think it is enough to say that the blues came out of Mississipi, sniffed around in Memphis and then settled in Chicago where it is most likely it will peacefully live out the rest of its days (46).

As Vance states, ''cotton obsessed, Negro obsessed, and flood ridden, it is the deepest South, the heart of Dixie, America's super-plantation belt''(qtd. in Ferris 3). The Delta had the proper atmosphere for her Black children to create an identity and a culture of their own at unbearably high costs like the sweat, and blood of thousands and above all the humiliation of an entire race brought to her against their will. As the master got rougher in his ways her children fled to northern towns, '' following the highways 51 and 61, which linked their towns with Northern industrial centers like St. Louis and Chicago. Singers also followed these routes, and their verses reflect the map of highways leading North'' (Ferris 6).

III. SETTING

3.1. IMMIGRATION AND URBANIZATION

The movement to the North where conditions were better and job opportunities higher was realized by many Black men. They moved from town to town for a better life, carrying the music through which they had been expressing themselves for decades. When the Great Depression swept the whole counry in the 1930s, theAfrican Americans were the first ones to be fired. Urban life was totally a different experience for the ex -slave and he got through that with the same old strength – his music.

As Muddy Waters tells about his own experience:

> I wanted to get out of Mississipi in the worst way, man. Go back? What I want to go back for? They had such as my mother and the older people brainwashed that people can't make it too good in the city. But I figured if anyone else was living in the city I could make it there, too' (Guralnick 67).

Not everyone thought the same. As Titon points out many returned or stayed back in the South. However, it was certain that Chicago had become the place that represented escape.

Shelby Brown's experience was different than that of Muddy Waters:

> One thing about Chicago, people told me that money was even growing on trees there. I went and got me two sacks to carry with me for that money tree in Chicago. I went there and my brother, he saw me with two sacks. He say, ''Shelby,what you carrying them sacks for?'' I said, ''Man, I'm looking for that money tree that's here in Chicago.''. . . I stayed there thirteen years and then I come back home to Leland. It got too rough in Chicago.'' Like ShelbyBrown many families moved back and forth between Chicago and Mississipi (Ferris 6-7).

The first blues records dating back to the 1920's, were made under the name ‘’race records’’ The first recording was by Mamie Smith who sang in Chicago, and as the popularity of ‘‘race records’’ grew, record company directors went south and recorded many of the country bluesmen. Blues music was a hit and had settled in the urban area and called Urban Blues.

> By the late 1920s a definite ‘‘city’’ influence could be heard on records, if by that one understands a number of tendencies: small instrumental groups, instead of soloists accompanying themselves; songs which reflect urban concerns (house-rent, policy) and omitted rural references (mules, chopping cotton, floods) in their lyrics; . . .This kind of blues might be called ‘’urban blues’’ because of a self-conscious polish and elegance coupled with a tongue-in-cheek bawdiness (Titon 51).

When analysing the development of country blues into urban blues, standardized forms,regular beginnings or endings two or more instruments characterize the change (Keil 218). Apart from this definition of form the most enlightening analysis of the difference between rural and city blues in terms of the role of blues artist is articulated by Charles Keil:

> Stated another way, a bluesman in the country or for the first time coming to grips with city life sings primarily to ease his worried mind, to get things out of his system, to feel better; it is of secondary importance whether or not others are present and deriving similar satisfactions from his music. . . . An urban bluesman senses a broader and deeper obligation to the community or, rather, to negro communities across the country, since the urban blues singer is practically by definition itinerant. Individual catharsis is still a *sine qua non* to successful performance, but in an anomic, bewildering urban situation, characterized by shifting values and interpersonal conflicts, people expect something more than a personal lament from a singer. He

> must not only state common problems clearly and concisely but must in some sense take steps toward their analysis and solution (76).

Urban conditions were not exactly the remedy for the ex-slave who was in quest of equality, happiness, or at least humane treatment. In both the northern and southern cities blacks were not welcome by whites into their districts and were crammed in black areas.

> Chicago's black population in 1900 was a little more than thirty thousand. By 1925 this figure was quadrupled, and the numbers steadily increased between the wars with the result that some four hundred thousand Blacks lived there in 1950; only a score of cities in the United States had a higher *total* population.The residential area did not expand in proportion and more and more Blacks were crammed into the congested South Side (Oliver 166).

In *Blues Fell This Morning,* Oliver, moves on to mention other cities with the same population problems such as New York, Detroit, and Philadelphia. The living conditions were poor and miserable. Six families sharing an apartment built for one, people who lived in basements with no light and ventilation, slums worse than anywhere on earth were not the promised land. But if you think of the housing that they left behind in the South with no toilets, bath, running water, gas or electricity, it is obvious why most black men wanted to try their chance in the North.

As Du Bois states in *The Souls of Black Folk*, ''to be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardship''(10-11) Blacks were the poorest of the poor with additional burdens in the form of racial discrimination. They had been deprived of all human rights, and many were left in ignorance.

> What in the name of reason does this nation expect of a people, poorly trained and

> hard pressed in severe economic competition, without political rights and with ludicrously inadequate common school facilities? What can it expect but crime and listlessness, offset here and there by the dogged struggles of the fortunate and more determined who are themselves buoyed by the hope that in due time the country will come to its senses (Du Bois 181)?

Crime, gambling and prostitution in black communities is mostly the result of the socio-economic conditions an entire race suffered from, which was only worsened by racial segregation. The presupposition of the Blacks as lazy, having animal drives and low or no moral values as racial traits and inheritences, simply represented an ignorant and overwhelmingly prejudist viewpoint to explain crime and violence in the black community. There were not many options for the black man to choose from.

Richard Wright depicts the possible variations of his character Bigger Thomas in the introduction to his novel *Native Son*, which reveals the writers viewpoint toward the African American society in the late '30s.

> Now for the variations in the Bigger Thomas pattern. Some of the negroes living under these conditions got religion, felt that Jesus would redeem the void of living, felt that the more bitter life was in the present the happier it would be in the hereafter. Others clinging still to that brief glimpse of post-Civil War freedom, employed a thousand ruses and strategems of struggle to win their rights. Still others projected their hurt and longings into more naïve and mundane forms – blues, jazz, swing – and, without intellectual guidance, tried to build up a compensatory nourishment for themselves (xii).

Wright also wants to make sense of his character's behaving more violently in Chicago.

> The urban environment of Chicago, affording a more stimulating life, made the Negro Bigger Thomases react more violently than even in the South. . . . It was not that Chicago segregated Negroes more than the South, but that Chicago had more to offer, that Chicago's physical aspect – noisy, crowded, filled with the sense of power and fulfillment – did so much more to dazzle the mind with a taunting sense of possible achievement that the segregation it did impose brought forth from Bigger a reaction more obstreperous than in the South (xv).

The urban setting presented some other problems. Prostitution was the result of poor wages and the pouring of poor girls from the countryside with no other option to survive. Brothels were common in segregated areas.

> Recruits were drawn from the many young girls who found themselves homeless and workless in the city, and those who, having come straight from the country, were attracted by the glamor and bright lights of urban life, beguiled by the smart clothes and smooth manners of the town-dwelling men. Such a girl was flattered by the attentions she received and looked with scorn on the simple manners of the country boys, as Smokey Hogg complained (Oliver 170)
>
> Yeah, a country gal, man, have wrecked my life to – day, (twice)
>
> For I didn't stint myself, my poor girl she throwed it away.
>
> You can buy a country gal in my home, man, she wanna sleep on spring mattress every day, (twice)
>
> When the poor thing ain't used to nothin', people, but sleepin' on cotton and hay.
>
> Ooooh, a country gal think she smart when she lovin' every man in town, (twice)

> When the poor thing ain't doin' nothin', people, but tearin' her reputation down (Oliver 171).

Another aspect of city life was women working to support their families. This is explained by Paul Oliver as:

> In the 1920s many black women worked as housemaids, domestic servants, yard girls, and kitchen mechanics. They had better chances of retaining their employment than their menfolk, and many a woman took pride in supporting a man. They were even prepared to share him with other women for the protection that he afforded them and the love that he could give (171).

Black experience in the urban setting posed different problems than in the country. These problems found their way into blues lyrics, and in themes there was a shift to urban problems such as wages, rent, prison which enriched the blues and added to the responsibility of the singer.

3.2. ARABESK – URBANIZATION AND MIGRATION

The migration, urbanization and urban setting of the United States in the early ‘20s cannot possibly go past unnoticed by a Turkish citizen who lived through the 1970s. The migration to cities, poverty and women’s situation described, display an amazing parallelism to the lifestyles of the people who migrated from villages to big cities, especially İstanbul, during 1970s.

After the War of Independence Atatürk foresaw the salvation of the nation through changing the modes of production, economy, and the culture and some of the traditions, not in a reformist way but in a more radical way, as in the form of constitutional laws. There may be several interpretations of this; however, the one I see in 2006 when I look back is that of a wise leader who saw that the nation was far behind the capitalistic modes of production the world was already experiencing. The Turkish nation was one that really did not have the gradual transition from a feudal system to capitalism and industrialism. The Ottoman Empire economy depended more on taxes from countries conquered than the feudal modes of production. Therefore, the mechanics of feudalism did not operate properly although there was some sort of *ağa* (feudal owner of a village) – villager relation. Atatürk was determined to improve agriculture by mechanisation and modern farming techniques as well as industrialisation in towns and urbanization. He was ready to introduce capitalist modes of production and elevate the nation to the level of western civilizations, the faster the better since the nation had lost a significant amount of time.

Here it might be appropriate to draw attention to another nation that had not gone through a transition from Feudalism to Capitalism either, rather from a new form of slavery – racial slavery - to capitalism: the United States. However, there is a distinct difference between these two countries: the former in poverty after a destructive war trying to establish the

economy from scratch, the latter applying a strong capitalist economy due to the gross primitive accumulation gathered during slavery.
Therefore, the parallelism may only be evident in the cultural attitudes of an unprepared people who experience industrialization and urbanization.

Atatürk did not have the time to wait for economic change to affect the superstructure ,and neither did he have the intention to risk of success of the radical religious and pro- padişah people in reversing the process. So industrialization and modernization began with we call an *inkilap* (revolution) in culture (use of the Latin Alphabet) and laws to secure the Republic, Constitution and industrialization.

For a number of reasons the industrialization goals of Atatürk were not realized until the 50s. Prime Minister Menderes attempted to improve economic conditions but neglecting the development in agriculture and forgetting about the people in villages. Many people seemed to have forgotten Atatürk's phrase, ''the villager is the master of the nation,'', or they had not understood the implicit reasoning until migration to big cities started. There were two causes of migration: labour was needed for industry in the cities and agriculture could not support people in the villages and small towns since industrialization was not really in effect, nor was the modernization of farming methods. The former was the natural outcome of industrialization and urbanization. However, the latter was nothing but neglecting the majority of the population and the modernization of production in agriculture. When government aid was not adequate and crop prices fell, some of the solutions found were devastating to the whole country and to nature. Many villagers cut down trees and had their share of the profit from the lumber business, which brought about decades-long problems of erosion and the loss of fertile areas, not to mention the disapearance of forests which we still have not been able to regrow. Villagers either sold their land to survive, or the land inherited from the elders were distributed among many children, which was not enough to support any.

Cattle grazing was not profitable due to transportation inadequacies. Added to these conditions were poor educational and cultural facilities which pushed the young rural population to big cities like İstanbul, whose ‘‘earth and stone is made of gold’’ It was the land of opportunities.

According to the statistics the population of İstanbul which was around 1.700.000, went up to 3,019,032 in 1970 (Stokes 100) due to migration from the villages. People who lived in İstanbul at the time were either the rich post-war elite, the middle class, clerks and people in service business. these people thought they were the true residents of the city and scorned the new commers. Before 1950s the settlement was in what was called *suriçi* (within the old city walls). The migrants settled in areas which were then the outskirts of the city. They settled in areas my mother refers to as the picnic areas of her childhood, which we refer to as the inner city districts like Rami and Dördüncü Levent. People needed houses and had to deal with it themselves and rapidly illegal houses were built. Most of them found jobs in factories or small textile firms which again were situated on the outskirts, an advantage at the time. The houses were built overnight – that is why they are called *gecekondu* – by the whole family and relatives or even with the help of people from the same village who happened to have come before. They were small houses shared by more than one families at times. So 1960s saw the city expanding via shanty towns whose dwellers were uneducated, unprepared, and above all from a totally different cultural experience. The rural folks with different values, lifestyles and appearance started interacting with urban culture. They were the ‘’other’’ who looked different, dressed differently, talked with a different accent sometimes not comprehensible at all, ate differently and were unaware of city ettiquette. Even the members of working class who were born and raised in the city felt superior. The conditions in slum areas were not what the migrants had longed for. There was no electricity, no sewer system, no running water and no sanitation. However, the conditions they left behind were not

any different. Working conditions were worse, the pay was little and the work hard, children and women were exploited. Not all the workplaces applied the rules of social security and above all jobs became scarce within a decade. To be able to feed themselves, the whole family had to work from day-break till midnight at whatever jobs they could find. Women usually had a better chance to find employement as cleaning ladies and sewing in small textile firms. Soon it was the woman who supported the family. The consolation was that they would not starve if they worked hard. This misconception that they would always have a job also proved wrong during times of unemployment which the migrants might have not survived, had they not been sent food from their villages by their relatives.

The majority of migrants were unqualified laborers and did not have the time nor the energy to get any sort of training. Even children were not sent to school as they had to earn money. The government rules at were not strict on compulsory education, which was only five years at the time. The migrants, uneducated and unprepared, had to deal with urbanization and a culture alien to them.

To demonstrate the parallelism between the urban setting of blues and arabesk it is inevitable to rephrase Richard Wright to suit 1970s İstanbul:

> Some of the migrants living under these conditions got religion, felt that God would offer them a better hereafter, the more they endured in this world the closer they would be to heaven. Others who clung onto the idea of equal rights and pay aroused in the highly political 1970s era, struggled hard through strikes and demonstrations to win their rights. Still others projected their hurts and longings into more naïve and mundane forms – arabesk, pop, folk rock – and without intellectual guidance, tried to build a compensatory nourishment for themselves. (rephrased from Wright xiii)

These striking similarities between the blues and arabesk communities in the city, also finds parallelism in Oliver's depiction of urban housing conditions compared to that of the

slums in İstanbul. The moral values of the migrants were harmed when the beautiful and ignorant migrant girl was flattered by a handsome and cunning city dweller, promising her the rich life and city lights she had been craving only to find herself working in a brothel in İstanbul or a small town in Anatolia or commits suicide.This had been a theme recurring in arabesk films during the late 70s.

The migrant working class young man would find himself in more humiliating conditions if he happened to fall in love with a rich city girl. He would either have his hopes shattered and be humiliated by her and be reminded of his class and status by his *usta* (master) as in ‘‘The Apprentice’’ by Cem Karaca whose songs are of a highly political discourse:

Kalktı hilal kaşları

Dedi kim bu serseri

Ustam seslendi uzaktan

Giy dedi tululamları

İşçisin sen işçi kal

Giy dedi tulumları

I translate this as:

She frowned

Asked ‘who is this bum’

My master called from a distance

Put on your overalls

You are a worker – stay as one

Put on your overalls. Cem Karaca

Or he would drown his sorrow in an Orhan Gencebay song such as ‘‘Console Me’’:

Come and see my pitiful state,

Console me .

If there is someone else between us

Give me back my purest love (qtd in Stokes 235-236).

Nevertheless, the frustrations and anger were multiplied tenfold by the riches the city had to offer and the fact that he would never be able to have his share. These conditions led to higher crime rates, alcohol and drug abuse in slum areas.

As to the musical roots of arabesk music, it is useful to have a brief historical look at some types of music common to Turkish Culture. When the Turkish Republic was founded the inherited music genre from the Ottomans was Türk Sanat Müziği (Turkish Art Music), which was originally considered as the music of the palace and represented the artistic values of the Ottoman elite. The music ordinary people and especially villagers listened to was Türk Halk Müziği (Turkish Folk Music). In villages there was the tradition of the *aşık* - Aşık Veysel being the most outstanding representative – with his *bağlama*, and *tassavuf* music in religious settings. Atatürk's change of superstructure included music. He praised Turkish Folk Music and Art Music alike. Everyone in Turkey knows how much he appreciated performers and music, one of which was Safiye Ayla and her music. He also wanted Turkish people to interact with the cultures of Western countries and put emphasis on the opera and dance music. His attempts by no means were westernizing Turkish music but enrichment in music.

During the 1960s Turkish Music Industry was mostly dominated by the western songs with lyrics in Turkish. Fecri Ebcioğlu was the pioneer and Ajda Pekkan was the star. This trend was called Türkçe Sözlü Hafif Müzik. It exposed musicians and audiences to more complex and more instrumental western music. At the dawn of arabesk, along with these Turkish folk rock was on stage. Turkish Folk Music wandered around in the counry, interacted with Turkish Art Music in the city and Arabesk was formed in the city . It was original with roots in Turkish Folk Music, Turkish Art Music and *aşık* tradition and Orhan Gencebay is refered to being the father of the genre.

IV. PERSPECTIVES

4.1.SOCIAL STAND

> Music is a rare distillation of human experience, and occupies a relatively inaccessible apex or peak of culture. For this reason, a musical style and its exponents may ultimately reveal some important and otherwise unobtainable knowledge of the total environment from which they spring (Keil 215-216).

This finely refined definition of music being the reflection of a culture by Charles Keil sheds light to our efforts in understanding Blues music as well as Arabesk music.

Blues is the music of a group of people who have journeyed through slavery, racial segregation, immense poverty, humiliation and lack of acceptance. Therefore, it seems quite natural to perceive it as protest music, which would be contrary to the reality. Blues has a more distinctive quality to fulfil its role as a musical genre in its revelation of the African American culture it reflects.

The first assumption one might propose is that blues is all about racial segregation. Even though there are some examples of blues on this topic, generally the issue is not directly addressed in all blues songs. David Evans explains in that:

> Basically, the problem of discrimination was until recently so overwhelming and so institutionalized that it had become a fact of life for the average blues singer. There was no point in singing about segregated facilities because the singer knew nothing else. Blues instead have dealt with the results of discrimination, such as broken homes, poverty, crime, and prison. In these areas there are at least some fluctuations. For blues to attack the institution of discrimination itself, they would need to express an ideology of progress and a belief in ultimate success in overcoming the problem. As noted earlier, this kind of ideology is alien to the spirit of blues, which instead allows only for temporary successes. (*Big Road Blues* 29)

Discrimination was a common experience for both the performer and the audience. To directly address it would be merely stating the fact. However, by dealing with the outcomes, blues carried on the painful experience, and the harm done to a whole race, from one generation to the other. Thus the blues helped the Blacks preserve their identity and culture.

Oliver states: ‘‘Blues, is above all, the expression of the individual singer. Declaring his loves, his hates, his dissapointments, his experiences, the blues singer speaks for himself, and only indirectly, for others’’ (*Blues Fell This Morning* 276). Therefore, the blues singer is the one who reflects his culture and people. ‘‘He did not identify himself with others; his listeners were more inclined to identify themselves with him. The blues singer was himself the race hero, and this lay his popularity and the phenomenal success of the blues as a musical form’’ (275).

While Oliver concentrates on the singer and his interaction with his men, William Ferris to indicates the power of the blues:

> To express these feelings (hard labor and personal loneliness) through song is to sing the blues. As thoughts roll across his mind, the blues singer defines a perspective which makes sense of black life by focusing his verses on themes which recur in both conversation and performance (*From The Delta* 26).

Blues music has raised race awareness and identity through the songs of a shared African American history. Blues are not merely sorrow songs nor do they reflect passivity. They are the vocalised accounts of Black experience which help to create an identity.

Ferris asserts:

> The singer consciously assumes his role as a black man singing for his own color, and and blues intensify this racial identity. B.B. King stresses, ‘‘If you’ve been singing the blues as long as I have, it’s kind of like being black twice’’ (Ferris 26)

To conclude, blues is not protest music, it does not directly deal with institutionalized discrimination, instead deals with the outcomes and helps maintain identity and cultural integrity.

This same definition can be applied to Arabesk. Arabesk is not protest music either nor does it have any political aspirations. Arabesk represents through vocalization the distress, frustrations, and disillusionment of internal migrants relocated in urban setting. Neither the singer nor the genre has the qualities of taking revolutionary steps to change the poor conditions nor do they have any radical solutions. However, by concentrating on the outcomes of exploitation and poor living conditions the migrants have had to endure, it helped create an identity for its audiences who were lost in the big cities they had come with great aspirations. They were exploited, mistreated and humiliated. In confrontations with the rich, they lost and the government and the local authorities ignored their needs and they were even treated as potential criminals.

> In spite of this, arabesk has never become the focus of explicit political protest. Critics of arabesk interpret this in terms of its message of passivity. For them arabesk not only numbs the critical faculties but deadens a sense of political awareness and responsibility by blaming everything on fate. It might be argued, on the contrary, that 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 (Stokes 152).

At this point, it is only appropriate to illustrate Stokes' commentary on arabesk with the lyrics of an Orhan Gencebay song which reveals how arabesk protests without direct reference to the authority. Here is ''Batsın Bu Dünya'':

Yazıklar olsun

Kaderin böylesine yazıklar olsun

Herşey karanlık

Nerde insanlık

Kula kulluk edene

Yazıklar olsun

Batsın bu dünya

Bitsin bu rüya

Ağlatıpta gülene

Yazıklar olsun (qtd in Özbek 218-219)

My translation:

To Hell With This World

Shame

Shame on such a fate

Everything is dark

Where is humanity

Shame on the one who

Serves the human (*kul* is the human God created)

To hell with this world

Let this dream end

Shame on the one who

Laughs while causing tears.

This song very clearly reflects the criticism of inequality, and complains about the injustice. The use of the word *kul* is significant because it is both used as a noun and a verb, in the latter case meaning to serve. Since we are all human beings created by God, we should not be

serving each other. This is a perfect criticism of the capitalist system and injustice. Orhan Gencebay comments on his song during his interview with Meral Özbek:

> This is not a pessimistic song as perceived by some people. On the contrary it is a song which opposes. I say hell with this world, rather than being as it is. I certainly do not want the world destroyed, I want to emphasize the opposition to the world being like this (*Orhan Gencebay Arabeski* 218-219).

Arabesk has one other quality that is notably comparable to Blues which is being a member of the culture, possessing the emotion to convey. This, Orhan Gencebay states in his interview with Meral Özbek : ‘‘Singing is a feeling, which is not easy to describe, if you can get into what you are singing you can achieve it. A person who has been trained in Western music has a different conception.He needs to interpret the feelings, not the notes only’’(Özbek 288).

A similar idea had been stated by Muddy Waters when he talks about white blues players.

> I think they are great people, but they are not blues players….These kids are just getting up, getting stuff and going with it, you know, so we’re expressing our lives, the hard times and different things we been through. It’s not real. They don’t feel it. I don’t think you can feel the blues until you’ve been through some hard times (Guralnick 84).

Blues is distinctive in the way that it serves as a bond between the audience and the performers. The interaction of the performer and the audience is different than most other musical genres. Arabesk is similar in this regard. Charles Keil suggests about Blues:

> I should like to discuss in more detail the concept of soul and in its many dimensions, because in this notion of an ‘’unspeakable essence’’ we have the foundation of the ideology which both guides and is embodied in any contemporary blues ritual. The word ‘’ritual’’ seems more appropriate than ‘’performance’’ when the audience is

> committed rather than appreciative…Bluesman and preachers both provide models and orientations; both give public expression to deeply felt emotions; both promote catharsis – the bluesman through dance, the preacher through trance; both increase feelings of solidarity, boost morale, strengthen the consensus (*Urban Blues* 164).

Arabesk audiences are also committed to their music rather than being merely appreciative and find solidarity and identity in the music they listen to. Stokes gives an account of a concert where Müslüm Gürses was performing with other artists, one of whom was Okay Temiz, ‘‘ a drummer associated in Turkey with progressive jazz and experimental music.’’ Temiz left the stage because the audience constantly chanted for Müslüm Gürses. When eventually Müslüm took the stage, the crowd was in a trance (Stokes 89-90). ‘‘A number of Turkish observers have pointed out that arabesk can no longer be seen just as music, but as a form of social and cultural existence’’ (Stokes 91).

4.2.THEMES

Well it's blues in my house, from the roof to the ground, (twice)

And it's blues everywhere since my good man left town.

Blues in my mail-box, 'cause I cain't get no mail, (twice)

Says blues is in my bread-box, cause my bread got stale.

Blues in my meal- barrel and there is blues upon my shelf, (twice)

And there's blues in my bed, 'cause I am sleepin' by myself. (qtd in Oliver 283)

Blues owing to tradition has a vast spectrum of themes and topics. The themes are representatives of everyday troubles, loneliness, poverty, and losing a loved one.

In country blues, all aspects of the life of the African Americans can be found, however urban blues are more confined to themes like love, poverty, crime and punishment (Keil 71). The beauty of nature has never been one of the themes in blues (Evans 29) except for natural disasters that pose a problem.

As Keil recounts, Paul Oliver has dealt with many of these in *Blues Fell This Morning,* some of which may highlight our understanding of the genre. The 1930 drought, in the words of Son House from Mississipi, ''put everybody on the killing floor'':

Now the people down south soon will have no home, (twice)

'Cause this dry spell has parched all their cotton and corn.

Pork chops forty cents a pound, cotton is only ten, (twice)

I don't keep no women – no, no, not one of them.

So dry, old boll weevil turn up his toes and die, (twice)

Now ain't nothin' to do – bootleg moonshine and rye (qtd in Oliver 18).

During the Great Depression:

And it's hard time here, hard time everywhere, (three times)

I went down to the factory where I worked three years or more, (twice)

And the boss man told me, ''Man, I ain't hiring here no more.''

Now we have a little city, that we calls down in ''Hooverville.''(twice)

Times have got so hard, people ain't got no place to live.

. . . . . (qtd in Oliver 33).

Monkey Joe Coleman made his way from New Orleans to Memphis, Chicago, and eventually, the East Coast.

They tell me that the New York Central train runs faster than any Greyhound bus can run, (twice)

I'm gonna ride it this mornin', just to leave this bad luck town.

. . . . . .(qtd in Oliver 63).

4.2.1. LOVE AND MISTREATMENT

Love is one of the most dominating themes in both blues and arabesk. Love and its themes of separation, longing, and eventually pain are delicately woven in both musical genres. Interestingly enough, *hate* is not a very common issue in either the blues or the arabesk. One might assume that hate would be one of the most common aspects of the blues considering the torture the black people had been subjected to since they first set foot in America. Blacks who were suffering from all types of mistreatment did not need another source of despair, neither did the migrants in the slum areas of İstanbul fighting with poverty and ill treatment of the people of the city. Therefore, the music that would bind them together needed more promising

themes. Hate makes people blind with one main objective left to survive: revenge. If that is not fulfilled, the result is very often that hate consumes the person and leads to self destruction. People need hope and the strength to survive, therefore love is a more *logical* feeling to cling to. Love is one of the human emotions that is promising and brings hope even if the loved one is away there is always the hope that he might come back or even the hope of a new potential love. Paul Oliver says:

> Blues has rarely acquired a polished veneer of decorative words or elaborately turned phrases, but within its compass there are innumerable examples of sincere and direct declarations of love and affection.. . . a Dallas folk singer, Whistlin' Alex Moore, was singing with a simple, but valid, philosophy: (80)

Paul Oliver quotes Moore:

> Like in a ragin' storm and the captain on the deck,(twice)
> My poor heart's bleedin' and my mind's all wrecked.
>
> I think it's unfair to love and not be loved,(twice)
> I think it means beware when you kiss and cannot hug.
> There's no heart in life unless you understand, (twice)
> There's no heart in marryin' someone, just because you can.
>
> Hatred is self-punishment, forgiveness is better than revenge, (twice)
> There's no heart in buying love, all to lose and none to win (80)

Love brings happiness, joy and a great will to survive. The beloved is so much more beautiful than any other existing female and brings so much hapiness. '' Doctor'' Clayton sings:

> Well I feel all right and everything is okay,

Yes, I feel all right, everything is okay,

It’s the love of my baby, oh, makes me feel this way.

She’s got ways like an angel, an’ she’s sweet like heaven above, (twice)

She’s got everything I want, I need and love.

She’s got great big legs, Lord and the cutest little feet, (twice)

Says she’s got the sweet disposition that worries every other man she meets.

She’s copper-colored mama, Lord her shape is a solid dream, (twice)

She’s the loveliest woman I swear I’ve ever seen (qtd in Oliver 78).

Along the same lines using different methaphors İbrahim Tatlıses, an arabesk singer adores his lover in ‘‘Gülüm Benim’’:

Kalbimdeki tatlı sızı

Sensiz bu gönlün yazı

Bakışların öyle güzel

Öldürüyor beni nazı

Kalbe açan çiçek gibi

Çölde yağan yağmur gibi

Sevincimsin mutluluksun

. . . . . .

Bir yürürsen bahar yürür

Çiçek yürür peşin sıra

Gülüşlerin ömre bedel

Can katıyor bu canıma

. . . . . .(Stokes 240)

Stokes translates the lyrics:

The sweet ache in my heart,

is the spring of this soul without you.

Your glances are so beautiful,

her coyness will kill me.

Like a flower which opens up the heart,

like rain in the desert,

you are my joy, you are my happiness.

. . . . . .

If you would walk, spring would follow,

and the flowers would come out in their turn.

Your smiles are worth life.

They add life to this soul of mine,

. . . . . (240).

However, love has never been a bed of roses either in any human experience or in the ones depicted in these two musical genres. Although there are some examples of happy love songs in blues and arabesk, the majority are of love that leads to separation, pain, and complaint and in Titon's words, ''mistreatment'', through which both genres found their expressions of social protest. Titon, who changed his view of blues songs being merely about love, sex and daily problems, asserts that:

> I stressed that freedom from mistreatment was the overarching theme in blues lyrics. The mistreater usually was a lover but sometimes a boss. And although the lyrics, with a few notable exceptions did not express social or racial protest directly they referenced racism through the general theme of mistreatement (Titon 266).

Blues lyrics when studied in isolation and if read literally give the impression as many have interpreted, that they are all about love, gambling, sex and everyday troubles. The misconception lies in ignoring the ‘’implied narrative’’ – the general story already known (Stokes 143). Stokes uses this in examining arabesk, and it can be accurately applied to the blues as well. ‘’If this implied narrative structure could in any way be removed, the musical performance would be rendered meaningless’’ (Stokes 143).

In blues the implied narrative is the racial discrimination, poverty and exploitation lived daily by both the singer and the audience, so rather than repeating the already shared narration, the results in daily life are dealt with. These are the elements that the bluesmen and the audience use as a medium of protest. In arabesk it is the complaints to the lover and fate that the singer and the audience use, rather than repeating the already known facts of life such as being a second class citizen, poverty, and mistreatment. Both musical genres have implied narratives which they share with their audiences, there make the music meaningful and the audience participant.

Separation and the lack of love, which lead to loneliness are the main causes of pain and distress. However, it should be noted that although these may seem to be the results of human relationships, in both blues and arabesk, these are the results of social conditions, lack of money and being a member of the lowest class in society rather than a mere man and woman problem. Both blues and arabesk deal with such outcomes of social conditions rather than directly address the already known fact, which makes it possible to cover the issues of love, separation and mistreatment in the same manner.

Hard work had its own share of creating problems in love, as Robert Petway sang:

> She’s a cotton-pickin’ woman, Lawd, she do’s it all the time, (twice)
>
> If you don’t stop picking cotton now, baby, I believe you sho’ gwan to lose your mind.
>
> . . . . . .

How long on my bended knee – yes I mean it,

How long on my bended knee,

Pick so much cotton now, partner, will you forgive me if you please (qtd in Oliver 84).

Pains in a household with nothing to eat would even destroy the greatest romance of all times and Charlie Spand voiced the situation:

Lord I walked and walked but cannot find a job, (twice)

Lord I cain't talk about money, and I sure don't want to rob.

Now my woman's hard to get along with, as I'm sittin' here; (twice)

I ain't cooked me a square meal, honey in God knows when.

. . . .(qtd in Oliver 48)

In the world of dollars people were trying to realize their dreams. However, aspirations such as money, a better life and self improvement were not at all available to the lowest class and in turn most often caused the loss of the more important thing in life as Lazy Slim Jim realized.

Money is the root of all evil, look what it have did for me,(twice)

Caused me to leave my baby, now I'm living in misery.

. . . . . .(qtd in Oliver 93)

The distress and sorrow when deserted by his mate displayed by the blues singer is eloquently voiced by Big Bobby :

Without a warnin', you broke my heart.

You shook it darlin', and you tore it apart.

You left me sittin', in the dark cryin'.

You said your love, for me was dying.

I'm beggin' you baby, baby please.(twice)

Turn on the light, let it shine on me,

Turn on your love light, let it shine on me.

. . . . . .(qtd in Keil 126)

The distress, sorrow and longing intensifies in jail. And Oliver quotes:

All last night I sit in my cell alone, (twice)

I was thinking of my baby and my happy home.

Sometimes I wonder, why you don't write to me?

If I been a bad fellow, I did't intend to be.

. . . . . .(204)

In arabesk, as Stokes comments, imprisonment is dealt with through its consequences, which are loneliness, isolation and longing. Neither the crime nor the justice is questioned, the immediate effects are emphasized and the protest is to fate. (Stokes 150)

Love, loss of it, betrayel and frustrations are explicit in almost all musical genres but the difference is eloquently analyzed by Oliver in the lyrics of Robert Johnson's *Stones in My Passway*. ''Though Robert Johnson's passionate and tormented blues were ostensibly about his relationships in love, it's possible that such a blues as *Stones in My Passway* was subconsciously expressive of a deeper frustration.''(93)

I got stones in my passway and my road seems dark at night,(twice)

I have pains in my heart, they have taken my appetite.

I have a bird to whistle, and I have a bird to sing,(twice)

I've got a woman that I'm lovin', boy, but she don't mean a thing.

Now youse trying to take my body, and all my lovin' too,

You made a passway for me, now what are you trying to do?

I'm cryin' please, please let us be friends.

> And when you hear me howlin' in my passway, rider please open the door and let me in (qtd in Oliver 93-94).

Love, separation and the pains have also been the dominant characteristics of arabesk music as well. The analysis of the lyrics taken literally lost the underlying meaning and took it further attributing passivism to the genre due to the use of the theme *kader* (*fate*). Many considered faith as the acceptance of the God decided future of the person. However, in many songs especially in Orhan Gencebay songs it is a medium through which the singer complains. In the conditions present, the protest against all forms of mistreatement the ghetto people were subjected to was personified through the protest against the beloved and fate.

> In the songs there is a transition between the lover, the beloved, God, society and fate; or the lyrics give the impression that through the speech with the beloved, other people especially the society was addressed. When asked about this Orhan Gencebay stated: [. . .] Beloved, is the comrade our lovers confide in, get angry with. Altough everything seems to be said to the beloved, they are not all for the beloved. . . in general the effects of the events and the whole life is told (Özbek 185).

Özbek also states that love and social problems have mingled in Gencebay's songs and takes it further by suggesting that since love is a symbol which is identified with life and happiness, that it should be defended against the constraints and destructive powers of the social conditions:

> mutluluk sevince ele geçendir
>
> gülmeyi bilen sevmeye kıymet verendir
>
> şu koca dünyanın nesi var başka
>
> bedbaht olanlar sevgiyi inkar edendir
>
> . . . . . .
>
> yeter ki sevdim de

ben bu aşk ile

dünyanın kahrına

gülüp geçerim.(*Orhan Gencebay Arabeski* 186-187)

I have translated this as:

happiness is attained when you love,

the one who can smile is the one who values love

what else does this old world have

the ones in misery are those who deny love

. . . . . .

just say you love me

with this love

I'll just smile away the troubles of this world.

In arabesk the protagonist (Stokes 159) is wandering around in the ruthless urban setting with hopes shuttered, longing, lonely – either because he had left his beloved in the village trying to earn enough money to present her a better way of life or been deserted by his partner due to poor conditions – and in sorrow which might also be caused by his love for a girl whose higher social status would never allow them be together. Since the main reasons, poverty, humiliation and the system are well known among the ghetto residents, they are not directly protested but the beloved and fate as symbols receive these protests. Müslüm Gürses explains his misfortune of being lonely and sad at avery young age and condemns fate for it in ''Bağrı Yanık'':

Bu genç yaşımda dertlere attın felek

Acımadan sen benim bağrımı yaktın felek

Hayinsin, zalimsin sen felek felek

Bir gün daha geçti ömrümden

Böyle garip kaldım bağrı yanık

Keder eksik olmaz gönlümden

. . . . . .(qtd in Stokes 234)

I translated this as:

‘‘Burnt Heart’’

At this young age you have subjected me to torment, fate

You burnt my heart without mercy, fate

You are mean, you are evil, fate, fate

Another day of my life has gone by

Here I am lonely, burnt hearted

Sorrow resides in my heart

. . . . . .

In most arabesk songs the male singer is expressive about crying without feeling ashamed of it. In a male- dominated society, especially in the 70s when the men were depicted in macho terms, crying in public was certainly not one of the definitions. Therefore, it can be concluded that arabesk lyrics were ‘‘statements about the nature of the inner and private self’’(Stokes 147). What is more, the only thing he can take refugee in, is drinking alcohol. He wants to drown his sorrow in alcohol, or looking at it another way, being drunk makes him more articulate and couregeous in his protest, all the restrictions of the social rules lifted. As Müslüm Gürses sings:

‘‘Hüzünlü Günler’’

İki ay oldu ayrılalı

Gözlerime yaş yerine hep kanlar doldu

Mazideki güzel günler demek yalandı

. . . . . .

Göz yaşım döndü sele

Gittin artık uzaklara duyamaz oldum

Gönlüm şimdi teselliyi şarapta buldu (qtd in Stokes 242).

My translation:

‘‘Days of Sorrow’’

Two months it is since we parted, filled with sorrow

Filled my eyes with blood for tears

Lies were those beautiful days in the past

. . . . . .

Floods are my tears

Can’t hear you, you’re so far away

Consolation for my soul is wine now.

The protest and the voice of opposition to the system and its mistreatments are voiced in their most eloquent form in Orhan Gencebay’s masterpiece, ‘‘Batsın Bu Dünya’’ which has already been quoted. Another song displaying these characteristics could this one be by Müslüm Gürses:

Bu nasıl dünya her şey tersine

Kulak veren yok garibin sesine

Zaten karalardan kara bahtımız içimiz

Çeşme gibi akar göz yaşlarım

Kullarına kul yaratmış yaratan

Bir yar için beni gurbet elinde (qtd in Stokes 244)

My translation:

What kind of a world is this, everything is wrong

Nobody listens to the voice of the poor

Blacker than black is our soul and fate

Like fountains flow my tears

Me a slave created the creator for his slaves

For a lover in this foreign land.

4.3. MUSICAL COMPOSITION

In terms of the musical composition of the blues one might think of the evolution from slave songs to urban blues. Many would assume that it is a free domain where anything would fit, but Guralnick severely opposes the idea:

> [The blues] is a highly conservative institution. Its structure is rigid, its lyrics derivative, and there is little place in its cannon for oddness or eccentricity. . . .Blues is a twelve bar structure, three line verse, the words rhyme and most frequently derive from a common pool of lyrics or ‘’floating verses’’. (37)

Improvisation is another important aspect of blues. The singer wants to affect its audience and the audience would like to hear songs appropriate to their mood at the moment. If the singer can improvise successfully, ‘‘he will meet the needs of his audience and try out new ideas. Improvisation allows the singer to be an individualist at the same time that he expresses sentiments which are familiar and relevant to himself and to the audience’’ (Evans 164- 165).

The greatness of blues as music owes a lot to how it is sung. Peter Guralnick says:

> Singers like Howlin’ Wolf and Elmore James and even Muddy Waters seem to care scarcely at all for the words that they are singing. What meaning there is they convey not through words but through feeling and intonation. . . . It’s not that what they sing is trivial exactly. It’s just that it does not entirely reflect what they are singing about (41).

The long history of blues from the ‘’bottleneck’’ guitar to the electric guitar holds one more tradition: learning from a master (Ferris 38-39). James Thomas began his career by secretly playing with Elmore James. Thomas explained :

> I wasn’t allowed at night clubs but I would slip out on a Saturday night. . . and I would play with Elmore and Sonny Boy Williams. . .(Ferris 39)

As Muddy Waters accounts for his learning to play the guitar, he was so affected by the way Son House was playing, he listened to him every night for four weeks in a row.

(Guralnick 67)

As to arabesk, there are several speculations on the musical composition of arabesk which could provide a basis for further research. The study of the music of Orhan Gencebay provides us a perspective of the musical composition of arabesk:

> In Orhan Gencebay arabesk the most significant trait is that it has a hybrid (combination) structure. It uses the rhythm and instruments of the Turkish music with the rhythm and instruments and techniques of the Western music in varying proportions; rhythm emphasized and violin is an important aspect. . . . In Orhan Gencebay’s words ‘‘within the realm of Turkish music sounds.’’

(Özbek 147).

Both arabesk and blues were founded on the old traditions of the rich cultural backgrounds of people who have been dislocated, but they have ended up being unique musical genres formed in the lands they came to. They are the synthesis of the musical heritage which interacted with the new culture in which they found themselves. They were formed to satisfy the needs of their community.

V. CONCLUSION

Comparing two very distinct musical genres like blues and arabesk results in astonishing findings. Although they are worlds away and have gone through different experiences, blues and arabesk have several similarities starting with how they were formed and the parallelism of their cultural settings. The most striking similarity, however, is the way in which protest of the social conditions was voiced.

Both blues and arabesk tell the stories of dislocated people similarly positioned in communities where they were regarded as the inferior. Therefore, the audiences and the performers were aware of the narrative which they did not have to sing about. Instead through songs that dealt with the consequences of the implied narrative, both genres became the voice of people who were suffering to give them a sense of belonging and identity. The songs which do not directly refer to the source of the problem created a more effective way of raising awareness. In neither of the genres there is straight protest or direct opposition to authority but they are vocalized expressions of sufferings, and everyday problems caused by the conditions.Therefore, they have audiences who do not merely listen but be part of the performance. The audiences to whom the music gives a sense of belonging, identity, solidarity and hope.

They have a common trait of being songs based on the rich historical backgrounds of their people's culture, but having been formed as unique and original musical genres through their interaction with the cultures they were not accepted in and the result of their experiences on the lands they arrived. Both blues and arabesk reflect the culture of their people, blues the African American culture, arabesk the culture of the migrant from the village to the big cities, the *gecekondu* people.

Blues is the product of African American culture. ‘’Contrary to popular belief, Negroes are the only substantial minority group in America who really have a culture to guard and protect’’(Keil 191). Titon reinforces the point:

> In response to a flurry of letters protesting the magazine’s inattention to white blues artists, Paul Garon, one of *Living Blues’s* founding editors, explained :’’Only the very specific sociological, cultural, economic, psychologic, and political forces faced by working class African-Americans – forces permeated with racism – produced the blues. *Nothing else did!* . . . Indeed, while anyone can play or sing the blues, it is the unique engendering nature of black culture that has always been our prime concern.[. . .]
>
> (275).

It is important to evaluate any form of art within the context where it was created and flourished. Other people enjoying the product should by no means devaluate or deviate it from the culture of the group it represents.

Both blues and arabesk have come a long way. The situation in 2006 in Turkey is one where blues is treated as a respected, a high-culture form of music by many intellectuals and educated people. However, arabesk has not fully achieved a repectable, high-culture status in its full sense yet. There have been several signs that it will, eventually. Many intellectuals and educated people still can not think of arabesk as worthy as other genres like rock, country, classical music and of course blues. However, times are changing in favour of arabesk.

Orhan Gencebay has always been respected as an eminent composer and musician. Now arabesk as a musical genre is also gaining respect and acceptance among the intellectuals who scorned it as low culture. İbrahim Tatlıses sings accompanied by a symphony orchestra, Müslüm Gürses gives a joint concert with Duman (one of the hard rock groups) and above all something many people might not dare to even think about a decade ago: Müslüm Gürses’s

unforgettably beautiful performance of the song ‘‘Sensiz Olmaz’’ composed by Bülent Ortaçgil – an outstanding composer and performer of *özgün* (free) music. Maybe arabesk and arabesk singers will eventually get the status they have deserved. Maybe we have started hearing the voice of our own people.

VI. WORKS CITED

‘‘American Civil War.’’ 2006 Microsoft R Encarta R Online Encyclopedia. 11 August 2006 <encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761567354/Civil_War_American.html>

Andrews, William L. ‘‘An Introduction to the Slave Narrative.’’ 2004 *UNC University Library*. 10 January 2005 <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/intro.html>

Crosby, Ethan. ‘‘Rural Blues.’’ 26 June 2006 <http://bluesnet.hub.org/readings.htm>

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Ed. Houston A. Baker, Jr. 1982. New York: Penguin, 1986

Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: The Modern Library, 2003

Endres, Clifford. ‘‘What Hath Rock Wrought?: Blues, Country Music, Rock’n’Roll and İstanbul.’’ *Journal of American Studies of Turkey*. (1995): 33-39 20 May 2006 <www.bilkent.edu.tr/~jast/Number 1/Endres.html>

Evans, David. *Big Road Blues: Tradition & Creativity in the Folk Blues*. New York: Da Capo, 1982

Ferris, William. *Blues from the Delta*. 1978. New York: Da Capo, 1984

Gilroy, Paul. *Small Acts*. London: Serpent’s Tail, 1993

Guralnick, Peter. *Feel Like Going Home: Portraits in Blues and Rock’n’Roll*. 1989. Cambridge: HarperPerennial, 1994

Keil, Charles. *Urban Blues*. 4th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969

Oliver, Paul. *Blues Fell This Morning: Meaning in the Blues*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994

Özbek, Meral. *Popüler Kültür ve Orhan Gencebay Arabeski*. 6th ed. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003

Stokes, Martin. *The Arabesk Debate: Music and Musicians In Modern Turkey*. New York: Oxford UP, 1992

Titon, Jeff Todd. *Early Downhome Blues: A Musical and Cultural Analysis*. 2nd ed. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994

Williams, Eric. ‘‘Capitalism and Slavery’’ 2003 New Jersey *AAH Curriculum Guide Resource Page*. 10 January 2005 <www. njstatelib.org/NJ_Information/Digital_ Collections/AAHCG/williams.html>

Williams, Raymond. ‘‘Moving from High Culture to Ordinary Culture.’’ 12 September 2006 <http://www.wsu.edu:8001/vcwsu/commons/topics/culture/culture-index.html>

Wrack, Matt. ‘‘Slavery and the Rise of Capitalism.’’ *Socialism Today*. 1998. 10 January 2005 <www.socialismtoday.org/33/slavery33.html>

Wright, Richard. *Native Son.* Abridged from the original 1940 text. New York: Perennial, 2003

.