

**İKİYE KARŞI BİR: 80 SONRASI TÜRK SİNEMASI'NDA KADIN
DAYANIŞMASI**

**TWO AGAINST TO ONE: WOMEN INTERDEPENDENCE IN TURKISH
CINEMA AFTER 80'S**

Nihal ULUSOY*

ÖZET

Türk Sineması'nda kadın 1980'li yıllara gelene kadar namuslu anne-ahlaksız kötü kadın ikilemini bir türlü aşamamış, bir karton tip, bir prototip olarak varolma sorunu yaşamıştır.

12 Eylül 1980 Darbesi ile başlayan süreçte ise muhalif solun çöküşü, sağ ve sol görüşün liberalleşmesi; kişisel olanın da politik olduğunu savunan feminist muhalefetin güçlenmesini sağlamıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler:Türk Sineması, Feminizm, 1980 Askeri Darbesi

ABSTRACT

Woman in Turkish Cinema could'nt pass over the pure mother-immoral prostitute dilemma until 1980's and struggle with her existing problem.

In the period which started with 1980 military coup, the collapse of oppositional left wiew, liberalization of left and right wiew, support to the feminist hostility which defend "personal is also politic".

Key words:Turkish Cinema, Feminism, 1980 Military Coup

* Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi

1. TURKISH CINEMA AND FEMINISM AT 80'S IN TURKEY

All movements against gender discrimination became powerful in women's world after French Revolution. (Çağatay, Soysal, 1993: 327) In 1968, those movements extended to masses. II Wave Feminists were against inequality among men and women. As maternity and housework were associated with women, those, who wished to dedicate their lives to politics, science or career, were considered to be insane. In fact, this was the distribution of authority. Due to the role of male in public sphere, man was to be the father, the husband and the patriarchal authority. (Öztürk, 2000: 65)

Traditional norms became ineffective in the 80's. The annihilation of Marxist movement in Turkey as a consequence of the military coup in 1980, Turkish leftist view evolved and leftist women headed towards feminism. Although Feminism is never considered to be a leftist movement in Turkey, it is a leftist ideology and as a result of this misperception, it succeeded to escape from censor and force. Consequently, Turkish feminist movement in the 80's became first democratic reaction against the military coup. (Tekeli, 1993: 33-34)

In 80's Turkish woman groups and feminists held the woman rights which was given to them by the young Turkish Republic. They worked for an ideologically more powerful feminism and put sincere effort for independent organizations against patriarchal social life.¹ In 80's feminism started to be debated in a universal scope. Aside from individualism, equality of gender became more important in Turkish feminism. (Tekeli, 1993: 22)

Feminism became more active with the feminist semposium held by *Yazko Translation Magazine* at 1982 in Istanbul, with the feminist woman page issue by *Somut Magazine* at 1983, a with a protest against a law article which legitimates violence towards women in 1987 (Tekeli, 1993: 22)

Feminism gave way to changes in mass communication in 80's. Woman magazines and woman television shows increased. On the other hand press started to allocate space for feminist actions in the 80's. (Saktanber, 1993: 212-214)

Kadınca Magazine was an outstanding phenomenon for feminism in Turkey in the 80's and also for our work. Kadınca Magazine's target group was upper middle class women because they were also the pioneers of Turkish feminism in this period. Kadınca Magazine started to portray a new woman, who was conscious of her sexual identity, who had considerable amount of self respect, who was aware of her personal rights and as a virtue of these who was able to orientate her man without self-sacrifice. While it insisted on woman's sexual freedom and fought for it, it also paid attention to woman's economic freedom although it never cared about the way to acquire this freedom. Generally, it insisted on "being a successful woman". Kadınca Magazine also imposed the idea of "I want, I can" on women. (Saktanber, 1993: 213)

Kadınca Magazine's presence and its discourse in Turkey did not change everything. In Turkish society, women were classified in two groups: The ones purified from their sexuality under men's hegemony; and the ones who had nothing but their sexual attributions.

Especially, until the 80's, we can find two stereotypes of woman - the domestic mother figures purified from their sexuality, or the ones defined by their sexuality threatening the family institution with their wamp characteristics - in Turkish Cinema. There is no other woman type in classical Turkish Cinema. Like other commercial cinemas, Yeşilçam Cinema had an escapist style. It focused on entertainment and imposed and supported traditional, conservative social values. (Esen, 2000: 29-43)

Yeşilçam's favorite genre was melodramas. Melodrama's common theme sublime love and the emotions embodied there, celebrated and praised the notion of being an housewife and doing housework under the disguise of love's docile world and attached them an importance although they were undermined since they put forth no surplus value. (Saktanber,1993: 219-229) Love in melodramas must have always ended up with marriage and was never independent from fate and holy love.

On the other hand in Yeşilçam movies, women who exceeded society's moral norms were considered prostitutes. Women could win social recognition only under certain

circumstances and others were doomed to be abused by the society when deviated from the norm. Those were mostly feminists, artists or lonely intellectual women figures. (Saktanber, 1993: 229)

Military coup of 1980 started a new age in Turkish Cinema. Turkish Sexploitation movies disappeared and social realist movies of 70's were damaged. The sexploitation movies were replaced by "arabesque singer" movies and the social realist movies were replaced by the individualistic movies which were the emblem of identity of exploration of Turkish society. Most of these movies narrated women's identity problems and society's perception of women. (Güçhan, 1992: 94-95)

Nothing changed in the presentation of women in "arabesque singer" movies. In these video movies, women were still stereotype characters. (Esen, 2000: 22)

In the individualist movies, woman was presented as a humanbeing, just the opposite of the "arabesque singer" movies. Here, the woman thinks, opposes, desires, wants to be successful in her professional as well as in her motherhood. These were realistic women characters. (Esen, 2000: 42)

In the new cinema of this period, sexuality became an inartificial issue unlike its representation in sexploitation movies. Woman's new role changed by social transformations, woman's awareness and feminism created 80's woman film in Turkish Cinema. (Güçhan, 1992: 94-95)

Turkish Cinema, after 80's, generally put determined human relationships on its agenda. dealing with woman independence, sexual freedom in the frame of woman-man-woman love triangle. (Özkan, 2004: 8) These movies aimed to analyse women from different perspectives. Atif Yılmaz was the most prolific director of Turkish Woman Movies. He produced 13 woman films between the years 1980 and 1989. (Esen, 2000: 43)

Actually he started to shoot woman films in the 70's. His first woman film was "Utancı" (Shame) in 1972. "Kuma" (Fellow Wife) in 1974 and "Selvi Boylum Al Yazmalım" 1977 are other important woman movies of Yılmaz in the 70's. (Esen, 2000: 39)

“I am influenced from the feminist wave in Turkey. They became more powerful, more serious in this case. I made research and therefore was able to make movies about it” he stated in one of his interviews. (Esen, 2000: 44)

Atıf Yılmaz in his “urban woman” movies explains woman sexuality and identity without referring to social roles of motherhood and wife and he transfers the question of equality from public sphere to private sphere. Woman’s priority is gained from men with the discourse “first me”. (Göle, 1993: 74-75)

On the otherhand, 80’s woman movies broke down another important tabu. Through Agah Özgüç’s “Social Erotic Movies” important Turkish actresses, old “good girls” started to show their sexualities for the benefit of social realist movies. Müjde Ar, Hülya Koçyiğit, Türkan Şoray, Hale Soygazi became symbols of intellectual erotism in Turkish Cinema. (Özgüç, 2000: 212)

2. FEMINISM FROM KADINCA MAGAZINE TO TURKISH CINEMA: DUL BİR KADIN-A WIDOW

This article aims to focus on woman solidarity by analysing four movies. Our first movie is, *Dul Bir Kadın- A Widow* directed by Atıf Yılmaz in 1985. *Dul Bir Kadın*’s content have lots of similarities with *Kadınca Magazine*’s context. It supports and reflects *Kadınca*’s point of view.

Dul Bir Kadın is a story of two women -Suna (Müjde Ar) and Ayla (Nur Sürer)- who have troubles with their sexual lives. Suna and Ayla belong to upper middle class like *Kadınca*’s target audience. They use liberal feminist expression “you” against Marxist feminist expression “us”. (Aydoğan, 2004: 41) During the movie Suna’s single friends Gönül (Deniz Türkali) and Ayla recommend domestic character Suna to be active in sexual life and to make peace by accepting her desires.

Being successful in professional life is important in our movie just like it is in *Kadınca Magazine*’s content. Movie’s protogonas are highly educated and are friends from college. Ayla is an advertiser, Gönül is an elderly painter and have an antique store, those professions

were famous in 80's. None of them have economic difficulties. They have their own houses, cars, they do what ever they want, when ever they want. So they are not proletarian. (Özkan, 2004: 8) Suna loses an important part of her husband's heritage but she disregards this situation and pursues her desires instead of making a good marriage.

Dul Bir Kadın's protagonist fight against the conservative social orders but they are narrated as artificial characters. Love and sex are important external elements for their journey in to their conscience where men are important elements. (Özkan, 2004:8)

On the other hand, men are criticised with their sexual powers. Gönül says, "Men are selfish in the bed." In other words, Gönül and Ayla only fight for their sexual freedom in the field of bed.

Working women are supported by cheap housework performed by women and by women relatives, but in fact, this can be called exploitation. (Kandiyoti, 2007: 44) In *Dul Bir Kadın*, Suna consistently humiliates her housemaid and her coiffeur and hangs out only with women of her class.

Middle class women spend their leisure time with volunteer works.(Kandiyoti, 2007: 48) Especially Suna does this, but that is not an important detail in the movie.

At the end of the movie, Suna's sexual journey ends problematically. Because of her psycho lover, Engin (Yılmaz Zafer), she loses her best friend Ayla and also her happiness. She is saved by "a good man", a character by which the male gender is sublimated at the end of the movie. Classical narrative ends with happy ending to conserve the old, patriarchal system. Sometimes, peccant woman are pardoned and are committed to old system or are mostly punished via death. (Esen, 2000: 71) However, in *Dul Bir Kadın* the sinful one is the male character (Engin) and he is punished as he is left alone. Self confidently, professional woman (Ayla) or good mother (Suna) returned to their "woman's place". (Öztürk, 2000: 61) They create their own happy endings by rejecting the masculinity of the man which acts as a threat towards woman identity.

Dul Bir Kadın perceives the lesbian relationship issue in a different way than the other Turkish exploitation movies. Ayla and Suna admired each other but they have to share the

very same psycho man, which caused them to become closer. They walk around hand in hand in Bodrum bazaar and they sleep undressed sharing the same bed. (Özgüç, 2000: 167) In Turkish Cinema women became by all means lesbian in case of hopeless situations. *Dul Bir Kadın* can be accepted as the Pioneer of feminist genre in Turkish Cinema, but essentially, it was only a new form of the old Yeşilçam model.

3. A LESBIAN MELODRAMA: DÜŞ GEZGİNLERİ-DREAM TRAVELLERS

The prostitute and her redeemer's story was a stereotype in Yeşilçam Cinema. *Düş Gezginleri* (1992) is a newer model of that story, an implementation for the new era, 90's, by the smart director Atıf Yılmaz . (Özgüç, 2000: 167)

In *Düş Gezginleri* Doctor Nilgün (Meral Oğuz) returns to her scarcely populated hometown where she spent her childhood and saves her childhood friend Havva (Lale Mansur) from brothel and makes her "her wife". That's the first real lesbian story in Turkish Cinema. In the film which raises the thought that a woman's like for another female can only result from not being able to find what she wants from a man. Women repeat the social norms in their behaviours rather than a mutual support. For many societies, home and family life are considered to be women's world and public and the political world are considered to be men's. Consequently, woman are isolated from the public sphere. (Öztürk, 2000: 62-63) Especially, in *Düş Gezginleri*, even women of the leader group live in their territories and prostitutes are imprisoned in their brothel's borders. Doktor Nilgün can easily come into existence in public sphere, however, she is interrupted by men. On the other hand, Nilgün saves Havva from brothel but she puts her in another prison, their own house. Nilgün is able to go out and earn money, even in that situation, she becomes more and more "man". Women are accepted in the public sphere if they are burdened by the responsibility of another women (Kandiyoti, 2007: 44) just like Havva and Nilgün's relationship.

According to Freud lesbian impulse is born from the castration phobia which is explained as the male behaviour in woman. (Sagan, 2003: 34) For example, Havva is isolated from the society and Nilgün is also disturbed there. Their lesbian impulses could be explained according to Freud.

Male character Nilgöl, starts to use and abuse her wife or housekeeper Havva at first sight. She makes her clean her house, cook, she imprisons her, she is jealous because of her, she humiliates her all the time by mentioning her prostitution, Havva becomes more and more unconfident in their relationship. Home, as a private sphere is not colonized by men yet for Ann Kaplan and she adds that women were still able to hang together.(Öztürk, 2000: 66) In *Düş Gezginleri*, as a prisoner, Havva hangs together with her neighbour Olay Olay (Deniz Türkali). At the end she leaves Nilgöl with her support. This interdependence does not include sexuality or authority, so that's real.

Social gender roles determine the behaviours of male or female which in return explains the hierarchical constitution in the society. Violent, confident, authoritarian, rude, selfish behaviours are used for male and philanthropic, kind, patient, tender, hesitant behaviours are attributed to female actions. Higher positions bring violent and competitive behaviours. (Güçhan, 1992: 40) Nilgöl is a doctor, she has a high position in the society, she competes in her social and private life. At the first sight she competes against Havva in her private life and after then she starts to compete with Olay. Nilgöl competes with fellow women. In the film, we witness the exploitation of a woman, portrayed as a caricature by another woman simplyfied into a male caricature rather than a woman solidarity theme.

4. FEMINIST LESSONS FROM “PROSTITUTE” TO THE “MADAME”: İKİ KADIN-TWO WOMEN

Other important “women interdependence” movie is *İki Kadın-Two Women* (Yavuz Özkan- 1992). This movie was the reflection of an important judiciary case of 90's. (Saktanber,1993: 229) *İki Kadın*, narrates this story in a different way. Famous and strong one (Zuhal Olcay) is raped by a minister. She goes to court to demand justice and than she is morally supported by the minister's wife (Serap Aksoy). Essentially, the prostitute starts to give lessons to minister's wife through the movie and they become friends..

Space is important in *İki Kadın*. Minister's wife stays at her home during the movie. Women are happy as long as they are associated within their natural habitat, home Movie portraits them as happy people, makes them stronger in their privileged places and isolates them from the public sphere. They feel the need to defend and protect themselves in the

public sphere. (Güçhan, 1992: 45) But, what's the importance of hanging together in private "female" place? At the end of the movie, minister's wife returns to her husband to protect the power, money and her position. She sustains status quo. Women interdependence collapses once again because of the patriarchal society's rules.

On the other hand, in *İki Kadın*, like our other movies, there is a revolt against a bad man. Our movies disregard the patriarchal world's problems and women's interdependence. *Düş Gezginleri* is also concerned with this case because there is a bad woman who becomes a man.

5. MENDACIOUS REVOLT IN SMALL TOWN: VİCDAN –CONSCIENCE

Our last bad man is *Vicdan's* Mahmut (Murat Han). Like *Düş Gezginleri*, in *Vicdan* there are two childhood friends who constitute a relationship. Mahmut is married with a quiet docile girl Songül instead of his real love Aydanur and they have an affair. Songül realised this situation and she decides to become good friends with Aydanur. Aydanur changes Songül's attitude. Songül starts to live a new secret life and she likes it. She understands that she must destroy town's borders but thinks that Songül was punished because of destroying private and public sphere's borders. *Vicdan* seems like a progressive movie but in reality it repeats commercial cinema's models. Two women who inflict patriarchal life's borders are immediately punished. One of them is killed and the other one becomes a prostitute.

Vicdan starts in a small village. This small town is between the town and the country. It includes very conservative and interesting lives. In small the town, women and men live different lives. Women interact with their relatives and neighbours. Small towns include stereotype lives. Women chores are undermined issues in small towns. Woman do not act as females but instead as professionals whose behavioural practices do not require a perception of men as males. Frankly, all society's conservative rules exist in small towns. There is private and public sphere separation. Women interacts with each other consistently and that relation creates an interesting interdependence. (Kandiyoti, 2007: 35) In *Vicdan* the stereotype relationships between two women and a man which we can recall in Turkish movies after 80's create interdependence. On the contrary of the relation between Suna and Ayla in *Dul Bir Kadın*, Aydanur and Songül start to hang together against Mahmut at the first part of the

movie and they prefer each other. Unfortunately, small town's conservative structure and the pressure of hypocrit patriarchal relations end two women's interdependence in a rather bloody manner.

Remorse is the one of the most important effects of super ego according to Freud. In the period of attending society, all "morally upright" behaviours are remorse. Because in the period of Oedipus complex, castration of father figure orientates us to be morally upright. (Sagan, 2003: 34)

Aydanur has an affair with her childhood friend's husband. Songül makes her feel guilty. She makes Aydanur face her remorse. Aydanur, on behalf of being moral, left her lover and preferred to be lover of her friend. Instead of the man who abuses her, she preferred her friend. This movie's father figure is Mahmut.

Happy ending is also a classical narration ending. It is used to protect patriarchal system. Peccant woman are pardoned and become committed to the system or mostly are punished by death penalty. *Vicdan*, *Düş Gezginleri* and *İki Kadın* do not have happy endings. Sinful women characters are losers and they are punished. In *Dul Bir Kadın* happy women characters obeys the dominant system and they are awarded.. The pros and cons of this are debatable in terms of woman identity

CONCLUSION

The period which started with 12 September 1980 military coup is a variation period for Turkish society and Turkish cinema. Woman's new role which is changed in private and public sphere, pursuit of identity, resurgence of feminism are reflected in Turkish Cinema and results in woman's films of 80's. In this very new cinema, new bourgeois women are important figures. Educated and Professional women could pass to public sphere but loneliness, unhappiness and sexual dissatisfaction bring their ends. Women are shown especially at their home, in the private sphere. Private life became spectacle, spectators started to gaze. Müjde Ar reflects a woman who has a certain identity as she experiences her sexuality freely. She shows her body, but her body became for new women and also for men a spectacular object. (Güçhan, 1992: 43)

On the other hand, feminism became popular in 90's. In the new decade a new concept

of womanhood emerged in which a power conflict among men and women does not exist and power causing from femininity is preferred. Women are more beautiful, happier, outstanding and they are more powerful. They designed their traditional roles in a showy manner. Indeed, they adopted their traditional roles titivating, but they assumed it as a source of power. (Güçhan, 1992: 43) In *İki Kadın*, we see the prostitute with her daughters. She is portraided as a good mother as she adopts her traditional role. On the other way, she chooses her job herself. She is aware of her rights so she must have been educated. She is a woman with self-confidence

In Turkish Cinema woman's sexuality is represented through sexually free women. Especially, Atif Yılmaz's *Dul Bir Kadın* and *Düş Gezginleri* are relevant examples. *Vicdan* is the pursuer of them. Sexuality is practiced in private sphere in Turkish Cinema. Women who want to experience their sexuality freely and rebel against social norms and patriarchal society end up with an either implied or very clear lesbianship. But likewise, this relationship is not also allowed to last long and woman solidarity even in bed is not allowed. In Yavuz Özkan's *İki Kadın* women's interdependency is prohibited. Minister's wife is associated with the patriarchal system.

In *Vicdan* men and women of working class and small town life and also their behavioural codes are under debate so two women's pursuits, disobedience, sensational interdependance are punished. Generally, in Turkish movies, women experience very bad things and they must accept these situations. Women could be awarded for their self sacrifice and patience mostly with marriage but if they create a misery for men, they are murdered. (Abisel, 1994: 127) Especially, we see this in *Vicdan* through Songül's end. Aydanur, who leaves Mahmut, is punished also and she is imprisoned and becomes a prostitute. Women are punished just because they became powerful by choosing each other. In *Düş Gezginleri*, *İki Kadın* and *Vicdan*, who ever fights for her freedom, has personalities, who ever could live in public sphere and who has male features are shown as "femme fatale". Those women are punished in all the three movies. Dr. Nilgün is isolated, the prostitute loses law suit and is isolated again, Aydanur kills her lover.

In Turkish society, women meet and will be meeting a social, forensic and traditional discrimination even in progressive movements. Popular cinema reinforces traditional values.

Dominant cinema represents woman in a dominant view. Movies signify depressed contents which is patriarchal and subconsciously issued in Yeşilçam's melodramas. (İğneci, 2004: 23-24)

We can analyse positive effects in the Movies after 80's as women are represented as educated and in favorable jobs where they acquire high positions in the society. Women's representation types, their fight for their rights, identities, interdependence and their pursuit for their sexuality changed society in a positive way.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

BOOKS:

- Abisel, Nilgün (1994) **Türk Sineması Üzerine Yazılar**, Ankara- İmge
- Çağatay, Nilüfer; Yasemin Soysal, “*Uluslaşma Süreci ve Feminizm Üzerine Karşılaştırmalı Düşünceler*” Tekeli, Şirin (1993) (Ed.) **1980'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadın Bakış Açısından Kadınlar**, İstanbul: İletişim
- Esen, Şükran (2000) **1980'ler Türkiyesi'nde Sinema**, İstanbul- Beta, Second Edition
- Göle, Nilüfer (1993) **Modern Mahrem-Medeniyet ve Örtünme**, İstanbul- Metis, Forth Edition
- Güçhan, Gülseren (1992) **Toplumsal Değişme ve Türk Sineması**, Ankara- İmge
- Kandiyoti, Deniz (2007) **Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşlar-Kimlikler ve Toplumsal Dönüşümler**, İstanbul- Metis, Second Edition
- Özgüç, Agah. (2000) **Türk Sineması'nda Cinselliğin Tarihi**, İstanbul-Parantez
- Öztürk, S. Ruken (2000) **Sinemada Kadın Olmak**, İstanbul: Alan
- Sagan, Eli (2003) **Freud Kadın ve Ahlak**, İzmir: İlya, Second Edition
- Saktanber, Ayşe “*Türkiye'de Medyada Kadın: Serbest, müsait kadın veya iyi eş, fedakar anne*” Tekeli, Şirin (1993) (Ed.) **1980'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadın Bakış Açısından Kadınlar**, İstanbul: İletişim
- Tekeli Şirin, “*1980'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadınlar*” Tekeli, Şirin (1993) (Ed.) **1980'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadın Bakış Açısından Kadınlar**, İstanbul: İletişim

PAPERS:

- Aydoğan, Filiz. “**Tüketici Kitleler Olarak Evdeki Melekler ve Kadın Dergileri**”, Interdisciplinary Meeting in Woman Issues 1-4 March 2004 Sempoziyum Paper Texts, Yeditepe University Faculty of Fine Arts, Second (2004): 41-50
- Güçhan, Gülseren. “**1990'lı Yılların Türk Sineması'nda Kadının Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rolündeki Değişmeler**”, Interdisciplinary Meeting in Woman Issues 1-4 March 2004 Sempoziyum Paper Texts, Yeditepe University Faculty of Fine Arts, Third (2004): 39-52
- İğneci, Rana. **Türk Sineması'nda Klasik Kadın Temsiline Karşı Alternatif Bir Yaklaşım; Derviş Zaim Sineması**, Interdisciplinary Meeting in Woman Issues 1-4 March 2004 Sempoziyum Paper Texts, Yeditepe University Faculty of Fine Arts, Third (2004):21-30
- Özkan, Zühal Çetin. “**Türk Sineması: 1980 Sonrası Kent Filmlerinde Aile ve**

Kadının Aile İçindeki Rolü”, Interdisciplinary Meeting in Woman Issues 1-4 March 2004
Sempoziyum Paper Texts, Yeditepe University Faculty of Fine Arts, Third (2004):3-10