



## STRUCTURAL LOOKS OF THE CULTURE AND ART AREA IN TURKEY IN THE 1980s

### 1980'Lİ YILLAR TÜRKİYE'SİNDE KÜLTÜR SANAT ALANININ YAPISAL GÖRÜNÜMLERİ

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#### Öz

Toplumların kültür/sanat ürünleri ile sosyal, siyasal ve ekonomik unsurları arasında dinamik bir ilişki bulunmaktadır. Bununla birlikte söz konusu ilişkinin yapısal değişiminde belirli dönemler öne çıkabilmektedir. 20. yüzyılın kırılma noktalarından biri olan 1980'li yıllar, dünya konjonktürüyle birlikte Türkiye'nin de paradigma değişimi yaşadığı bir dönemdir. 12 Eylül 1980 askeri müdahalesinin yarattığı kırılma Türkiye'de sadece ekonomik ve politik alanda olmamış kültür ve sanat yaşamını da doğrudan etkilemiştir. 1980 asker müdahalesi Türkiye'de her açıdan bir milat olmuş ve ekonomiden siyasete, sokaktan kültür/sanat ürünlerine kadar her şey 80 öncesi ve sonrası şeklinde anılır hale gelmiştir. Sanat ve sosyal bilimler alanında yeni arayışları tetikleyen bu gelişmeler, sanat/kültür ürünlerine bakış açısında, sanatın üretilmesinde ve sergilenmesinde önemli değişimlere kaynak olmaktadır. Bu bağlamda kültür/sanat alanı toplumsal değişim sürecinin açıkça izlenebileceği gözlem alanlarından birisi olarak görülebilmektedir. Bu dönemde kültür/sanat ürünlerinde öne çıkan yapısal görünüm; apolitikleşme, bireyselleşme ve kadının özneleşme sürecinin ön plana çıkmasıdır. Bu yıllarla birlikte kültür/sanat ürünlerinin liberalleşme sürecinin ekonomik, siyasal, toplumsal ve ideolojik yapılanmasının bir taşıyıcısı durumuna gelmiştir. Bu dönemde sanatçılar/kültür üreticileri yapıtlarını olabildiğince bireysel konulara odaklı üretme çabasına girerken bir kısmı da arabesk kültürün de etkisiyle 1980 sonrasında çok renkli, çoksesli ve çeşitli biçimlerde ürünlerle kendilerini ifade etmeye çalışmışlardır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kültür, sanat, yapısal görünüm

#### Abstract

There is a dynamic relationship between the culture/art products of societies and their social, political and economic elements. However, certain periods might come to the forefront in the structural change of the abovementioned relationship. As one of the breaking points of the 20th century, the 1980s was a period in which Turkey experienced a paradigm shift along with the world conjuncture. The rupture that was caused by the military intervention of 12 September 1980 not only have impacts in the economic and political field, but also directly affected the cultural and artistic life in Turkey. The military intervention of 1980 became a milestone in Turkey in every respect and everything, from economy to politics, from the street to culture/art products, became known as before and after the 80's. These developments, which triggered new searches in the field of art and social sciences, were also the source of important changes in art/cultural products and in the production and exhibition of art. In this context, the field of culture/art can be considered among the observation areas where the process of social change can be observed clearly. Structural aspects that came to the fore in culture/art products in this period were depoliticization, individualization and the process of women's subjectivation. It became a carrier of the economic, political, social and ideological structuring of the liberalization process of cultural/art products in these years. Although artists/culture producers tried to produce their works focused on individual subjects as much as possible in this period, some of them tried to express themselves with polychrome, polyphonic and various forms after 1980 under the influence of arabesque culture.

**Keywords:** Culture, Art, Structural view

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As one of the breaking points of the 20th century, the 1980s was a period in which Turkey experienced a paradigm shift along with the world conjuncture. The rupture that was caused by the military intervention of 12 September 1980 not only have impacts in the economic and political field, but also directly affected the cultural and artistic life in Turkey. Cultural/art products affect the social, political and economic elements of a society in a dynamic way.

The 1980s takes its place in the memories as a period when the Turkish society faced a major political, sociological, psychological, literary and cultural break and witnessed the change and transformation of the society. The military intervention of 1980 became a milestone in Turkey in every respect and everything, from economy to politics, from the street to culture/art products, became known as before and after the 80's (Yılmaz, 2015).

The 1980s also reflect a period in which the technology and information age began to dominate in a fast manner. Postmodern discourses and formations, which became more prominent in Turkey, especially in the 1980s, took their place on the agenda (Uz & Uz, 2018: 9). These developments, which triggered new searches in the field of art and social sciences, were also the source of important changes in art/cultural products and in the production and exhibition of art. In this context, the field of culture/art can be considered among the observation areas where the process of social change can be observed clearly.

## 2. STRUCTURALITY IN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

The long-standing debates on the transformation of the Turkish Language Institution into an academy intensified in these years. The first step in this respect was taken with the Political and Social Research Foundation meeting that was held on 26-27 December 1980. In this meeting, before the new constitution was prepared, it was stated that the Turkish Language Institution should be restructured in line with "*Living Turkish*", and this was supported by the government of the period. Even though it was defined as a scientific institution, the removal of the autonomy of TDK and making it an official institution under the government started a new discussion with the concern that language studies would continue with a bureaucratic understanding (Özcan Gönülal, 2011: 1135).

After the law 2876 was enacted on August 11, 1983, and published in the Official Gazette on August 17, 1983, the biggest change made in this institution was the linking of the institution to the prime minister (Yaşar, 2016: 156). It was emphasized in the Prime Ministry circular of 1984 that "*our mother tongue should develop in its natural course*" and "*excessive attitudes should be avoided in official correspondence and publications*" (Özcan Gönülal, 2011: 1135).

The discussion of "old" and "new" lost its importance in Turkish after the 1980s and "pollution" and "corruption" started to be mentioned in the language with the change brought by popular culture and mass media with ideological, economic and social tendencies. The first of these changes was being influenced by English at the word level, the other was the changes that occurred as a result of the impacts of local uses, especially in the field of sound, vocabulary and grammar with internal migration (Özcan Gönülal, 2011: 1135).

The simplification pressure on the language decreased in the post-1980 period. In general, the understanding of harsh opposition on this issue has left its place to soften. However, language faced with a situation that can be called a kind of corruption with the development and spread of communication tools such as television, radio, computer and

internet in this period. Turkish was under the influence of Western languages, especially English (Yaşar, 2016: 2).

The language discussions, which continued intensely before 1980, still continued, although considerably at low levels after 1980. Many decisions regarding language and prohibitions were taken by state institutions. Common sense began to prevail in the society in the post-1980 period in the old-new word debates, on which there was no consensus and the language was left to its natural course. The words transferred from other languages to Turkish were left to use rather than being thrown out of the language. Although the language debates before 1980 deviated from the timeline, it contributed greatly to the reduction of the difference between the spoken language and the written language, the removal of affixes, words and grammatical elements contrary to the structure of Turkish, and the progress of Turkish on its way to becoming a scientific language (Yaşar, 2016: 273).

The socialist discourse in literature started to retreat with the military intervention of 12 September, and the writers of the period began to meet in culture, art and literature magazines away from politics (Çiçek, 2019: 5). Although it is noteworthy that the poetry magazines that were published after 80 were four-fold more than the poetry magazines published since 1923, the partnership established by the big capital with the arts and culture magazines in this period was also considered as another striking aspect (Çiçek, 2019: 4).

A new period started After 1980 with the capital provided by big institutions, colorful prints and visuality in literary journalism, and journals away from a biased publication perception shaped by political patterns and that wanted to bring the transparency of art to their pages and also, the multicolored aspect of the arts took their place in the history of literary journalism (Çiçek, 2019: 6).

The consumption culture, which started to rise with the 1980s, soon shows itself in literature as well. The new perception that came with depoliticization created a superficial, easy-to-consume and popular literature. Like other fields of culture and art, literature, which was left to the mercy of the economic market, turned into a popular and entertaining product easy-to-consume under the effects of the changing lifestyles of the youth after the military intervention (Çınar, 2021:31).

The changing value judgments after 1980 also had a place in the literature. A reckoning with September 12, the regrets and pain experienced after the military intervention was required. In addition to the 12 September theme, themes such as drugs, sexuality, suicide, and feminism were also among the themes that were covered (Çınar, 2021:32). The activism of the rising women's movements in the society in the post-1980 period was also reflected in the field of literature, and in this respect, the number of women novelists who examined the position of women in society and shed light on women's problems, who looked at women as women and enlightened them, and the number of novels written also increased (Çınar, 2021: 52).

The innovative and transformative understanding in novels in the 1980s, political and social developments, as well as cultural conditions such as the change of reader profile, the search for answers to the expectations of the reader, and the emergence of different literary tendencies are among the triggering elements of difference in novels written in Turkey as well as in the world. After the 1980s, concerns on how the novel was written rather than the question of what was written came to the forefront. Formal concerns and theoretical discussions were prioritized, and new techniques and expression types such as structuralism and postmodernism emerged (Alver, 2012: 12).

Turkish storytelling, which is another genre, had its richest period both qualitatively and quantitatively following 1980 with its accumulation of nearly a century (Uslu, 2016: 605). It was observed that what happened after the 1980s brought the storytellers together on common denominators such as “self-criticism”, “sexuality”, “loneliness”, “depression” and “confrontation” (Uslu, 2016: 581).

The novel type of human being formed in society under the effects of both military intervention and modernization also found its place in stories. The story characters tried to create an identity for themselves in a quest that was based on the structure of the society. It was these searches that shaped the story characters (Uslu, 2016: 605).

The existence of an apolitical environment was in question after 1980. In the period when postmodernism was effective globally, it cannot be expected that Turkey would stay away from this. It is possible to argue that the feeling of “diversity” dominated the 1980s in a general but fundamental sense (Çakır, 2016: 661-662).

### **3. STRUCTURAL LOOKS IN THE PERFORMING ARTS**

When the period after 1980 is evaluated, it can be observed that activities in terms of theater art were realized (Çınar, 2021: 5 9). In 1982, the Ministry of Culture offered the theater a lifeline with the opportunity to provide funds in return for the projects it would bring to private theaters. On the other hand, state theaters opened stages in different cities in line with the idea of spreading throughout the country. Adana State Theater was opened in 1985 and plays were started, Trabzon and Diyarbakır State Theaters were established in 1988. It is also seen that the performing arts affiliated to the State Theater were increasing in these cities and children’s theater units were established (Çınar, 2021:59).

The government’s decision to support state theaters on the one hand and private theaters on the other had positive effects on this field. Although there were 35 state theaters previously, 16 private theaters and 51 theaters in total in 1980, there were 46 state theaters, 25 private theaters and 71 theaters in total in 1983 (Ural & Ercilsin, 2018: 588).

The 1980s also stands out as a fruitful period in terms of competitions held in the theater field. Playwriting competitions were organized by many institutions and organizations, municipalities, banks (TGNA, TRT, Ministry of Culture) to encourage and motivate young writers. Theatrical texts found successful in the scope of these competitions benefited from opportunities such as publishing and staging. This period, which was also active in terms of awards, was one of the activities that revitalized the theater field with the newly added awards along with the previously known awards (Çınar, 2021:62).

Mostly light plays with music were staged in the 1980s. The audience’s choice was also games that would make them laugh. Comedies and musicals originating from American incentives began to be staged in the 1980-1981 period (Buttanri, 2010: 69). After 1980, theaters entered a troubled period. The spread of television, not writing plays for a long time, the lack of new writers and censorship caused the theater to be interrupted (Ural & Ercilsin, 2018: 587).

Although the opera audience had the chance to be equipped with more comprehensive information and interpretations, although relatively, on an opera work over the magazines in the 1960s, this disappeared in the early 1980s (Ergüven, 2007: 73).

### **4. THE CHANGE IN THE PLASTIC ARTS**

The change and transformation in every field in Turkey in the post-1980 period also affected the architectural field. Although the architectural environment was affected

negatively in the early years of the 1980 military intervention, it entered a positive process with the developments in the following period. Two important developments were experienced in the architectural environment in this process. One of these was in the quality of architectural products. Before 1980, building materials and construction techniques were low and had poor quality. In the post-1980 period, important developments were experienced in these fields. Technological developments were effective in this. The other development was social changes. Along with the developments in social life in the 1980s, the policy of the Chamber of Architects and the contents of its publications also changed. It is seen that the Chamber of Architects pushed the profession into the background and took part in the political environment in the country Until the 1980s (Erdoğan, 2009: 33).

The state, which was the biggest client of the architectural environment until the 1980s, gradually left its place to local governments and the private sector. One of the most important changes in the post-1980 period was the socialization of architecture and competitions. Architecture then began to concern those who were not directly related to the subject, extending beyond its professional circle. Problems and discussions were no longer specific to professionals and architects (Erdoğan, 2009: 40).

There was a great increase in the number of Atatürk monuments with the Atatürk Year, which came right after the intervention during the 1980 military rule. In this period, the Centenary Celebration Coordination Board was established, and in addition to this, an inspection board regarding Atatürk monuments was established with the joint work of the Plastic Arts Department affiliated to the General Directorate of Fine Arts of the Ministry of Culture and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. The Board undertook the task of deciding whether the Atatürk monuments to be built were appropriate, whether they could be reproduced or how many of the same mold would be reproduced (Sönmez, 2015: 40-41).

The Istanbul Municipality wanted to equip the city with monuments of “Turkish Elders” and ordered sculptures to be erected in various parts of Istanbul After the second half of the 1980s. In this period, these sculptures were placed in the newly built parks and squares (Sönmez, 2015: 48).

The ‘Contemporary Artists Istanbul Exhibition’, which was organized by the Painting and Sculpture Museums Association in 1980 for the first time, created a new expression platform especially for young artists in the field of art (Terzi, 2008: 92). On the other hand, there was an increased demand in the art market. As a result of the financial value that the paintings acquired over the years, the work of art also started to be evaluated as an investment tool. The opening of many important galleries in this period led to the development of contemporary art. The establishment of private galleries, bank-supported galleries and cultural centers, and the financial contribution of domestic capital were among the many incentives for contemporary arts (Terzi, 2008: 93). These exhibitions, which supported new searches in plastic arts in Turkey, pioneered the changes and developments and took an important step for Turkey to take its deserved place in the changing art field in the whole world. In this respect, the 80s was a milestone for innovative art in Turkey (Uz & Uz, 2018:10).

On the other hand, the expression ground of painting only with canvas and paints lost its validity in this period, art visuals and discourses that went beyond the canvas emerged and conceptual art began to be mentioned. New technological opportunities and the inevitable place of the computer in the life field entered a new period in communication and a new reality began to shape the society in this period, which is also called the information age (Uz & Uz, 2018: 2).

The multi-faceted different experiments of some artists who went out of the canvas and discovered new forms attracted attention in this period. In fact, it subverted the concepts

with its structure that removed the viewers from the position of being the receivers watching merely the art object and placed them in the very center. It is primarily thought, philosophy and knowledge that shapes art. Art object came to the fore with their suggestive, surprising and questioning characteristics (Uz & Uz, 2018:3).

## 5. STRUCTURAL LOOKS IN THE FIELD OF MUSIC

It is seen that the tavern and arabesque culture found a wide place in the context of music and space in Turkey in the 1980s, and it was frequently mentioned in various platforms (Tayfundagi, 2017:28). It is possible to argue that tavern and arabesque music, as a popular cultural element, had a significant audience in this period (Tayfundagi, 2017:43).

Rock and pop groups released with the technological and studio opportunities after 1985 exploded with arabesque music and a process similar to the one in the West began to be experienced. On the one hand, this can be considered as the corruption of music and falling behind the image of music, on the other hand, it can be argued that this created a democratic environment providing an opportunity for everyone (Kıyar, 2018: 50).

A widespread influence of arabesque music on all music genres was observed in the 1980s. In this process, it can be argued that the arabesque culture, which rapidly penetrated the socio-economic and socio-cultural fields, caused even different cultural areas to be affected by this movement, and in this respect, a new cultural period was entered, especially after the 1980s (Tohumcu, 2012: 115-116).

It is seen that the music industry was classified in three stages in parallel with the technological developments until the 1980s in Turkey. Although the period from the beginning of the twentieth century to the 1960s is called the gramophone age, the period between 1960 and 1980 is defined as the turntable period in which 45- and 33-inch records were played, and the period between 1980 and 1990 is described as the tape period in which cassettes were more popular (Kurdođlu, 2008: 17).

## 6. HIGHLIGHTS IN TURKISH CINEMA

The 1980s are considered a breakthrough in Turkish cinema. These are the years when all the old theories were turned upside down. It was during this period that the “*individual*” entered Turkish cinema, psychological studies were performed, the transition to women-oriented cinema along with urban, marginal, depressed and uncommunicative characters in cinema (Şimşek, 2013: 47). The 1980s witnessed the films of intellectual filmmakers who became increasingly apolitical, productions with arabesque singers who became the reflection of the unhappiness and despair in the country, and “women’s films” that expressed the freedom of urban women who had the chance to escape from the male-dominated perspective (Saydam, 2020: 417). The only difference between the women-oriented films, which increased in number in the 1980s, from the films that were produced before, is that female sexuality was brought to the forefront with the help of the leading actors of films (Bayburtluođlu, 2005: 39). In Turkish films, women-centered narratives became synonymous with the so-called sexual revolution. In such narratives, the freedom of women was presented as sexual freedom.

A documentary attitude, examining and evaluating human beings with their natural environment draws attention in the approach to the subjects. In this way, instead of the stereotypical heroes of the past, whose characteristics were similar to each other and whose behaviors were known in advance, regardless of the film genre, people with different and different characteristics started to enter the cinema.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the Turkish cinema in the 1980s was that individual films on the personality crises of post-1980 intellectuals began to be seen. The tradition of Turkish cinema began to take the place of films in this period and were generally based on atmospheric stories where individual creation concerns were at the forefront, and which were alienated from society. In addition to the changes in content characteristics, there was a differentiation in the use of cinematographic elements such as camera movements, editing and decor, which had the characteristics of supporting the formation of the language of cinema. The traditional plot was abandoned, especially by taking the narrative patterns of European cinema as an example. As a result of this use, examples of films emerged where there was no form-content integrity. Although the films in this genre created an audience of their own, they also took their place in the history of Turkish cinema as examples that were never able to connect with large audiences because of their structures outside the formation characteristics of the Turkish cinema tradition. It is seen that social concerns came to the fore from time to time in films made in this genre. However, since these social problems took place in an individual structure, social problems could not go beyond being minor motives. For this reason, they were in a distance from the general structure of the period in which they were built (Bayburtluoğlu, 2005: 38).

The number of spectators began to decline During this period. In addition to the increased pirate tapes and video recordings, the widespread use of television played an important role in the decreased number of viewers (Ural & Ercilsin, 2018: 581). The video recording industry, called pirate tapes, became widespread in 1982. The screening of videos in public places such as coffee shops and casinos, as well as homes, reduced the demand for cinema. The public's easy access to movies through television made cinema a troublesome and expensive entertainment industry (Ural & Ercilsin, 2018:582). Another point that made Turkish cinema bleed was the increased production costs. The increased movie costs also affected ticket prices negatively, and therefore, the cost of living forced people who had difficulty in living to reduce their social and cultural expenses (Ural & Ercilsin, 2018:582-583).

Sex films, which increased in number in the 1970s and took over cinema, and political films that described the problems of the people with a socialist realist eye, were suddenly cut off by the 1980 military intervention. In these years, the producers, who wanted to attract the audience to the movie theaters, found salvation in arabesque films in which melancholy, pain and fatalism were effective. The sad stories of people in slum were told based on the words of the arabesque songs, and from time to time, these arabesque songs and folk singers were used in the movies. Subjects such as crime, pain, grief, and begging were reflected in the movies with a heavy melodrama (Tombul, 2019:47).

## **7. CHANGES IN FASHION AND CLOTHING**

The liberalization policies in the economy and the entry of foreign capital into the Turkish market closely affected fashion. Famous clothing brands of the world opened their stores in big cities one after another, and walking around in clothes carrying these brands became a status symbol. Many clothing items such as shirts, sweatshirts, tights that were translated from English into Turkish, headbands, rubber shoes, and tracksuits became fashionable in the 1980s (Alp & Türkmen, 2016: 61).

Branding mostly affected young people and women. The socio-economic and political environment brought by September 12 was a period in which ideologies and mass movements faded and television and entertainment were brought to the forefront. On the one hand, inflation, unemployment and livelihood problems caused that people preferred cheap and multi-purpose clothes, on the other hand, with the increased mass production, people started

to prefer outlet stores. The years when uniformization, cheap and poor quality goods, styles that would impress the masses more, and the tastelessness called kitsch, also coincided with the 80s (Alp & Türkmen, 2016: 65-66).

The disco culture, which left its marks on the 80s, also took its place in fashion, and satin-style bright fabrics and phosphorescent colors were employed in the designs. Another important factor that affected fashion in the 80s was aerobics with colorful tights, hair bands, leggings designed from phosphorescent colors. Comfort in clothing and ease of use were at the forefront. Leather became important in men's and women's clothing (Alp & Türkmen, 2016: 66).

## 8. CONCLUSION

The internal migration phenomenon, which started in the 50s in Turkey, gained momentum between the 60s and 80s, and as a result, it caused a changing city culture in the 80s. Although the "arabesque culture", which became common with cultural forms such as music and cinema in this period, symbolized a part of the society, the value judgments and perceptions of people began to change with the development of the consumption culture and advertising sector.

Artists, in other words, cultural producers, tried to produce their works focused on individual subjects as much as possible in this period, although some of them tried to express themselves with multicolored, polyphonic and various forms after 1980 after the influence of arabesque culture.

In conclusion, depoliticization, individualization and the process of the subjectivation of women come to the forefront with the depoliticization process in the political field as the structural aspects that came to the forefront in culture/art products in the 80s. However, it was seen that culture/art products were integrated into the capitalization process following the liberalization and globalization after 1980 and caused a new and rapid transformation in all social processes. Cultural/art products became a carrier and/or reflector of economic, political and social structuring in this process.

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