

**T.C.  
CELAL BAYAR ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ  
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI  
YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ**

**AN INQUIRY ON THE REPRESENTATION OF ORIENTAL WOMEN IN  
TARIQ ALI'S *ISLAM QUINTET***

**Sündüz ONART**

**Tez Danışmanı: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Burcu ALKAN**

**MANİSA  
2012**

## ÖZET

### TARIQ ALİ’NİN *İSLAM BEŞLİSİ* ADLI ESERİNDE ŞARK KADININA BAKIŞ

Sündüz ONART

İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü

Yüksek Lisans

Tez Danışmanı: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Burcu ALKAN

Manisa 2012

Bu çalışma, Tariq Ali’nin, 1992-2000 yılları içerisinde yayınlanan *İslam Beşlisi* adlı eserinde, Şark kadınının temsilinin tartışmasını ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Oryantalist bakış açısına karşı Şark’ı savunan bir eser olarak kabul edilen *İslam Beşlisi*’nin amacındaki tutarlılığı, yerel kadına yaklaşımı konusunda sorgulanmaktadır. Şark kadınının klişeleşmiş Oryantalist analizine istinaden, bütün serilerdeki kadın karakterler ve onların yerel kültürlerine göre değerlendirilmesi, Ali’nin anlatımındaki gizil Oryantalist söylemi açık etmek amacıyla araştırılmıştır. Bahsi geçen amaç dahilinde, bu çalışma, kadının Oryantalist açıdan betimlenmesi ile cinselleştirilmiş Şark’ın emperyalist bilgisi arasındaki benzerlikleri de inceler. Böylece, kadınlık, ataerkillik ve “Şarksal” sosyal değer kavramları, *Beşli*’de uygulanan Oryantalist ve anti-Oryantalist çerçevede irdelenmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Oryantalizm (Şarkiyatçılık), Tariq Ali, Temsil, Kadın, Klişe, Kültür

## ABSTRACT

### AN INQUIRY ON THE REPRESENTATION OF ORIENTALWOMEN IN TARIQ ALI'S *ISLAM QUINTET*

Sündüz ONART

Department of English Language and Literature

Master's Degree

Thesis Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Burcu ALKAN

Manisa 2012

This study aims to scrutinize the representation of “Oriental” women in Tariq Ali’s *Islam Quintet*, which were published in the period of 1992-2010. Shaped by an “anti-Orientalist” perspective to release the so-called Orient from the Orientalist perceptions, the *Islam Quintet* is questioned in its uniformity in relation to its approach to the native women. Within the analysis of the stereotypical “Oriental” woman, the female characters in five volumes and their position *vis-à-vis* their local culture are examined in order to unfold the latent Orientalist discourse in Ali's narrative. By such intention, this thesis also explores the parallels between the Orientalist depiction of the women and the imperial discourse of a “gendered” Orient. Accordingly, the notions of femininity, patriarchy, and the “Oriental” social norms are discussed in relation to the Orientalist and anti-Orientalist frameworks that are applied in the *Quintet*.

**Keywords:** Orientalism, Tariq Ali, Representation, Women, Stereotype, Culture

Yüksek lisans tezi olarak sunduđum “**An Inquiry on the Representation of Oriental Women in Tariq Ali’s *Islam Quintet***” adlı çalışmanın, bilimsel ahlak ve geleneklere aykırı düşecek bir yardıma başvurmaksızın, tarafımdan yazıldıđını ve yararlandıđım eserlerin bibliyografyada gösterilen eserlerden oluşup, bunlara atıfta bulunmuş olduđumu belirtir ve bunu onurumla dođrularım.

17/12/2012

Sündüz ONART

*for Metin Onart*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The person whom I would like to thank first is my supervisor Assistant Professor Dr. Burcu Alkan. Her invaluable guidance, tutorship and meticulously detailed feedback have always led my way from confusion to enlightenment. This study is indebted to her respected personal skills both in theoretical and stylistic frameworks. I respect her for her motivation and the academic model she constitutes. She has taught me not only to question, but also to ask the right questions. I thank her for her care and for being always herself.

I would also like to thank Associate Professor N. Sibel Güzel for the invaluable knowledge she imparted at her classes. She was the person that got me interested in postcolonial literature in the first place. I also thank her for her help, support and friendly guidance.

Undoubtedly, I thank the members of staff at the English Language and Literature Department of Celal Bayar University for their friendliness and support. The many opportunities, with which I was provided through the department, enriched my scholarly experience immensely. The Erasmus exchange programme that enabled me to visit the Alpen-Adria University Klagenfurt in particular was much appreciated. Without such opportunities and the support of the academics of the English department, this study would not exist.

I also thank the School of Foreign Languages at Celal Bayar University for providing me with the suitable schedule and free time that was necessary to finish this programme. The teaching experience I gained has also been a welcomed professional and academic experience.

I thank Halil Çeliker for encouraging and supporting me at every phase of my study. He was always there when I needed his friendship and assistance.

Finally, I want to thank my husband Metin Onart, without whose love and patience, surviving the stress of the project would be much more difficult.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2 Orientalism</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 Edward Said and Orientalism.....	9
2.2 The Feminine Orient and the Oriental Female.....	14
2.3 The Representation of Women in Orientalism.....	17
<b>3 An Inquiry on the Representation of Oriental Women in Tariq Ali’s <i>Islam Quintet</i></b>	<b>24</b>
3.1 Mystified and Exotic Oriental Woman.....	25
3.2 Devious and Insolent Oriental Woman.....	31
3.2.1 She, Courageous, Curious and Seductive.....	32
3.2.2 She, Adventurous, Disloyal and Naughty.....	37
3.2.3 She, Sharing the Male.....	45
3.2.4 She, Beyond Limits.....	50
3.3 Submissive and Secondary Oriental Woman.....	54
3.3.1 Concept of Marriage – Woman as Child-bearer.....	54
3.3.2 Master-Slave Relationship – Woman as Sex Objects.....	63
3.3.3 Woman as the Property of Man.....	70
3.3.4 “The Second Sex” .....	71
3.3.5 Education and Honour-killings.....	75
3.3.6 Oriental Woman vs. Her Western Sisters.....	81
<b>4 Conclusion</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>92</b>

## ABBREVIATIONS

In this thesis, abbreviations in *italics* are used to refer to the each volume of the *Quintet*:

(in alphabetical order)

*GB* : *Night of the Golden Butterfly*

*PAL*: *A Sultan in Palermo*

*PT* : *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree*

*SAL*: *The Book of Saladin*

*SW* : *The Stone Woman*

The abbreviations in quotations marks (“ ”) refer to the cited articles.

“CSS” : “Can the Subaltern Speak?” by Gayatri C. Spivak

“PES” : “Protocols of the Elders of Sodom” by Tariq Ali

“RES” : “Remembering Edward Said” by Tariq Ali



...

*A damsel with a dulcimer  
In a vision once I saw:  
It was an Abyssinian maid,  
And on her dulcimer she played,  
Singing of Mount Abora.  
Could I revive within me  
Her symphony and song,  
To such a deep delight 'twould win me  
That with music loud and long  
I would build that dome in air,  
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!  
And all who heard should see them there,  
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!  
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!  
Weave a circle round him thrice,  
And close your eyes with holy dread,  
For he on honey-dew hath fed  
And drunk the milk of Paradise.*

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Kubla Khan*

## INTRODUCTION

Tariq Ali is a political activist who is known to be a spokesperson for the political injustices around the world. Taking a stance against wars and imperialism, he has written many critical essays and books on political affairs. He deliberately reacts and provides people with alternative perspectives to those of the hegemonic powers. His aim in writing is evident in his essay “Literature and Market Realism:”

Why do we write and for whom do we write? . . . For those, and I count myself amongst them, who refuse to distance themselves from history and world politics, the answer is simple. Writers should not run away from reality. In the face of horrors old and new, we must fight back with our literary fists. (146)

It is this inclination of him to assert an “anti-Orientalist” viewpoint and release reality from “Western” prejudices on the so-called East that has culminated in a recently completed set of novels, the *Islam Quintet* (1992-2010).

Although *Redemption* (1990) is Ali’s first novel, the *Islam Quintet* is accepted as his most notable fiction. In accordance with his worldview and perception of politics, history and literature, the *Quintet* serve the contemporary literary sphere with a broadening vision, through which the *Eastern*, *Oriental*, or *Islamic* cultures find themselves an “exit” from the Orientalist discourse. Set in the different periods of Islam-Christianity conflict, the “novels belong to a politically correct philo-Orientalist genre that consorts well with a current taste for indigenous and diasporic voices” (Buj, “Tariq Ali in Conversation pt. I”). These “diasporic voices” constitute various fictional narratives that rely on the historical fact, and they highlight an idealistic vision: There was a time in the past, before the ramification of imperial hegemony, when people of different religions could live in harmony without racial and cultural discrimination.

Accordingly, Ali’s *Quintet* aims to dissolve the identities defined for the “Oriental” or “Eastern” societies. Depicted beyond the conventional perceptions of “Oriental” people, such as being primitive, lewd or narrow-minded, these characters, whether historical or fictitious, establish a contrasting image of the so-called Oriental people.

Among these characters, Ali presents many significant women who live under patriarchal social rules as the wives, daughters, servants and elders of the household. Developed as individual characters with their own decisions and mistakes, they are freed off passivity. As opposed to the Orientalist stereotyping, which renders the Oriental woman as sensual, secondary and voiceless, these “Oriental” women are generally depicted as confident, clever, strong and conscious of their sexuality. They are parts of then intellectual society. They embody the open-minded Oriental women who are valued by men. For instance, Sultana Jamila in *The Book of Saladin* is “a sceptic, a lesbian, raised by her father on the rationalism of the Andalusian philosopher Ibn Rushd” (King, *World Literature Today* 245). Similarly, Maya of *A Sultan in Palermo* is celebrated for her wit and self-confidence.

However, although Ali portrays these women by an intention to break out the Orientalist stereotypes, he sometimes makes use of the same Orientalist discourse in reference to their domestic and social profiles. The characterization yields to the Orientalist stereotype in minor details. As such, this thesis develops a discussion of the representation of “Oriental” women in relation to the stereotyped Orientalist set of beliefs. In this process, notions such as “East-West,” “Orient-Occident,” “Orientalism” and “Orientalist stereotypes” will be scrutinized.

Edward Said in his pioneering study *Orientalism* (1978) defines Orientalism as “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ [East] and ‘the Occident’ [West]” (2). In this sense, the distinction between these two concepts is far from being just geographical. On the contrary, the Orient and the Occident are both ideologically constructed terms and they operate as binary oppositions (5). That is why they “must be studied as components of the social, and not the divine or natural, world” (Said, “Orientalism Reconsidered” 347). The Orient has become a signifier for the Occident in an antithetical relationship. What the *East* is, the *West* is not.

As interdependent processes, the creation of the knowledge about the Orient and the “Western” self-definition through this knowledge are not simply imaginative.

Orientalism owes its roots to the eternal dynamic of power. As Said puts it, “[t]he relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (*Orientalism* 5). What enables the Occident both to propagate its notions of the Orient and to announce them through a body of institutions is the political power it has. With this political power, the Occident is able to create and re-create the Orient. Said notes this construction clearly in *Orientalism*:

Under the general heading of knowledge of the Orient, and within the umbrella of Western *hegemony* [emphasis added] over the Orient . . . there emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy . . . [Therefore, Orientalism is] based more or less exclusively upon a sovereign Western consciousness out of whose *unchallenged centrality* [emphasis added] an Oriental world emerged, first according to general ideas about who or what was an Oriental, then according to a detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections. (7-8)

The organization of the world in this way relates to the idea that there is a strong manifest interdependency between the knowledge generated and the intentions of its generator, which is essentially ideological, “an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control” (*Orientalism* 36). The systematic knowledge accumulated by the powerful is modified and disseminated according to their political interests and it is circulated through mediums such as academics and literature. This formation suggests that “the cultural role played by the Orient in the West connects Orientalism with ideology, politics, and the logic of power . . . to the literary community” (Said, *Orientalism* 24). The literature, hence, is to be understood *vis-à-vis* politics and society.

Tariq Ali’s viewpoint in reference to politics-literature relation is similar to that of Said. In his provocative essay “Protocols of the Elders of Sodom,” Ali quotes from Stendhal: “Politics in a work of literature is like a pistolshot [*sic*] in the middle of a concert, something loud and vulgar, and yet a thing to which it is not possible to refuse one’s attention” (5). The words of Stendhal assert the attitude towards literature and politics as a dynamic notion. By saying that “[t]here cannot be any Chinese wall between literature and politics” (“PES” 149), Ali summarizes all the discussions relating to this standpoint. Accordingly, the circle of knowledge, power, literature and

politics gives way to the biased set of beliefs of the *West* about the *East* to be embodied in novels, poems, and stories.

These works are organized in such a way that they not only reflect the so-called Orient in its varying characteristics but also define and re-shape it by a certain methodology, out of which develops the Oriental clichés. In other words, the writers writing about the Orient are trapped in the same prejudice, of which the discourse of Orientalism itself consists. Thus, the original Orient “provoke[s] a writer to his vision; it very rarely guide[s] it” (Said, *Orientalism* 22). The academics and literary people, who are interested in the Orient as a “career,” have established a set of generalized qualities attributed to the Orient by using similar kinds of “style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances” (Said, *Orientalism* 21). With this methodology, works that deal with the Orient have represented the region and its peoples in their “Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelty, [and] sensuality” (Said, *Orientalism* 4). The “Eastern” people have become the signifiers of the uncivilized, the rude, the lustful and the fundamentalist; and this signification is, just as Said does, what Tariq Ali rejects.

Ali’s rejection of the Orientalist stereotyping becomes evident in the *Islam Quintet* through the portrayal of the female characters, who represent an adverse perspective of the Orientalist mindset. Yet, although they are mainly presented to be clever, confident and active participants of both domestic and social life, they also reveal the Orientalist discourse that is at work in the novels. As such, the female characters in Ali’s *Quintet*, who stand against the Orientalist clichés, may also imply otherwise. The *Quintet* deals with the Orientalist discourse in two main interrelated forms of representation. Firstly, the representation of *women* themselves as separate characters; and secondly, the representation of the *culture* that is unveiled through the stories of those women. These stories, accordingly, lead the way to the “Western” prejudices imposed on the so-called Oriental women, culture and peoples in general.

Reina Lewis, in her study *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem* (2004), argues that the Orientalist consensus, which is associated with the

“Western” viewpoint, represents the “Oriental” women “in ways that [are] sexual (the lascivious odalisque), temporal (the Orient as a zone out of time locked in a pre-modern past), social (. . . Oriental women [are] pictured as either sultanas or slaves), and cultural (the ignorant, lazy harem woman)” (7). Indeed, these spaces in which the “Oriental” women are categorized stem from the so-called Oriental sensuality. The Orientalist representation of women as separate characters in the *Quintet* maintains two reciprocal subdivisions. The first division comprises vivid description, “splendid” visualization and extraordinary portrayal of the female beauty. As Ali visualizes the “Oriental” women, he makes use of highlighted vocabulary which, in fact, reflects the Orientalist discourse. As Bruce King in his review for *The Stone Woman (2000 - Islam Quintet III)* states, “[a]lthough hoping to dispel clichés about Islam, Ali is likely to reinforce stereotypes” (*World Literature Today* 111). The use of certain adjectives, the references to the mythological stories and the elevated depiction of the physical qualities of women by men parallel the Orientalist stereotypes. Thus, the “Oriental” women are, yet again, mystified and are rendered exotic.

Along with the visual idealization of the “Oriental” women, the plots in which they are involved construct a vital dimension for their characterization. Their reactions to the events and their comments on certain circumstances elaborate their characterization. For instance, the most common characteristic revealed, as the Orientalist discourse also suggests, is their sensuality. Their daily experiences culminate in their being labelled as lustful. Although Ali intends to represent them within their own cultural norms, at times he strengthens the Orientalist ideology as well.

Apart from their sensuality, the native women’s so-called impotence, passivity and helplessness are also emphasized. The plots centring on women not only depict them with these traits, but also “orientalize” the culture. The responses of the “Oriental” women to their culture present them in an area whose borders are defined by patriarchy. Indeed, the one perspective where the Orientalist ideology and local patriarchy coincides is the way they treat women. The Orientalist ideology underlines the submissiveness of women similar to the way the “Oriental,” especially Muslim,

societies do and relates it to patriarchy. Mahmudul Hasan explores this relation as follows:

Its demonizing of Muslim societies as repressive to women and its portrayal of Muslim women as passive victims (who are veiled, shackled, and secluded) maintain clear links with the ‘Orientalist descriptions’ of Eastern societies. (“The Orientalization of Gender” 27)

Accordingly, Ali situates the women of the *Quintet* in such occasions that they are represented as the “victims” of a despotic patriarchy. These women are depicted in demeanour which obviously displays their discomfort with the patriarchal social codes. Rather than being assimilated without questioning, they reject their secondary position, however much in vain it might be. This helplessness is the gate through which the Orientalist discourse enters and finds an opportunity to self-justify.

Orientalism disparages the reactionary, primitive and biased attitudes of “Eastern” patriarchy, and by sustaining them in a latent way, it establishes an identity for the “West” through binary opposition. The most common means, on which Orientalism depend to criticize the Orient, are the veil and the *harem*. In the Orientalist discourse, the veil is the symbol of enslaved Oriental women. As Meyda Yeğenoğlu in her study *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (1998) suggests, the rejection of the veil evokes “‘civilizing,’ ‘modernizing,’ and thereby ‘liberating’ the ‘backward’ Orient and its women, making them speaking subjects” (46). Besides, for the Occident, the *harem* signifies humiliation for the Oriental women just as the veil does. The Oriental *harem* is thought to be a prison for women who are left to serve their masters’ sexual desires. Moreover, “[t]he vision of the harem as a sexualized realm of deviancy, cruelty and excess has animated some of the West’s best known examples of dominant Orientalism from fine art, to operas, to novels and popular literature” (Lewis 96). Aydın, in his essay, notes the *harem* (and the veil) to inspire one of those Orientalist works of art, *Vathek* (1786), a tale by William Beckford:

. . . the figure of the veiled Eastern girl symbolizing the Other is created by a narrative structure in which a male subject’s attempts to liberate a female object from the tyranny of the harem is interrupted or arrested by a stereotypical patriarchal aggressor who prevents the achievement of

narrative desire in the possession of the woman. (“Travel Writers and Their Oriental Women”)

Such examination of *Vathek* points to three basic assumptions of the story; how the “West” sees the veil, the *harem* and the Oriental lands. In other words, the Orient is also subjected to the possessive desire of Orientalism that shows the “East” as the secluded object of “Western” desire, as a feminized place invaded by the masculine subject.

The Orientalist outlook, which is used to condemn the Orient, is structured around the women of the *Quintet*. Their discomfort with the patriarchal social norms is the space where the Orientalist discourse is revealed. However, their reactions are not always visible. Some of the women in the *Quintet* are characterized as being silent despite their discontent with the traditions. Their depiction in various stories, hence, relates to another dimension in which the women themselves substantiate their passivity. Essentially, the Orientalist mindset values the Oriental women as being passive, segregated and secondary. The women who cannot develop awareness or who cannot give voice to their consciousness, then, become the Orientalist stereotypes. Therefore, the Orientalist ideology contrives in both frames. It legitimizes itself through the cruelty of the Oriental culture when the women express displeasure with it; and it legitimizes itself again through the silent and/or silenced image of the Oriental women. Therefore, defined through such a theoretical framework, this study begins with a review of Orientalism. The Orientalist discourse will be analysed in relation to its historical background, its connection to imperial hegemony and methodology, as well as to questions in reference to Edward Said and his *Orientalism*, along with other works in the field of postcolonial studies. Meanwhile, the study focuses also on the representation of women in Orientalism, which is elaborated in reference to *Orientalism* and other studies. Moreover, the resonance of the Oriental female to the Orient as a feminized land is explored within the same division.

The discussion will continue with the inquiry on the representation of Oriental women in the *Quintet*. The questions of femininity, gender and culture of the “Orient” will be explored in relation to the “Orientalist” discourse under three main points:



“Mystified and Exotic Oriental Woman,” “Devious and Insolent Oriental Woman,” and “Submissive and Secondary Oriental Woman.”

Finally, in the conclusion, the standpoint that is necessary for the works dealing with the Orient will be examined. This standpoint, which parallels objectivity and depicting the Orient on its behalf, will be clarified with a reference to the notions of culture and representation. However, it will also be suggested that in the works dealing with Orientalism, there is an inevitable lack of such a stance, in accordance with which the whole argument of the thesis will be justified. In addition, the possible perspectives within which the *Quintet* could also have been studied will be examined. In conclusion, the reason for this thesis to be discussed on its present argument will be clarified.

## **ORIENTALISM**

### **2.1 Edward Said and Orientalism**

In one of his conversations with Tariq Ali in June 1992, Edward Said told him that “the effects of colonialism are much deeper and go on much longer when the last white policeman leaves” (“Excerpt from ‘Conversations with Edward Said’”). His words point to the long historical period the world has been going through since the early days of colonialism when the “West” initiated its administrative and ideological journey over the “Eastern” lands that specifically constitute the Middle East (Curtis 38-39). The intention of the “West” was to save the exotic lands from their discerned obscurity, inferiority and alienation. Since colonialism is the “conquest and subsequent control of another country, [it] involves both the subjugation of that country’s native peoples and the administration of its government, economy and produce” (Hiddleston 2). However, “the effects of colonialism that continue upon the departure of the last policeman” derive from the imperialist cultural supremacy established and practiced during the colonizing period. The aftermath of this period, hence, is analysed in its all references to politics, economics or ethics and cultural regeneration. As such, when analysing these references of both “pre” and “post-colonial” periods of the Middle East methodically, Said realizes that they differ from his own experiences, and tells Tariq Ali about the incentives of his further studies:

By the early seventies I began to realize that the distortions and misrepresentations were systematic, part of a much larger system of thought that was endemic to the West’s whole enterprise of dealing with the Arab world. It confirmed my sense that the study of literature was essentially a historical task, not just an aesthetic. (T. Ali, “Remembering Edward Said” 277)

As postcolonialism discusses “the discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy, anthropology and linguistics” (Quayson 2), Said focuses primarily on the literary works through which the so-called West imposes its imperial ideology over the so-called East or the Orient. Reading between the lines of primarily British and French literary studies, he detects that since Napoleon’s conquest of Egypt, “imperialist

suppositions” of the “West” are portrayed as “universal truth . . . that [are] used in the service of Western domination” (T. Ali, “RES” 276). This so-called universal truth has constructed the discourse of the Orient and “[has] served both as an instrument of rule and to shore up a European cultural identity, by setting it off against the Arab world” (T. Ali, “RES” 276). The deconstruction of the “West’s” prejudiced documentation and systematic distortions to denounce the Arab “East” is the core Said asserts in his *Orientalism*.

The broad definition of Orientalism can be stated as the body of practices, institutions and manners destined to produce, circulate and disseminate the knowledge of the Orient. As Said develops a critical viewpoint against Orientalism, he establishes three main interrelated viewpoints. Firstly, he delineates the main initiative of Orientalism, which is to construct the identity of the “West” in relation to the Orient. In other words, “the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, [and] experience” (Said, *Orientalism* 2). This means that the science of Orientalism that formerly meant to study the people and culture of the “East” has modified itself to create the Orient in accordance with the political and economic interests of the “West.” Said views this attitude of Europe briefly as gaining “strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (Said, *Orientalism* 3). Therefore, the establishment of the West’s self-identity relates to the creation or re-presentation of the Orient. This establishment unveils the distinction between “representation,” that is, to stand for something in its legal and political usage, and “re-presentation,” that is, to modify and create.

The re-presentation of the Orient and the artificial boundary between the European “us” and Eastern “them” is constructed basically in an “academic” way in many institutions. Under this academic roof, “a large mass of writers . . . take the basic distinction between East and West as their start point” (Said, *Orientalism* 2) and authorize view on it with an aim to dominate. The creation process involved “othering” the people of the region in relation to their race, religion and culture which Said calls “Orientalizing the Orient:”

A group of people living on a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they call “the land of the barbarians.” In other words, this universal practice of designating in one’s mind a familiar space beyond “ours” which is “theirs” is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary. I use the word “arbitrary” here because imaginative geography of the “our land-barbarian land” variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction. It is enough for “us” to set up these boundaries in our minds; “they” become “they” accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from “ours.” (*Orientalism* 54)

The “Orientalizing” process is crucial to maintain an Orientalist approach since “[t]he eponymous subject of the Orientalist is primarily defined by its otherness to Europe rather than by the characteristics of its indigenous inhabitants” (Baddeley 69). However, what is more significant than the process itself is to assure the consistency of the space opened by it. Out of this intention to secure the “Orientalizing” project emerges the second critical point of Orientalism.

Said remarks that “Orientalism . . . is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment” (*Orientalism* 6). The material investment, which sets the basis for “Orientalizing,” has produced a set of beliefs that derive not only from the general ideas about the Orient, but also from the fantasies, desires and imagination of the Orientalist. With the aim to know the Orient, and thus to be able to mould it, the Orientalist accumulates knowledge through certain interdependent “lenses,” as Said calls them, such as “the journey, the history, the fable, the stereotype, [and] the polemical confrontation” (*Orientalism* 58). In other words, the Orientalist re-presents the Orient according to the factual or imaginative travel experiences in the “exotic” lands. Moreover, access to the local literary works, comprehension of them in bias and highlighting the fabulous elements such as giants and fairies have enabled the Orientalist to gradually construct a perceived discourse. The most significant issue within this discourse of Orientalism is the stereotype.

The main scope of stereotyping is to re-present the “mysterious” Orient in its so-called traditional exoticism. In order to present an Orientalist vision of the “Eastern” people, Said quotes from Lord Cromer:

Orientalists or Arabs are thereafter shown to be gullible, “devoid of energy and initiative,” much given to “fulsome flattery,” intrigue, cunning, and unkindness to animals; . . . [Orientalists’] disordered minds fail to understand what the clever European grasps immediately . . . Orientalists are inveterate liars, they are “lethargic and suspicious;” and in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race. (*Orientalism* 39)

These adjectives used for the Orientals eventually serve the prevailing “Western” identity development. Alexander Lyon MacFie in *Orientalism: A Reader* (2000) notes the characteristics of both sides in this development process as follows:

Europe (the West, the “self”) is . . . essentially rational, developed, humane, superior, authentic, active, creative, and masculine, while the Orient (the East, the “other”) [is] . . . irrational, aberrant, backward, crude, despotic, inferior, inauthentic, passive, feminine, and sexually corrupt. (8)

The traits assigned to signify the two sides in the encounter also include the “rational, peaceful, liberal, and logical” (Said, *Orientalism* 49) Europe against the “profound, seminal” (51), “supine, and silent” (138) Orient. Even the most ordinary and individualistic behaviour of a person is appropriated to a whole nation. The taken-for-granted characteristics of the alienated Orient have generated an Orientalist vocabulary that has become visible in the works of literature, art, and any means of communication. As such, the “[p]oets, dramatist, sentimental writer, novelist and maker of sensational machinery for the stage, picture show and quick-selling newspaper have created the ‘Oriental’ of imagination, fancy, prejudice and bigotry” (Griffis 65). Such labour has formed spaces in which the so-called “sensuality, promise, terror, sublimity, idyllic pleasure, intense energy” (Said, *Orientalism* 118) of the Orient are practiced within its “odd calendars, its exotic spatial configurations, its hopelessly strange languages, [and] its seemingly perverse morality” (166). Therefore, stereotyping has consolidated the Orientalist discourse. However, the labour of material investment needs stable reference

points in order to secure its continuity; and this need leads to additive citation of the literary and scholarly works in the Orientalist circle.

In the Orientalist writing and study in general, the writers, philosophers, historians, philologists and any scholar to deal with the Orient make references to the previous works released. The works become sources of continuous citation that referred to the body of ideas received from the past. As the authors cite each other systematically and take the previous reference points to be unchallenged, the Orientalist lacks individuality. Said discusses this formation in *Orientalism*:

The work of predecessors, the institutional life of a scholarly field, the collective nature of any learned enterprise . . . tend to diminish the effects of the individual scholar's production. A field like Orientalism has a cumulative and corporate identity, one that is particularly strong given its associations with traditional learning . . . public institutions . . . and generically determined writing (travel books, books of exploration, fantasy, exotic description). (202)

As such, there has been a community of scholars that add to the enhancement of Orientalism dynamically. Talal Asad summarizes the first and second critical aspects put forward by Said in *Orientalism* as its being “not only a catalogue of Western prejudices about . . . Arabs and Muslims,” but also an analysis of the “closed, self-evident, self-conforming . . . discourse which is produced again and again” (qtd. in Prakash 204). Besides, as this advancement is established in interdependence, the studies lack originality. Yet, since the discourse is a result of “reconstruction and repetition” (Said, *Orientalism* 122), it actually has never been original. It has never reflected the culture of the Orient on its behalf.

The third and the final perspective of Orientalism deals with its consequences in contemporary times. Orientalism, which has systematically been constructed since the late seventeenth century, has resulted in globally accepted generalizations. The so-called Oriental characteristics have come to signify “Eastern” countries and people with fixed attributions. Said claims that although the discourse has changed, the previous writings have been challenged and the understanding has revised itself, the Orient-Occident division has not been disturbed. The division, on the contrary, is preserved through

securely animated generalizations such as the Arabs' definition as uncivilized people and Islam's association with terrorism. Tariq Ali, in his essay "Cinema in the Muslim World," draws attention to "Hollywood trash depicting Muslims as terrorists" (239). Likewise, in his book *Covering Islam* (1981), Said, in reference to the prejudiced image of Islam created by the Western media, remarks that "covering Islam is a one-sided activity that obscures what "we" [the West] *do*, and highlights instead what Muslims and Arabs by their very flawed nature *are*" ("Introduction to the Vintage Edition" xxii). As such, he criticizes the suggestions that Orientalism has ended due to the literal end of colonization. Within the modern and altered attributions to the Orient and Islam, it still operates and reflects the Western bias despite increasing global awareness.

Finally, Orientalism can be defined as the biased "Western" knowledge of the Orient that is used for authorial intentions by enlarging the gap between representation and reality via scholarship, literature, media, and politics. In other words, it is a "*distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts" (Said, *Orientalism* 12). In *Night of the Golden Butterfly* (2010 - *Islam Quintet V*), Tariq Ali portrays the style of geopolitically conscious Orientalist writing and clarifies the distinction between re-creation and actuality:

Jindié's daily impressions of Beijing and her lyrical description of Dali and Yunnan deserve to be and will, no doubt, be published on their own, though not in the *National Geographic*, since there is not a trace of exoticism in what she writes. (237)

The re-presentation of the Orient, thus, has blurred its originality and has invented concepts such as an Oriental scenery, "an Oriental atmosphere," "an Oriental mode of production," "an Oriental tale," or "an Oriental personality" (Said, *Orientalism* 31-32). Yet, what draws the attention of the "West" in this process of creation has been that of the Oriental sensuality, hinting at the feminine image of the Orient.

## **2.2 The Feminine Orient and the Oriental Female**

As a systematically learned and applied science, Orientalism, constitutes the distinction between the "West" and the "East" through dynamic notions such as

rationality, power and domination along with their binary oppositions. One of the key elements in this dynamic, as Said suggests, is the sexual imagery of the Orient, that is, the association of the Orient with sex. He exemplifies the depiction of the Orient in sexuality by referring to Edward Lane's Orient of the nineteenth century. For Lane, as Said notes, "everything about the Orient . . . exuded dangerous sex, threatened hygiene and domestic seemliness with an excessive 'freedom of intercourse'" (*Orientalism* 167). The sexual representation of the "Eastern" lands and peoples, that are thought to be sensual, exotic and mysterious, has resulted in (or derived from) the feminine image of the Orient. The reason for this is to be explained by Orientalism's being "an exclusively male province" (Said, *Orientalism* 207). It suggests that "Western hegemony functioned by enlisting Westerners in its conquest of the Orient, penetrating it by constituting it as a woman – seductive, mysterious, fecund, devious, and vulnerable" (Prakash 209). This masculine nature of the discourse allowed the Orientalists to project their manly egos to the Orient and re-shape it within their own fantasies. As such, in order to grasp the "feminized" Orient, it is also significant to explore the ever-lasting power relation between male and female.

Simone de Beauvoir in her detailed study *The Second Sex* (1953) argues the formation of gender as follows:

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. Only the intervention of someone else can establish an individual as an *Other*. (273)

The mentioned stimulus that estranges the "female" from being merely a sex and orients her to a new identity as "wo-man" is her relation with the male, who reciprocally identifies himself as "man." However, the creation of these two identities in reciprocity cannot be established objectively. In fact, it develops as an assertion of masculine privilege that names women as the *Other*. In dealing with her, man cannot view woman as a separate sex and evaluates her in relation to himself. Hence, he disregards her own consciousness and calls her mysterious.



When man makes woman the Other, he expects her to recognize his superiority and attributes her all the characteristics that he never wants to be associated with, which in extreme cases results in misogyny. de Beauvoir believes that this “hostility . . . conceals a desire for self-justification” (21). She elaborates the hostility by gender-wise assignments:

Once the subject seeks to assert himself, the Other, who limits and denies him, is none the less a necessity to him: he attains himself only through that reality which he is not, which is something other than himself. . . . There can be no presence of an other unless the other is also present in and for himself: which is to say that true alterity – otherness – is that of a consciousness separate from mine and substantially identical with mine. (159)

In other words, through the creation of the Other as his counter image, he secures his identity to be superior and indestructible. That is the very standpoint that connects man’s *othering* of the woman to the “West’s” *othering* of the so-called Orient as if it is a woman.

As Orientalism is a “male province” that is actualized fundamentally by “Western” men, it is not surprising that it views the Orient as a woman to be *Othered*. Charlotte Weber in her essay “Unveiling Scheherazade: Feminist Orientalism in the International Alliance of Women, 1911-1950” writes that Orientalism is “a discourse articulated exclusively by men that ‘feminized’ the East by attributing to it qualities typically associated with Woman herself - irrationality, licentiousness, exoticism” (125). It directs all the so-called docile characteristics of woman to the Orient; and hence, not only constructs the “Western” identity in the encounter, but also aims to possess, submit, and consume the *Other*. By presenting the Orient as feminine, it also marks it as “passive . . . weak,” and “to be ravished” (Dellios 619; Prakash 210). That is why “[t]he Middle East is [seen as] resistant, as any virgin would be;” and the Orientalists look forward to “the conquest of [this] maidenly coyness” (Said, *Orientalism* 309). Similar to a man who wishes to obtain an unknown, thus enticing, woman, the Occident wishes to make the Orient subdue to “himself.” As the feminine Orient is not only submissive but also enigmatic and seductive, it “suggest[s] not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire, [and] deep generative energies” (Said,

*Orientalism* 188). The juncture between Orientalism's sexual politics and the context within which it is delivered cannot be ignored. In this sense, the imperial vision of the Occident becomes symbolized in the female body.

By such gesture, Orientalist writing, especially imaginative literature is to be resolved from neither the paternalistic nor the imperial ideologies of the "Western" hegemony. For instance, *The Book of Saladin* (1998 - *Islam Quintet II*) and *The Stone Woman* of Tariq Ali's *Islam Quintet* are two literary works, in which the Orient is explicitly likened to a female. In *The Book of Saladin*, "Misr," that is said to be "possessed of great wealth and weak rulers," is presented as "[a] beautiful bride waiting for a husband" (73). Similarly, in *The Stone Woman*, the Baron, who is of German origin, likens the declining Ottoman Empire to "a drunken prostitute, lying with her legs wide open, neither knowing nor caring who will take her next" (25). These obvious metaphors associate the Orient with the female identity. However, this kind of association in the Orientalist writing does not always necessitate a direct and manifest relation between the female and the territory. In fact, the formation of a so-called feminine Orient, which "is especially evident in the writing of travellers and novelists," is accomplished also by depicting the women of the region as "creatures of a male power-fantasy" (Said, *Orientalism* 207). The Oriental female, then, emerges out of the "Western" gaze shaped by male humiliation and desire and becomes the playground for masculine domination.

### **2.3 The Representation of Women in Orientalism**

The Orientalist mindset represents the Oriental woman in two main categories which are in accordance with the "feminized" Orient. The first image of the native woman relates to her putative sensuality. She is depicted as a lusty figure who always wishes to satisfy her libidinous desire. Said underlines that this lewd portrayal of her can be found in Orientalist literary works dating back to nineteenth century, such as those of Gustave Flaubert. As the stereotypical figure of the Oriental woman, Flaubert's *Kuchuk Hanem*, an Egyptian dancer and courtesan, is visualized "in her learned sensuality, delicacy, and . . . mindless coarseness" (Said, *Orientalism* 187). Moreover, she is said to be "no

more than a machine . . . mak[ing] no distinction between one man and another man” (Flaubert qtd. in Said, *Orientalism* 187). Depicted in “dumb and irreducible,” “seemingly unbounded sexuality” (Said, *Orientalism* 187), she is made to signify the so-called moral corruption in the Orient, and hence, she can be used for fantasized satisfaction without any qualms. Moreover, in *Justine* (1957), the first volume of *The Alexandria Quartet* by Lawrence Durrell, the male character Darley, who is a writer, portrays his Alexandrian love Justine with her “lovely head – the deep bevel of that Arabian nose and those translucent eyes, enlarged by belladonna” (30). Durrell makes Darley admire her as “[s]he gazed about her like a half-trained panther” (30). He is struck by her “exotic” appearance. He is curious about her and wants to know her closer. Likewise, Joseph Conrad’s heroine Alma is “irresistibly attractive and dangerous” (Said, *Orientalism* 186). Since Orientalism is a “citational discourse . . . which relies for its power on the repetition of recognizable elements (of Western Orientalist knowledges)” (Lewis 8), such literary figures reinforced the sexual image of the Oriental woman. Yet, one of the most effective Orientalist works, in which her seductive image is revealed, is Richard Burton’s translation of *The Arabian Nights* (1885).

Deprived of objectivity, *The Arabian Nights* is accepted to be a space where Burton’s own views on women, race and class flourish. With a highly Orientalist style, it depicts the “Oriental” women as chattels that are in a master-slave relationship with men. Their experiences are narrated in accordance with virile fantasy. The effect of *The Arabian Nights* in the creation of the Oriental woman stereotype is so much that it is still seen as a reference point in contemporary times. When Fatima Mernissi, in her book *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* (1993), tries to show “how women’s leadership in early Islam was suppressed from the collective memory and religious literature – an absence reinforced by Western scholars specializing in early and medieval Islam,” “the leading Orientalist of the 1960s, Bernard Lewis, ridicule[s] her effort . . . by telling her that she had probably read about them in *The Arabian Nights*” (qtd. in Pappé 245). The image of her as an “uninhibited and profligate sex object whose sole aim in life [is] to seduce and satisfy the illicit desires of the Oriental male (and later European male travellers)” (W. Ali 30) is too settled to be easily shattered. One of the mediums by which *The Arabian*

*Nights* (as well as many other works) delivers this frozen image is the famous “Oriental” *harem*.

Reina Lewis refers to the *harem* as the “most fertile space of the Orientalist imagination” (4). As the male Orientalist is deprived of access to the *harem*, what he writes about it lacks personal experience, yet, is quite creative. Hence, the mysterious *harem* becomes a place of curiosity or marvel, and its inhabitants, “an exterior target or threat” (de Certeau qtd. in Yeğenoğlu 49). Since the male cannot know her precisely, he sees her as dangerous, but at the same time, as the embodiment of “unrestrained Eastern sexuality” (Weber 126) who spends her days in “laziness and ignorance” (139). Meanwhile, it is not only the woman, but also the life she is living in the *harem*, that is, the web of relationships, intrigues, rivalry or cruelty, is dealt with much attention and creativity. Lewis discusses the Orientalist image of the *harem* as a whole:

In the imaginary of what might be called dominant Orientalist discourse, the harem figures as a polygamous space animated by different forms of tyranny (from despot to women, from eunuchs to women, from mistress to slave, from favourite to rival); of excess (the multitude of women, the opulence of the interior, the passions of the despot); and of perversion (the barbarity of polygamy, the violence of castration, the sapphism of the women locked up without ‘real’ men and the illicit affairs carried out behind the despot’s back). All these things are found deplorable and enticing by turn. In this well-known and endlessly rehearsed knowledge about the Oriental harem, the stereotype of the actual imperial seraglio (the biggest, most hierarchical and richest of Ottoman harems) came to stand in as a signifier for all harems: dominant Orientalist discourse could talk of ‘the’ harem with a clear sense of what it meant and of the spatial relations it enacted. To this extent, the generic harem of Orientalist fantasy operated as what Mills calls an ‘ideal/stereotypical level of space’. (182-83)

The reason for this fantasized “ideal” image of the *harem*, in addition to such image of the woman herself, derives from the Orientalist male’s suppressed sexual desires within the moral norms of then Victorian society. Feeling liberated from his own culture’s carnal suppression, he celebrates the *harem* and seraglio fantasies which provide him with both sexual fulfilment and self-satisfaction. As Carroll McC. Pastner suggests in her essay “Englishmen in Arabia: Encounters with Middle Eastern Women,” “[the] [d]eep-seated feelings about separate sexual spheres as [the Orientalist men] apply to

Victorian and post-Victorian society have inhibited English attempts to portray Arab women” (310). Accordingly, the Orientalist discourse in relation to the *harem* and women generates an opportunity to release the suppressed sexual instincts of the “Western” masculine mind.

Besides its sexual connotation in the Orientalist mindset, the *harem* also symbolizes the secluded, helpless, and thus, submissive Oriental woman. She is believed to suffer from a relentless “master” who violates her for his sexual gratification and hinders her from developing a consciousness. Then, “[t]he vision of the harem [emerges not only] as a sexualized realm of deviancy, [but also that of] cruelty and excess” (Lewis 96). As such, the Oriental woman is perceived as “an ignorant and repressed woman whose culture forced her into servitude” (W. Ali 30). The Orientalist discourse, hence, depicts her as a victim of local patriarchy that makes her silent and subjugated, just like the Orient itself “luxuriating in its own colonisation” (Baddeley 70). The pejorative picture of Muslim patriarchy and its relation to the local women that are depicted by the Orientalist literature has resulted in perceived misconceptions. The quotation taken from Dorothy Anderson’s *Miss Irby and Her Friends* (1966) defines how the relation between a Muslim man and woman in the Orient is seen from an Orientalist perspective:

To the Musulman, a woman was an inferior being, a chattel, to be bought and sold, kept secluded behind the screens of the women’s quarters, or, if produced in public, to be behind the draperies of the litter, or muffled and secreted in long shapeless robes, face covered by the veil; the property of the man as was his dog, his servant, his horse, to wait on his pleasure, to sleep at his feet; yet withal, if the husband be rich, to be cosseted and adorned with jewels and fed with sweetmeats, to spend days in idleness and chatter. (52-53)

Anderson’s portrayal of the Muslim woman “unveils” a significant Orientalist symbol to stand for the so-called submissiveness and passivity of her: the veil. The Orientalist discourse has always been interested in the veil and referred to it as the tragedy of the native woman since it tends to discuss it within the “Western” values and not that of the Orient (Jamal 54). “The veiled, secluded Oriental woman [has become] the perfect image of the non-citizen” (Lewis 96), through the eyes of whom the Muslim man is depicted as repulsive and cruel. Moreover, in reference to the victimization of the

Oriental women by Islam and patriarchy “as evidenced by the veil” the Orientalist discourse makes use of “the language of feminism to justify [its] imperialism” (Ahmed qtd. in Weber 144). The comparison of the Muslim “Oriental” women to their “Western” sisters aims to underscore the gap between these two veiled and unveiled women groups. The intentional “material investment” depicts the “Western” women as if they have never been subjugated by “Western” male superiority, and as if patriarchy is merely “Eastern.” Mohanty, in “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” discusses that while the “Eastern” women are represented as “ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, [and] victimized,” the “Western” women are depicted “as educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions” (337). The submissive image of the “Eastern” women suggested by the Orientalist scholarship and literature is also reinforced by the media:

Images in the media often portray Middle Eastern women as religious, conservative, oppressed, *swathed in veils* [emphasis added], lacking any meaningful personal freedoms, forced to live their lives as second-class citizens, and largely relegated to domestic roles, as a mother, a wife, a sister, or a maid. (“Women in the Middle East” 2)

Taken as a symbol for her differentiation from “Western” women and her passivity in society, the veil is imposed as the justification of the Orientalist vision of the Oriental women.

However, the veil “conceals” other meanings within itself as well. In the Orientalist discourse, both the veil and the *harem* symbolize the inferiority and eroticism of the Oriental women simultaneously (Peirce 1338; Weber 125). The sexual context is already resident in the *harem* due to its polygamous concept. Besides, the limited indoors access makes it mysterious, leading to curiosity, and thus, to vivid, fantasized descriptions of it. It is the same curiosity of the Orientalist male to discover the mystery concealed behind that makes the veil as appealing as the *harem*. Yeğenoğlu discusses this idea as follows:

Veil is . . . a multilayered signifier which refers at once to an attire which covers the Muslim woman's face, and to that which hides and conceals the Orient and Oriental woman from apprehension; it hides the real Orient and keeps its truth from Western knowledge/apprehension. It is also a metaphor of membrane, serving as a screen around which Western fantasies of penetration revolve. It is this polysemous character of the veil which seems to play such a crucial role in the unique articulation of the sexual with cultural difference in Orientalist discourse. (47)

Although the "Western" values insist on the veil as a symbol of native women's humiliation and exclusion from public sphere, the hidden sexual connotation of the Orientalist belief in relation to the veil leads to a different perspective. The "Western" gaze and desire to possess and dominate becomes symbolized in the "Western" yearning to uncover the veil. As a reaction to this imperial lust, the attitude towards the veil by the Oriental women alters and becomes political. As Weber suggests, it recently "symbolize[s] resistance to Western imperialism-and as such, has been advocated both by religious fundamentalists and some Muslim feminists" (143). In other words, the meaning it "conceals" varies in both the "Oriental" and Orientalist viewpoints in various times.

Since the early days of Orientalism, the image of the "Oriental" woman has been shaped in accordance with the colonial and virile tendencies of the Orientalists. She is continuously identified by two dichotomous characteristics; she is represented either as an insatiable sex slave who is always under the sexual service of her master, or as a powerless woman doomed in her inferiority. On the one hand, she is a temptress, but on the other hand, she is voiceless. A recent interview with Amy, an Asian transsexual, published in *Visible: A Femmethology* (2009) reveals how the stereotyped vision of the "Eastern" women remains unresolved:

With respect to sex and dating, I think what has been and continues to be trickiest for me is navigating *racial power dynamics* [emphasis added]. I am keenly aware of the stereotypes of Asian American women as passive, submissive, exotic and hypersexual. (96)

Despite the changing conditions in which the “Oriental” women are observed in modern days (such as the end of the colonial period), the image attributed to the “Oriental” woman does not seem to change and the clichés persist.



**AN INQUIRY ON THE REPRESENTATION OF ORIENTAL WOMEN IN  
TARIQ ALI'S *ISLAM QUINTET***

*She raised her face veil and, showing two black eyes fringed with jetty lashes, whose glances were soft and languishing and whose perfect beauty was ever blandishing, she accosted the porter and said in the suavest tones and choicest language, "Take up thy crate and follow me." . . . Thereupon sat a lady bright of blee, with brow beaming brilliancy, the dream of philosophy, whose eyes were fraught with Babel's gramarye and her eyebrows were arched as for archery. Her breath breathed ambergris and perfumery and her lips were sugar to taste and carnelian to see. Her stature was straight as the letter l and her face shamed the noon sun's radiancy; and she was even as a galaxy, or a dome with golden marquetry, or a bride displayed in choicest finery, or a noble maid of Araby.*

—Richard Burton, *The Arabian Nights*

The “Oriental” woman captured through an Orientalist’s eyes is more than a woman; she is embellished by the traces of magnificence and blessed with the splendid touches of nature. It is this endowed beauty that she lets flourish in veiled and robed privacy, adding to her mysticism. Under this silken drapery lives an Oriental woman with her mundane activities and repressed fantasies, which gradually paves the way for infidelity. As the Orientalist ideology suggests, a lustful Oriental woman is faithless; she is faithless to her man, she is faithless to her children, and first and foremost, she is faithless to her very self. This self-disloyalty reserves itself in the shape of primitivism, idleness and dependency. She is simple; she does not quest for knowledge. It is the safe roof of male domination under which she is preserved, sometimes in bliss and usually in antagonism to win over other Oriental *blessings*. Intrigues follow one another, then, out of which raises the once gullible now cunning Oriental woman. Yet, still secondary, still the “Other” in a male-oriented heart’s blood: Welcome to the world of the exotic lady.

One of the contemporary authors who dwell in this exotica world of the “Oriental” woman is Tariq Ali. In his *Islam Quintet*, Ali takes a stance against the generally accepted codes of Orientalist portrayal of the so-called Orient and presents a counterpart attitude in his narrative. However, the way he deals with the women of the territory

reflects his tone that is shaped by the Orientalist discourse. In all of his five works, the vivid depiction of various women and their acts, which are compatible with this literary creation, fit well into the taken for granted characteristics of the so-called Oriental/Eastern female society. It is obvious that Ali criticizes the biased, jaundiced and unilaterally set peculiarities attributed to the “other” nations by the “Western” mind – and wins himself a respectful seat in the agenda; yet he also creates a space for the Orientalist representation of the women of the region.

In this thesis, the examination of the “Oriental” woman in Ali’s *Islam Quintet* is carried out through interdependent trajectories that determine the understanding of one another and problematize the conceptualization of the “Oriental” woman as “mystified and exotic,” “devious and insolent,” and “submissive and secondary” (Lewis 142-177; El Saadawi 198-229, Said 207, Kabbani 26, 80; Lewis 7, Pollard 77-103, Hasan 28-35). These three main descriptive frames are drawn out by piecing together the similarities in the portrayal of women in all of the five novels. They depict the “Oriental” women both in their disposal and manners. However, in the *Quintet*, there are fundamentally two types of “Oriental” women; the naughty and the indolent; or, the coquettish and the submissive. Yet, such dualities do not prevent her from being predisposed to mystification and exoticism in either categorization.

### **3.1 Mystified & Exotic Oriental Woman**

The common way of adorning the “Oriental” woman with exoticism is treating her as if she was a divine beauty. The Orientalist depiction, as Said suggests, is the result of a “collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies” (*Orientalism* 73) that help a vivid visualization. Accordingly, the “Oriental” woman’s appearance is presented in such a way that she is taken not as an ordinary human being, but as a supernatural deity. Ironically, the natural elements of mother earth are called forth so as to create an unnatural and extraordinary beauty as such. In the *Quintet*, Tariq Ali makes use of rich picturesque features when depicting the women characters. Although such depiction helps to create lucid scenes and to visualize the characters in detail, it also reinforces the stereotyped image of the Oriental woman as perceived by the Orientalist gaze. Her vivid

portrayal becomes manifest through a variety of imagery, the first of which is the references to fruit and food.

In *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree*, Tariq Ali depicts several Moorish women who are associated with local fruits. One of them is Beatrice, called Asma after her conversion, the grandmother of the Banu Hudayl family, who is mentioned as “a beautifully shaped creature” (36) in her *fruitful* youth. When she was “fifteen or sixteen years old at the most . . . [h]er skin was the colour of ripe apricots, her eyes were the shapes of almonds, and her whole face smiled” (36). When the family saw their old – now dead– father Ibn Farid’s third and latest bride Asma, they could not help feeling amazed:

She looked so young and innocent. She was of medium height, but well built and generously proportioned. A virtuous face presided over a voluptuous body. Her skin was as smooth as milk but the colour of peaches, and her mouth looked as if it had been carefully painted with the juice of pomegranates. Underneath a mass of raven-black hair was a pair of shy, almost frightened brown eyes. They could all see how Ibn Farid had been bewitched by her. (*PT* 141)

In both descriptions of Asma, the narrative unfolds within a colourful visualization and that is how the glorious atmosphere is created. She is embellished with ostentatious adjectives. Every small detail in her beauty ends up in pure embroidery. Her lightweight and spontaneous behaviour elaborates in ravishing charm. That is why Umar, the master of the Banu Hudayl House, wants “to see how the shape of [Zubayda’s] eyes might alter when she smile[s], but he control[s] himself [since] [i]t [is] forbidden to pluck ripening apricots” (82). Thus, it is not surprising that Hind, Umar and Zubayda’s naughty daughter, whose skin, “normally the colour of wild honey [is] flushed and animated even in the weak glow of the lamplight” (135) is desired by men.

Referring to the women via fruit images continues in *The Book of Saladin*, where one of the major female characters Halima is noted to have “peach-like breasts” (21). Hers is “no ordinary beauty” (23). The aforesaid women of the narratives are subject to an elevated style of exoticism. That this exoticism is revealed in likening the women to various fruits is significant. Essentially, as Marie Richmond-Abbott argues in *Masculine*

*and Feminine: Gender Roles Over the Life Cycle* (1983), this reference links to the male's identification with "'civilization' or 'culture'," whereas "[w]omen [are] seen as being associated with nature" (22). As the woman is associated with nature, she is symbolized through natural images such as fruits, food, animals or other natural beauties such as rivers or forests. Indeed, in the early periods of humanity, "[m]en who manipulated nature by doing things such as irrigating and fertilizing saw themselves as dominating nature, and the cultural was considered to be superior to the natural" (Richmond-Abbott 22). In the meantime, "[a]s humankind moved toward a mastery of nature" (Richmond-Abbott 22) and since this mastery is generally overtaken by male power, men began to feel that the nature was not as powerful as it seemed. In this sense, mentioning the female characters as elements of nature in the *Quintet* points at the dominance of the "Oriental" men over women. Since all the references about the "Oriental" women are "*man-made*," it suggests that the men of the Orient deem themselves superior to the other sex.

Furthermore, in *The Book of Saladin*, Ali likens the "Oriental" woman to a princess whose physical appearance is supposed to be far away from simplicity. Throughout the novel, Halima is dubbed a "fairy princess from the Caucasus" (21) twice. Ibn Yakub, the narrator, mentions his capture of her sight in meticulous admiration: "When she returned, in a brocaded green and blue silk robe with large sleeves and gold bracelets, she reminded me once again of those legendary princesses of the Caucasus" (92). Halima is accompanied by her "Oriental" sister Mayya in *A Sultan in Palermo*, who "swept into the room like the princess" and had "a dark golden red [hair], just like the faded depiction of the Greek goddess Demeter" (*PAL* 45). The princess attribution is reinforced by the image of being goddess-like. The word selection is significant. Every word is chosen consciously in order to present a rich visualization and, hence, an atmosphere of exoticism and mystification, the way to which is led by underlying meanings these words suggest. The words "fairy" and "goddess" and the "princess," along with the images constructed around them present a magical fairytale-like world that is beyond reality. Through them, a sense of "Otherness" is created. Therefore, it is suggested that the woman does not belong to the same world with the man. While she seems to be a part of an unreal world, he stands for the realistic one. The difference

between the worlds of men and women is revealed through their tendencies in dealing with life.

As such, the princess image marginalizes the “Oriental” woman from the society through sublimation. Whether she is a historical noble or a fictitious character in a story, a princess is not an ordinary member of a society. Likening the “Oriental” woman to a princess, thus, displays an inclination to exclude her from the male-oriented society. Her mystification hinders her from developing individuality. Being “solidly integrated in male society,” she has “only a secondary importance” (de Beauvoir 184). Reina Lewis notes that “[b]eauty signifies in and through a series of looks that . . . gender and racialise both the objects of the gaze and the owners of the look” (142). Hence, the gaze of the men directed towards the women and their depiction of the female beauty in such vocabulary “genders” both sides. The man is given the authority and even if it might appear as a positive discrimination at first glance, the woman is latently eliminated from the society.

The vocabulary that adds to the “Oriental” atmosphere is evident also in the depiction of Zubayda, the first love of the emperor Salah al-Din who gives the novel its title. Once more, the woman is sublimated as her eyes are likened to “two lamps from heaven,” her teeth to “pearls” and her face to a “soft moon-entangled cloud” (*SAL* 283). The great scholar and historian Imad al-Din, the emperor’s attendant, speaks of her as follows:

She was dressed that night in a silk robe, the colour of the sky. It was richly patterned with a variety of birds. The nightingales were embroidered in gold thread. Her head was covered by a long black scarf, with a circular red motif. A silver bracelet hung loosely on each of her wrists. All this one forgot when she played the lute and her voice accompanied music. It was heaven, my friend. Pure heaven. (283)

The detailed account creates a magical ambiance that is succeeded through a woman. She is as if a part of the “Oriental” setting. Her identification with the elements of nature and her colourful depiction delivered in this magical atmosphere parallel her representation in the anonymous tales of *The Arabian Nights* “the fantasies of [which]

made [the Oriental woman's] image a hostage to common opinion in Western eyes" (Kolos, "Ottoman Women: Myth and Reality"). Simone de Beauvoir suggests in her *The Second Sex* that "[t]he tales of *The Arabian Nights* represent woman as a source of soothing delights, in the same way are fruits, preserves, rich cakes, and perfumed oils" (183). He enjoys the consumption of food just as he enjoys "consuming" the female sexuality. The man "sees Nature under favouring aspect [and loves] women with the gourmand's relish. . . . [H]e hardly differentiates between the pleasantness of [the women's] bodies and that of sand and wave . . . [which is] scorn[ing]" (de Beauvoir 184). Therefore, the attitude of linking her to vivid visual quality diminishes her value as an individual and descends her to a being that exists merely to please the men.

The conspicuous part of the lurid scene created in Zubayda's depiction also comprises of references to nature. The spell of the "Oriental" women in Ali's *Quintet* is sustained by the combination of several natural elements: The laughter of Noto and Siracusa women is resembled to "the ripple of a stream" (*PAL* 226) and Maya's hips are likened to "two half-moons" (87). Attributions to nature as such serve to mystify and exoticize the "Oriental" woman. Accordingly, the safe and familiar place of the woman in a man's world is hauled gradually to somewhere novel and unusual. He sees the woman as an original creature that is to be experienced and he is captivated by his own imagination. He treats her not as an ordinary human but as an unknown self by naming her organs with creative references from life. As he falls for his self-established design, he, then, dreams of "*conquering* the citadel that lay *hidden* under that perfumed *forest* [emphasis added] of hair between her legs" (*SAL* 212). He slavers for the unknown and desires to possess what is original to him. That is why Idrisi, the lover of both Maya and her sister Balkis, "felt he was being washed in waves of bliss as he *explored* [emphasis added] the mounds and crevices of [Balkis's] body" (*PAL* 128). The reason behind this attitude is actually explicit in Idrisi's emotions. The man fulfils his manly ego first by setting the scene for mystifying and sublimating, and then, by seizing the outsider. What he has in hand at the very end is the pure ecstasy in which he is overwhelmed by the satisfaction of his own ego.

The “Oriental” woman, especially due to her veil, has always been an area of curiosity in the Orientalist discourse. Since her body and face are covered, the writer feels spurred to use his own imagination to depict her. An excerpt from *Night of the Golden Butterfly* summarizes how an undistinguished gesture of a veiled woman can transform into a reflection of divinity:

A club, now sadly defunct, called Metro Fatherland, where in the heady years of the early Fifties young Muslim men and women met, ordered drinks and danced. On his way to this paradise, a writer would suddenly glimpse the veil parting on a burqa-clad woman’s face as she bought a piece of fine silk in Anarkali, and describe the vision as celestial light illuminating the Ka’aba. (32)

The exaggeration of a casual behaviour of an “Oriental” woman by any Orientalist writer mentioned in the quotation is where the Orientalist ideology reveals itself. As Meyda Yeğenoğlu remarks, “Orientalist writing is the European imagination at work in the field of the other” (44). In this respect, what makes this ordinary vision of a woman buying silk exotic underlies in her veil. Yeğenoğlu explores the concept of veil in her work as follows:

The veil attracts the eye, and forces one to think, to speculate about what is behind it. It is often represented as some kind of a mask, hiding the woman. With the help of this opaque veil, the Oriental woman is considered as not yielding herself to the Western gaze and therefore imagined as hiding something behind the veil. It is through the inscription of the veil as a mask that the Oriental woman is turned into an enigma. Such a discursive construction incites the presumption that the real nature of these women is concealed, their truth is disguised and they appear in a false, deceptive manner. They are therefore other than what they appear to be. (44)

In this sense, the imagery focusing on the Oriental woman’s appearance is a result of both the imagination of the male and already “orientalized” disposition of the female. As “[t]here is too much secrecy in [her] world” (*SW* 75), her veil symbolizes her mysteries. Depending on “[t]he *mystery* that is assumed to be concealed by the veil . . . [she] seem[s] to exist always in this deceptive manner” (Yeğenoğlu 44-45). Hence, a curiosity to discover the “behind-the-mask” (Yeğenoğlu 44) arises. The man wishes to learn what she has behind her mask that will lead him to her character:

This metaphysical speculation or mediation, this desire to reveal and unveil is at the same time the *scene of seduction*. The metaphysical will to know gains a sexual overtone. Troubled with this mask, the Western subject is *threatened and seduced* [emphasis added] at the same time. (Yeğenoğlu 45)

As the quest leads to her unknown character, she is presumed basically as charming and seductive. The identification of her mystery with the fear and fascination it arouses in men results in her designation as a malevolent, defiant and immoral personage. The mystified woman continues to be “orientalized” by her so-called sensuality and unreliability.

### 3.2 Devious and Insolent Oriental Woman

In the Orientalist discourse, the Oriental woman is drawn as a figure of moral corruption who leads men to disloyalty. They are “by nature mysterious, menacing, irrational, demonic, and sexually corrupt” (MacFie 86-87). In the *Quintet*, her corrupt disposition is highlighted by one of the male characters, Rujari, the Sultan of Palermo:

Our women were easier, accepting their place in our lives with dignity and calm. Yours were barbarians. Your Saracen women – and many Romans whose writings are in the palace library have testified to this – were too forward, too passionate, too demanding. Often they discarded their husbands. (*PAL* 149)

As a Christian, Rujari talks of his women of the same religion as *our* women. While addressing to Idrisi, who is a Muslim, he refers to the Muslim women as *your Saracen* women. The word *Saracen*, “one of the *Eastern* people” (Mayhew 504), explains how Rujari performs a racial and religious discrimination. His thoughts focus on the “Oriental” –specifically Arab or Turk– women and stigmatize them as being very flirtatious. This attitude raises the question as to whether his comment is factual or a fantasy of the Orientalist male mindset.



Irene L. Szyliowicz argues this question in her work *Pierre Loti and the Oriental Woman* (1988). She remarks that the conventional portrayal of women in “Eastern” societies has been biased and based on “Western” judgements. She links this bias to the “European” male chauvinism that she observes in the accounts of the French travel writer Pierre Loti, as she narrates his adventures with “Oriental” women (1-3). According to Szyliowicz, “since all the Oriental women essentially support and ratify their Occidental lovers, it is proper to conclude that Loti created these fictional characters as wish-fulfilment fantasies, to simultaneously reinforce and magnify his manhood” (3). The ideas creating stereotypes of the Oriental women emerge within the men’s imagination. What relates it to Rujari’s thoughts about Saracen women, then, is the way he portrays them. In accordance with the Orientalist approach, he sees the Oriental women as he wishes to see them. Able to be taken as the core of the portrayal of woman in the *Islam Quintet*, this very assertion of the Sultan sheds light on Ali’s Orientalist style of dealing with her.

In all of the five books of the *Quintet*, the narrative presents several aspects of her character, which, in the end, promote the image of the “Oriental” woman as, essentially, devious and insolent. This layered characterization of her unfolds through the main narratives and the subplots. In every narrative frame, the woman interacts with her milieu, at the end of which, the minor characteristics adding to her deviousness and insolence originate. As the stories develop, she emerges as a naughty temptress.

### 3.2.1 She, Courageous, Curious and Seductive

*Al-Idrisi: [Franks] lived with us in peace and realised they needed us to teach them all we knew. And they liked our women.*

—Tariq Ali, *A Sultan in Palermo*

In the *Quintet*, one of the salient traits characterizing “Oriental” woman is her bold and inquisitive temper. This trait is evident both in her actions and utterances. She is

depicted as a shameless seducer. Amid all “Oriental” women of the *Quintet*, Halima stands out with her appreciable temerity.

Then wedded to Kamil as his second wife, she chases the “forbidden fruit” (*SAL* 20) and has a love affair with Kamil’s chief officer Messud; both serving for the Emperor. The reference to the “forbidden fruit” connotes to the Biblical story of Adam and Eve “who tempt[s] [Adam] into partaking of the forbidden fruit” (Pevehouse 26). The biting of the forbidden fruit “cause[s] Adam and Eve to be expelled from the [Garden of Eden]” (Ross 97), that is, they have committed the “original sin.” In this story, the downfall of man is initiated by the woman:

And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. (*The Holy Bible*, Genesis 3.6)

As she makes Adam eat the fruit of knowledge, they both become aware of their sexuality: “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked” (Genesis 3.7). The consciousness of their own sexuality means the loss of their innocence. The curiosity Eve displays in reaching the “knowledge” results in her allusion “as a sexual temptress” (Richmond-Abbott 24). She is seen as a sinful seducer. Thus, the inclusion of “forbidden fruit” in the *Quintet* relates to Halima’s association with Eve. Just like Eve, Halima “make[s] the first move” (*SAL* 20) and tempts Messud into adultery which is sinful both in Islamic and Christian theological doctrines. The relation of Halima to the temptress Eve is to be approached in two dimensions, the gender and the culture. According to white Christian patriarchy, she is othered because of her gender:

. . . since woman remains always the Other, it is not held that reciprocally male and female are both flesh: the flesh that is for the Christian the hostile *Other* is precisely woman. In her Christian finds incarnated the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. . . . [S]he led Adam into sin. (de Beauvoir 184)

She is blamed for having no sense and for the downfall of humanity. In terms of culture, she is othered due to her “Oriental” character that labels her as defiant and immoral. As the Orientalists are mainly white Christian men, she is subjugated both by her sex and nationality. Seen from the Orientalist perspective, “the Oriental woman as an appearance of femininity . . . [is] describe[d] as the double articulation of cultural and sexual difference, [that is] culture and gender are other-ed through each other” (Yeğenoğlu 52). Accordingly, the doubly othered lustful Oriental woman is to be remedied and led to salvation just like the Oriental lands are to be cured off uncivilization. Thus, referring to Halima’s adultery as eating the “forbidden fruit” connotes to a suggested improvement supported by the “Occident” which will “rescue [her] from a subhuman status and reinstate [her] . . . to proper human status, that is, ‘the perfect Edenic form incarnated in Adam’” (McClintock qtd. in Hasan 28). The sinner Oriental woman is offered spiritual salvation by surrendering to the so-called hegemonic West.

As the story of Halima develops within the main narrative, the image of her as a courageous “Oriental” woman flourishes. When Ibn Yakub, the trusted scribe of the Sultan Salah al-Din, witnesses the Sultan’s confrontation with her on Kamil’s murder of Messud, he notes that “[h]e was staring at her with an intensity which would have frightened anyone else, but Halima looked straight into his eyes” (*SAL* 24). She did not move a muscle pointing at her inhibition and “[i]t was the Sultan who finally averted his gaze. She had won the first contest” (24). This scene implies that the “Oriental” female and the male are contestants in a fierce competition of power. She does not want to give in to the conventions and stands against the Orientalist view that places her in a secondary position in relation to men. Notwithstanding, the way she rejects suppression lacks etiquette of *balance*. Her “audacity astonish[es]” Salah al-Din, and “takes [the narrator] aback” as well; that is how he unravels “the question that ha[s] been troubling [him]” since Halima’s placement in the *harem*: “She had not been violated. [Salah al-Din] had been seduced” (*SAL* 37). By knitting Halima as a figure with freewill, Tariq Ali lets the “Oriental” woman bloom into bitterness, which is interbred with other equally influential qualities such as curiosity and ill zeal. Although a little time passes since the loss of her love, she does not refrain from seducing the Sultan. Her ardour to

be one of the Sultan's women shatters her sincerity of her love for Messud and creates a space in which she can be criticized by the Orientalist ideology.

The reason why the "Oriental" woman is insistent on grasping the secrets of life is probably because she does not perform any other weighty duty in her own life that would lead her to a relatively graver manner. According to the Orientalist mindset, the Oriental woman is shiftless, she does not have to earn herself a life and, if a mistress, she is usually accompanied by several maids. Having no serious concern, she indulges herself gaily in light-hearted curiosity (Dellios 621). This curiosity is exemplified in *The Book of Saladin* when "the intense questioning" of Halima and Jamila, the Sultana of the *harem*, "led to an insistence on both their parts that [Amjad, the eunuch] bare what remained of [his] genitals so that they could examine them closely" (255). Sultana Jamila, on the other hand, is depicted as the most intellectual woman among Ali's Oriental heroines. She is the daughter of "an enlightened Sultan . . . [who has] insisted that she be educated, just like her brothers" (*SAL* 94). She shares her knowledge with her companions in the *harem* and it is her "who keeps [their] minds alive" (94). Along with her sophisticated background, she is also depicted as a curious, naughty woman. It is the same inquisitiveness that gets the better of Halima who oversteps the mark and seduces Amjad in his deep sleep so as to examine his manhood more closely – by stroking, fondling and finally mounting (257). She does not abide by the boundaries.

Essentially, these two "Oriental" women are presented in a manner of searching for any kind of knowledge about life. Moreover, they are depicted to act confidently in every situation, especially in terms of sexuality. By making them behave freely in their sexuality, Ali aims to shatter the Orientalist image of them as submissive, passive and secondary. However, what Ali lacks is the *balance* of the "stereotyping" and "anti-stereotyping" images. Their depiction as libertines under the name of self-confidence does not establish a counterpart image for the stereotyped Oriental women. The analogous representations of Jamila and Halima as open-minded women is marred by their "too self-confident" image. Although it aims to destroy their passivity, it reinforces their sensuality and underlines their idiosyncrasy as the seductive.

Throughout all the novels in the *Quintet* included are several seductive characters. In accordance with the Orientalist portrayal of the Oriental women, they are noted to be the temptress prompting the males to sexual fantasies and liaisons. In fact, if they are “not faithless, futile . . . indolent, [they] [lose] [their] seductiveness” (de Beauvoir 584). Serving the notion of the woman being seductive, Ali adorns his novels with many incidents the most noteworthy one of which unravels in the case of Mariam and Salman in *The Stone Woman*.

Titled formerly as the lover, then the wife, Mariam meets Salman, the oldest son of Iskander Pasha, in Alexandria. The cynosure in their first meeting in her father’s house is her keynoted depiction as “bare-footed” (*SW* 146). This visualization of her is a symbol which hints at character as being an outcast in the conservative society. Compared to the generally accepted image of the Oriental woman as wrapped up in robes from top to toe when accompanied by men out of the household, Mariam is closer to laying bare her aptitude for enticement. This symbol is justified successively in the narration when Mariam and Salman are alone in their secret cove, naked, and he “did not possess her, even though she was prepared to sacrifice her virginity and [he] was by now in the grip of a white-hot passion” (*SW* 147). The reason behind is clarified by Salman himself: “Because making love to her would have been a violation of her father’s hospitality” (147). In contrast to Salman’s reasonable depiction, Mariam is presented as if she was a randy *Byronic hero* who is after lecherous adventures and seduction (Harvey 308). What adds more to her characterization as the temptress is her getting enraged at Salman’s confession about his reason to decline her (147). It is then that she “[begins] to curse all Pashas and Pashadoms and declare[s] herself to be a free citizen in the Republic of Love” (147).

Actually, by presenting Mariam in such a characterization, Ali intends to break down the clichés about the Oriental woman. She is portrayed as a woman striving to live according to her feelings. The focus is to depict her not in a state following the subjugating traditions of the society but in a state of self-consciousness and freedom. Yet, the subsequent narrative leads to a deduction that is different from such an intention. As the story develops, it is noted that Mariam is disloyal to her husband

Salman. Although her attitude before marriage is presented as her struggle for her freedom, her cheating Salman with the same drive dissolves her respectful image. Whether being disloyal and thus going beyond the social borders of the culture equals freedom and individuality is brought into question. The “Oriental” woman exemplified by Mariam cannot establish a strong “anti-stereotyped” self. What she signifies in the end is a woman caught in intriguing adventures.

### 3.2.2 She, Adventurous, Disloyal and Naughty

The “Oriental” woman as an adventurer is highlighted through subplots in the *Quintet*. These minor stories assist to educe the idea of how “colourful” the Orient is to be at times, which is another form of exoticism. In her book *Europe's Myths of Orient: Devise and Rule* (1986), Rana Kabbani asserts that as a result of “[c]enturies of stereotyping . . . the lascivious sensuality of the [so-called] East [has become existent in] ‘Oriental’ woman” (42). Strengthened by her adventurous image, she is depicted as “exotic, promiscuous and sexually available” (Belilos, “An Oriental Fantasy”). The Orientalist mindset perceives her as a libertine who chases after joy and drags men into her erotic fantasies.

The epitome of the “Oriental” woman as an adventurer adding to the multifarious lives of the Orient is an ancient “Oriental” princess narrated in *The Stone Woman*. Not forced into marriage by her brother, the Sultan, “she would veil herself and, [having been] accompanied by six armed eunuchs, she would visit taverns and places of ill-repute and all this to collect the latest lewd jokes” (*SW* 63). The preference of a princess is significant. Assigning a princess to the centre of this story creates the idea that “Oriental” women, even though she may be a princess passing her days in luxury, are not happy with their comfortable lives at home and do not fear going farther and fare worse.

The portrayal of the princess grows “colourful” as the story progresses:

She told her friends that she could never be satisfied with one man. . . .  
The choice was celibacy or freedom to choose her men. If she saw a man

she wanted, she would summon him and lift her veil . . . [and would say] ‘You may gorge yourself on this feast till you are sated. Enjoy it well, for you will never see or taste another. From paradise you will proceed straight to hell.’ (SW 63-64)

Her lack of satisfaction with one man is the portrait of the lascivious woman. The phrase “proceeding straight to hell” implies that they are killed by the servants of the princess so that they can keep mute. On the other hand, by her association with the “paradise,” the princess is exoticized. The hell-paradise duality attributes the woman a nature that is alluring, and yet dangerous. The servant men become the victims of, first their own lust, then, that of the princess. The advancement of the narrative in this manner alludes to the reader of the Sultan Shahryar of *The Arabian Nights* tales.

Heartbroken and stoned by his wife’s unfaithfulness, Shahryar takes his revenge from all women by strangling them one by one upon the rise of the new day on their wedding bed (Burton 7). The unquestionable acts of the all-authorial Sultan are brought to an end by Scheherazade who is “pleasant and polite, wise and witty, well read and well bred” (Burton 8). Deprived of a male “Scheherazade” for herself, however, the princess does not cease to slaughter. As a woman who is paralleled to the Persian Sultan Shahryar, she puts forward the idea that an “Oriental” female could also be as atrocious as her male counterpart and take lives of others easily.

Depicted as seducing her husband-to-be Salman beforehand, Mariam of *The Stone Woman* is now introduced as an adventurous married woman. As the story unfolds, it is revealed that Salman is not the begetter of his children. Although she only wishes to “free [her]self from [Salman] and the restraints of this life” (SW 155-56), she behaves selfishly. She puts her own life into the centre of the world and does not worry about the wreck she leaves behind. Despite her loyalty oath, she does not refrain from extramarital affairs and matches the Orientalist portrayal of the Oriental woman as disloyal.

The characteristics attributed to the Oriental woman as curious, adventurous or seductive result from her sensuality which is a taken for granted trait the Orientalist mindset assigns to her. Since the Oriental woman “as both peasant and odalisque,

become[s] the passive embodiments of the allure of the exotic” (Baddeley 70), she is treated as a lustful temptress, the only pleasure of whom is to live by sexual experiences. In respect to the social codes of the Oriental culture, the Orientalist ideology relates men to public and the women to domestic and private life. Reserved for the domestic life that hinders them from taking part in society, the women are perceived to seek relief through worldly pleasures. Their “fantasised association with an elegant and sensual femininity” (Lewis 256) helps to create the image of them as disloyal and naughty. Moreover, they are accepted to be preoccupied with sex and that they “spen[d] their time in sexual preparation . . . and in sexual intrigue” (Kabbani 26). Their breaking up with the ethical rules of the society that demand women to be monogamous is not a surprise.

In the *Quintet*, the stories involve both minor and major women characters depicted as being disloyal. What Plato, the enigmatic Pakistani painter utters about the women of his country in *Night of the Golden Butterfly* sheds much light on their characters and life styles: “Every pretty woman Zaynab [his love] knew in Fatherland had a husband, and quite a few in addition to a husband had a lover as well, and as an extra, another person to keep from getting too bored during the day” (*GB* 28). The disloyalty that is mostly unacceptable in societies is treated as a casual activity in the Orient, which most of the female characters in the *Quintet* experience regardless of their age or social class. The situation is exemplified by cross-mating references in the *Quintet*.

One of the references is the story of Kamil’s mother, the mother-in-law of Halima. She is presented as a typical middle-aged Oriental woman who is said to back Zenobia, Kamil’s first wife, against Halima. She assumes that as the present servant of their house, Halima would make a dishonourable wife to her son. As the account of Halima and her cheated husband is revealed, her pre-judgement about Halima purports to come true until it is unveiled that she herself was a disloyal bride to her own spouse. The former information about her being “deserted” by her husband when “she was heavy with their child” (*SAL* 26) is refreshed as his leaving the city upon discovering his wife’s infidelity. Kamil, in fact, was not of his blood, but of “a local merchant” she “had coupled” (26). This surprise circumstance highlights the Orientalist idea that most



women undertake cheating as a leisure activity. In order to cover her hypocrisy and share her own shame with another woman, she directs a judgemental attitude to Halima. As she does so, she tries to free herself from social judgements and guilt. By making another woman feel guilt-ridden for her libertine manners, she indeed aims to relieve her own qualms.

The love affair of the poet Ibn Umar and his married lover who is older than him serves for another pronounced issue adding to the main framework of disloyalty. In this incident, Ibn Umar's "attentions" are mentioned to be "encouraged" by her, leading to the "inevitable tragedy" (*SAL* 224). The choice of the word "encouraged" is very significant since it puts the blame of the "tragedy" primarily on the female. As if it is not a misconduct of two, the woman becomes the only one to be punished by being "poisoned" by her husband; "[s]imple solution to a simple problem" (224). Edward Bagby Pollard in his book *Oriental Women* (2010) clarifies the cultural approach to the disloyal woman and her punishment:

The Arabs, while sensual in their nature, have some strict laws concerning chastity. If a woman be guilty of lewdness, she is summarily put to death by her nearest relative. Unless this be done the family will lose all social recognition and civil rights. (81)

The female body, thus, symbolizes the honour of the entire family or group, to which she is attached. Just as the "Occident" associates the "Orient" with femininity and the female body and delights in their hegemonic power, the males of the local groups deem disloyalty as a challenge to their patriarchal hegemony and re-establish their power over women by taking their right to live out of their hands.

The "Oriental" woman sleeping with a foreign man is once more underlined in the cases of the mothers of Amir of Siracusa, the sisters Mayya and Balkis, and Zainab in *A Sultan in Palermo*. The first mother figure is alluded to have "commit[ed] an indiscretion with a cousin" (*PAL* 207) out of which the Amir's only sister is born. The second character is revealed to have "different fathers" (*PAL* 115) to her daughters. "Not only much better looking than [Mayya's] father but also more intelligent," the "Greek merchant" (115-16) comes out to be the father of Balkis. The forbidden zone

story ends when the husband punishes the wife by poisoning her (116). The third one, likewise, deceives her husband, sleeps with a merchant and gives birth to her only child Zainab (*PAL* 187). The husband is, however, still unaware of the truth.

These minor stories revolving around minor characters suggest that cheating is very common among the espoused. It is presented as if it is a local characteristic to the people of the Orient. The aspect that makes this impression more striking is that the woman is propounded to be the guilty side. As discussed before, she is presented as secondary in relation to the men and she is generally left to live a private life isolated from the public male-oriented society. This remoteness, hence, is believed to lead her to create joys for herself which results in her accusation of being naughty and adulterous. Such imagery makes “Oriental” women “the willing prisoners of European fantasy” (Baddeley 70) which categorizes them as being passive but sensual women. In all these subplots, the protagonist is the woman. Each story plays upon the female and develops the narrative around her. In other words, it is the woman who is primarily in charge of the betrayal and this clarification relates to the Orientalist viewpoint that she is, once and for all, the inviting scapegoat.

As the immorality of the so-called Oriental woman is emphasised, the characters involved in the act of adultery could be classified as figurative characters that add to variety in the narrative. As such, they lack an intensive character development and remain superficial. They are mostly presented within the framework they belong. They contribute to the main idea, and having officiated, they do not take the stage a second time. However, with the help of the major characters, the insolent side of the Oriental woman is more vividly woven through the existence of their foils. They take active part in the story and formulate the main plot.

The image of the insolent Oriental woman is thoroughly represented by Mayya, the lover of Muhammad al-Idrisi, the cartographer in *A Sultan in Palermo*. Her bewitching attitude as a naughty Oriental woman becomes manifest in her obscene language. She does not show any trait of timidity and talks defiantly about sex. As the Orientalist discourse suggests, the words and phrases she chooses to attribute to the intercourse

reveal her insatiable psyche which is full of fantasies. With her so-called colourful Oriental tongue, she embellishes her speech with creative similes. Upon her reunion with her everlasting love Idrisi by a secret marriage and in their love bed, she playfully asks him whether his “young cock [will] crow once more and hide in [her] nest again” (*PAL* 87). Her verbal playfulness repeats several times that night as they talk about various subjects. The flow of the conversation, however, is often interrupted by her naughty words. As the core of the talk “[raises] her temperature, [she claims] it may be time to pitch [his] own tent once again and follow [her]”; she would “test [his] maturity with great pleasure” (96). In contrast to her external appearance being covered by the veil, she is open and shameless inside and fulfils her desires.

The corrupt side of the Oriental woman displayed in the character of Mayya is accompanied by another female figure, her sister Balkis. When Balkis is included in the story, the narrative is enriched by a love triangle. The intermingling plotline starts due to the fact that Balkis and her husband, the Amir of Siracusa cannot have a child due to the Amir’s infertility. Longing for a baby, Balkis decides to get pregnant out of wedlock which, of course, means committing adultery. “The only problem is finding a father” (*PAL* 116) who will somehow be the victim of the tricky women that keep their cards closer to their chests. This decision denotes the Oriental woman as perfidious despite the reason behind it. Yet, what makes her a defiant woman is the way she handles the idea embodied in Mayya’s vow. She takes an oath to “support [Balkis’s] choice and do everything in [her] power to help [her] trap the beast and extract his seed” (117). The man in reference is attested as a “beast to be trapped” which naturally marks the woman as a hunter chasing men. The devious and villainous image of the woman is taken one step forward when, surprisingly, Idrisi is chosen to be “trapped.” Although Mayya at first rejects, she finally yields to her sister’s insistence.

To set the background for the canny plan of Mayya and Balkis to steal Idrisi’s “seed,” a story taking place on a “mysterious island” with “an ancient Greek temple” (*PAL* 98) is formerly delivered within the narrative. The aim of the inclusion of this tale is to enable a rich narrative parallelization with Balkis and the mystical female protagonist. This parallelization provides the “Oriental” woman with an image that

reinforces the Orientalist set of beliefs that labels her as dangerous, tempting, “all-seeing and secret-keeping” (Dellios 627). In short, she is seen as someone to be avoided.

Invited by the “priestesses” to dine on a feast at night, Idrisi’s men are noted to watch the women as “a *trapped animal sees a hunter* [emphasis added]” (*PAL* 101). Given “the love-pipes to smoke and then jugs of red wine,” all of them are depicted as being “intoxicated” and caught by an “uncontrolled passion” (101). Upon “[waking] next morning . . . all lying on the shore,” and surely robbed of their seed, they feel “frightened and . . . [like being] possessed by demons” (101). Idrisi vaguely recalls “being taken by the high priestess” (101). Yet, none of them can vouch for the happenings of the previous night. This fairytale-like experience parallels the story of Circe and Odysseus in Greek mythology. The magician Circe also invites Odysseus’s sailors to a feast during which she enchants them by magical potions and turns them into pigs. Failing to do the same to Odysseus, who is there to save his men, she is sexually attracted by him. She breaks the spell on his men and induces them to spend a whole year with her on her island feasting and drinking (Lowe 87-90). Even though she frees the men in the end, she still makes them lose a year out of their lives passing in full laziness.

This image of Circe as a mythological Goddess, thus, symbolizes the evil side of the woman as the temptress. Either presented through Orientalist, Biblical or mythological conventions, the woman is referred to as the temptress and the seductive. Her portrayal as such leads to the idea that the woman is alleged to be villainous and evil regardless of her racial or social background. Therefore, the Orientalist depiction of the Oriental woman as dangerous is not extraordinary. This idea is discussed by Simone de Beauvoir in the chapter named “Woman’s Situation and Character” in her *The Second Sex*:

We can now understand why there should be so many common features in the indictments drawn up against woman, from the Greeks [*mythology* – my adding] to our own times. Her condition has remained the same through superficial changes, and it is this condition that determines what is called the ‘character’ of woman: she ‘revels in immanence’, she is contrary, she is prudent and petty, she has no sense of fact or accuracy,

she lacks morality, she is contemptibly utilitarian, she is false, theatrical, self-seeking, and so on. (567)

At the base of the Orientalist ideas over the Oriental woman, thus, lie the biased masculine mentality that blames her for the downfall of men and thus humanity. The prejudiced and antagonistic ideas attributed to the Oriental woman are not actually limited to her. These ideas uproot a more general phenomenon focusing on the so-called bad woman moulded by “natural emanations of evil” (de Beauvoir 205). In fact, all women are subject to biased mindset and this bias is doubled in relation to the women of the Orient. In other words, the women of the Orient are addressed in a way prejudiced way both because of their gender and their race.

The inclusion of the priestesses’ tale, which is akin to that of Circe, into the main flow of events has two dimensional significance. The first dimension, which adds more to the Orientalist perception of the Orient and is less relevantly attached to the portrayal of the Oriental woman, is the magical atmosphere created in the narrative. The exotic tale justifies the Orient as “a place of . . . exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (Said, *Orientalism* 1). It helps the picturesque visualization of the Orient to flourish between the lines and serves to “normalize” such practices in the Orient.

The second aspect is the one pertinent to the representation of the “Oriental” woman. As noted previously, it mainly underpins the tricky plan of Mayya and Balkis which eases and inebriates Idrisi by powerful “herb infusions” (*PAL* 126). Having been informed about Idrisi’s odd experience beforehand, at a predetermined night, she “enrapture[s]” him and “mimick[s]” (126, 128) the acts of the high priestess. She captures him into a magical dream during which she seizes his seed. With the help of the priestess story, she accomplishes to get pregnant and the main plot advances. This is the superficial benefit of the inclusion of the tale. The significance of it, however, underlies in Balkis’s comparison to the priestess; hence, to Circe. By this comparison, Balkis, as an “Oriental” woman, is claimed to be as villainous as Circe. Moreover, this likening of her to the priestess is stated in Idrisi’s subconscious in advance of Balkis’s attempt: “The memory of the high priestess never left him. Balkis, the Amir’s wife, had

reminded him of her” (102). This allusion of Idrisi is indeed ironical since it is structured on the affinity in the physical configuration of Balkis and the priestess due to the paternal Greek roots of the former. As for the personality, the evil trait symbolized both by the priestess and Circe is animated in a major female character, through which the “Oriental” woman as a beguiling person is proclaimed. In accordance with her Orientalist representation, she tempts the men into committing sin and guides them to immorality.

Moreover, her lewdness is embedded in her insistent manner and decorative language. Her self assertive and demanding attitude even wearies Idrisi when she tries to abet him once more during the day after the night they spent together. “Enough, enough, Balkis. Your hands are on fire.” (*PAL* 140) is his reply in return to her offer to “dismantle the pole” as he has “pitched [his] tent early [that day]” (139). Like Mayya, she prefers to talk in a suggestive terminology that mirrors her “Oriental” passion. What slightly brings her at odds with her half-sister, however, is her ambition to share Idrisi as a husband.

### **3.2.3 She, Sharing the Male**

The “Oriental” women’s norm of sharing the same man depicts them in different characteristics which connotes their suggested indolence or passivism. The Orientalist discourse is familiar with the tradition of sharing the male due to the royal *harem* that accommodates hundreds of women yearning to be able to share their sultan. It is acknowledged that it is considered a privilege to visit the closet of the great emperor. Sharing the man within the domestic *harem*, which comprises of a husband and his several wives, can be as privileging as it is in the royal one. In this sense, the mutual husband figure identifies with the emperor, which leads to the inference that every man is the sultan of his own household.

In “Oriental” societies, sharing a man is a part of the culture. Justified in terms of religious doctrines, polygamy is viewed as being normal in the Orient. Although there may be cases in which the first wife feels discontented and dishonoured due to the

presence of the other wife or wives, she may also respond to it with content. Since it is the way of life they are born into, the women who display a carefree attitude in sharing the man cannot be judged and blamed for being insolent. As such, the sharing concept in the *Quintet* is to be analysed through three interrelated perspectives. The first perspective depicts the carefree attitude of the women, which suggests that they should be viewed “normal” according to their own cultural standards. The second perspective portrays the women as being insolent, who do not behave conventionally in terms of sharing the man. The third one presents them as voiceless, helpless, and submissive.

Both the first and second perspectives are observed in the *Quintet* and delivered by Maya and Balkis of *A Sultan in Palermo*. In the narrative, Maya is introduced as the second wife of Idrisi; yet, the first wife’s reaction to Maya for sharing the husband is not depicted. Indeed, it is ambiguous whether she even knows about Maya, as the story of sharing Idrisi revolves mainly around Maya and her sister, Balkis. Despite Maya’s unwillingness to accept Balkis as Idrisi’s third woman in the beginning, she does not reject it sharply either. Her tender-minded manner is presented by her conversation with Idrisi about the issue:

‘But she would be happy to leave the Amir and live as your second wife?’ ‘Third.’ Mayya *began to laugh* [emphasis added]. ‘You lived on your own for twenty years. Now you want both of us?’ ‘I do.’ ‘Let it be her choice, not yours. . . . You can discuss it with her tonight after you have finished pleasuring each other.’ (168)

Through the depiction of Maya behaving in such a mild manner, the novelist underscores that polygamy is to be evaluated within the cultural norms of that society. Rather than perceiving it as a tradition that degrades the women and makes them suffer psychologically, the Orientalist viewpoint should also pay attention to the otherwise perspectives by the women themselves. However, what makes the Oriental woman, who is Balkis in this case, an insolent character is her being an already married woman.

Although Balkis is married to the Amir, she does not want to leave Idrisi who tries to convince her otherwise:

‘[I]f you were not married to such an honourable and decent soul [the Amir], it would not matter, but you are, and for that reason alone we must not repeat this. Ever.’ . . . ‘If you really want us never to repeat this then we won’t, but I don’t believe you . . . The situation is difficult, but solutions can always be found.’ ‘And what about your sister?’ ‘We’ll agree to share you. She can have you for the first two days and me for the next three.’ ‘I thought there were seven days in a week.’ ‘After I’ve had my way, you’ll have earned two days’ rest.’ (*PAL* 131)

It may be within the cultural norms to share the same man, but insisting on it despite the already established wedlock stigmatizes the conventional image of the “Oriental” woman.

In the *Quintet*, *A Sultan in Palermo* is not the only volume in which the issue of sharing is involved. In every novel, the narrative refers to the point one way or another, either superficially or elaborately. Nonetheless, the web of relationships dealing with sharing the man differs in attitude from the one in *A Sultan in Palermo*. Unlike the story of Maya, Balkis and Idrisi, which depicts the “Oriental” woman both within and against the cultural norms, the ones in the other volumes portray her through the third perspective, that is, as voiceless. The women who do not want to be accompanied by another wife find themselves in a domestic inconvenience. Since they cannot oppose their husband openly about it, they direct their hostile manners to the new woman.

The reason behind the first wives’ rejection to the newcomer relies mostly on the social status of the latter. Even it is considered in accordance with the norms, sharing the male necessitates the man’s respect for the honour of his first woman. Although “[p]olygamy has always been more or less openly tolerated,” the husband is still “required to respect certain privileges of his legitimate wife” (de Beauvoir 417). If the woman feels dishonoured by her husband’s choice of a woman of lower social rank, she tries to stand against both public humiliation and the new woman. Although it may also stem from the woman’s love for her husband, this inconvenience emerges mainly out of a certain social viewpoint, which is also a part of the culture. Therefore, it is the same cultural norms that allow women to approach to the sharing concept in a mild manner; yet, risk their honour in public view. This contradictory situation, accordingly, results in



the women's representation as voiceless and subjugated, which is narrated in the *Quintet*.

In three volumes of the *Quintet*, there are depictions of the second or third wives, who are of lower social status when compared to the former wife. In the first book, *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree*, Asma or Beatrice as her former name, who is posthumously mentioned in the book, is included in the Banu Hudayl family as the third wife of Ibn Farid (38). Since the first wife has already passed away, there are in fact two wives in the household, Lady Maryam and Asma. The former wife, Lady Maryam, however, feels sad and dishonoured. In *The Book of Saladin*, Halima becomes Kamil's second wife successive to Zenobia; and then resides in Salah al-Din's *harem* in the palace as one of his *odalisques*. Sharing the male in the latter one is already a settled concept; so what is more significant here is Zenobia's approach to the circumstance, which does not bare much difference from that of Maryam. She has a tendency to look down on Halima (26).

Similarly, *The Stone Woman* has two stories of having a mutual man within the main narrative. The first one, which is happening in the present time of the main plot, is directly related to the main characters, especially to their mother figures. The women sharing the same husband are the mothers of Nilofer, Zeynep and Halil. Although there is no direct reference to their relationship with each other, they are hinted to be harmonious enough to "[settle] down to play cards" (27). As the second wife, Nilofer's mother Sara, is the daughter of "a court physician . . . who [attends] the Sultan and the royal family" (*SW* 69), her social status ranks equivalently with that of Zeynep and Halil's mother. As the women's psychology or a possible feeling of love is not depicted in detail, the sharing concept allows only the social interpretation. Therefore, since Sara is not inferior to the first wife, there is not a competition between them. Hence, in relation to the sharing concept, they are not presented as voiceless and subjugated as the Orientalist discourse suggests.

However, the second one, which takes place in the past, presents not a wife, but a "concubine" (33) called The Circassian as the second woman. As the "mistress" (32) of

Mahmut Pasha, she is attempted to be “removed from the scene” (33) by the first lady Sabiha. Similar to Maryam and Zenobia, Sabiha rejects it by trying to “remove her from the scene.” The social struggle against the subsequent wife is evident in the stories of these three women. In contrast to Lady Maryam, Asma is a “young serving maid” (*PT* 36) working for a nobleman and a recent Christian convert. Halima, likewise, is “an orphan” who is “sold to the family of Kamil ibn Zafar” (*SAL* 24), her later husband. Furthermore, she is “made to attend to the needs of [Kamil’s] young wife” (25) Zenobia following their marriage. The Circassian, too, is initially “bought for the household . . . and trained as a kitchen maid” (*SW* 32). Due to the status difference between the women, the first wives believe that they are abased. Zenobia “declare[s] that she [is] humiliated by [Kamil’s] choice, taking her servant as a second wife” (*SAL* 26). Sabiha is “upset” by “the public humiliation” (*SW* 33) and Maryam “cries” (*PT* 39). As such, despite its being within the cultural tradition, sharing the male may strengthen the passive and helpless image of the “Oriental” women, if they suffer from it. Hence, the Orientalist belief in the submissiveness of the Oriental women becomes manifest in relation to the concept of sharing the male.

In *Night of the Golden Butterfly*, Tariq Ali presents another sharing plot, which is slightly different from those of Maya, Maryam, Zenobia, Sara and Saliha. In the previous stories, the sharing concepts are dealt within the three perspectives that depict them conventional, naughty or voiceless. In the final volume of the *Quintet*, sharing the male presents the “Oriental” woman both naughty and voiceless who is trapped by conventionalities. The sharing plot revolves around Zaynab, her maid and the maid’s husband. Born into a reputable wealthy family, Zaynab is the woman who asks her maid to share her husband. The condition causing her to ask for the maid’s husband derives from her forced marriage “to [the] Holy Book” (*GB* 134), which hinders her from having a legal spouse. As the so-called wife of the Qur’an, she is prohibited from letting her share of the family estate out of the family. In order to protect her brothers’ wealth, she is made to suffer from practices that are displayed as a part of their culture. As such, so as to be able to “experience the delights of being a woman” (141), Zaynab asks one of her maids “to share [her husband]” (140). The maid, whose husband “give[s] . . . a great deal of pleasure” is depicted “not [to be] shy about describing the foreplay” and

this is what encourages Zaynab “to put this proposition to her” (140). Zaynab comments on the way her maid responds to her offer:

I said I was serious and her face went pale as the sand. At first I imagined it might be jealousy on her part . . . If she had been jealous, I would have immediately withdrawn the request. When I made this obvious she was mortified. It wasn't at all, she told me . . . [S]he was happy to share him. Had I not after all, she asked, shared much with her and the other maids? (140)

This sharing story is to be approached both from two standpoints, that of the maid and that of Zaynab. The carefree and pleased reaction of the maid refers to the first perspective of sharing the male. According to her culture, her attachment to her lady comes before any other form of loyalty. It is the same culture that leads her not to feel jealous or sorrowful about sharing her husband with her lady. Approached within their norms, sharing is not viewed unusual by her. As such, she cannot be judged according to the Orientalist mindset that characterizes her as insolent. Notwithstanding, the interpretation of the issue from Zaynab's standpoint makes her subject to the Orientalist belief, which is constructed by the cooperation of the second (her insolence) and third (her helplessness) perspectives of the sharing concept. Although she is liable to be considered as naughty enough to make such an offer, she is indeed depicted as a voiceless Oriental woman, who surrenders to patriarchy. This is the reason why she wishes to create herself a space, in which she can fulfil both her desires and her subjugated personality. As such, she does not refrain from challenging the prohibitions set by the male society. She ratifies the Orientalist discourse that presents the Orient as a place of extremes by going further the ethical limits.

### **3.2.4 She, Beyond Limits**

Since the ethical values of the culture, in which people are involved, are accepted as the limits of that society, exceeding these limits means to take a stance against the social code either consciously or unconsciously. Thus, deciding as an individual and being confident enough to go beyond the ethics of the society ruins the docile image of the “Oriental” woman. Yet, since the space to exceed these limits is connected to sexuality,

the sensual image of her becomes refreshed. In the Orientalist discourse, they are viewed “so nymphomaniac and their gargantuan sexual appetite was so uncontrollable that, in the absence of men, they used to dally with each other” (Kabbani 26). Accordingly, the representation of the “Oriental” woman to be beyond limits is delivered through two subjects in the *Quintet*; homosexuality and incest.

The topic of homosexuality in the *Quintet* is handled from both female and male perspectives. Nonetheless, this being an inquiry about the representation of the “Oriental” woman specifically, the emphasis is only on the subject of lesbianism excluding pederasty. The most manifest lesbian relationship narrated in the *Quintet* is that of Halima and Jamila, both of whom reside in Sultan Salah al-Din’s *harem*. The two women have much more in common than merely living under the same roof. Both have born sons to Salah al-Din and are popular among the other women of the *harem*, but the intimacy between them is due to their similar personalities. Halima is an impudent, inquisitive and seductive character who is depicted as a witty person. As for Sultana Jamila, she is the soul of the *harem*. She is against narrow-mindedness and tries to raise awareness against it in other women. What brings these two women closer is the same desire for defiance. Neither of them wants to surrender to the general belief that women are secondary and simple-minded. In fact, they may even disclaim the Orientalist vision that presents the Oriental women as utterly ignorant since they, especially Jamila, talk on the side of women “in a very bold way” (*SAL* 94) so as to enhance their social position. Yet, when considered in relation to sexuality, their intellectuality is interrupted by their surpassing the ethical borders of the society they live in. Therefore, it hints at the impossibility of the “Oriental” woman to be both impassive and socially accepted.

The lesbian relationship is depicted to flourish gradually, given the start by Jamila’s “encourag[ing] [Halima] in this” (*SAL* 95). Another thing that she “encourages [her] [is] to stop shaving the hair on [her] pudenda” (95). Not shaving the hair is very symbolic as it means rejecting the etiquette set by male-oriented way of life. By discouraging shaving, she invites Halima to live only for herself and not to serve any other social institution. Their relationship does not only consist of physical intimacy. Jamila

describes the emotionality of their connection by likening themselves to “the flute and the lyre” (180) that play in harmony. For Jamila, “[w]hen Halima smile[s] it [is] as though the world smile[s] with her” (180). Yet, the bond holding them together breaks down due to the changes in Halima’s character and Jamila is merely left with its memories.

The lesbian affair depicted in *The Stone Woman*, however, is slightly different from that of Jamila and Halima. The difference in their relationship is the lack of physical contact. Although there is a conspicuous fondness between Catherine and Rachel, they never open up to each other. Having ceased to sleep with her husband Halil, Catherine falls in love with Rachel who is also an artist like her. “[T]o paint Rachel . . . in every great detail, not missing a single freckle” becomes the thing she “want[s] most in this world;” “. . . to paint all of her both with and without clothes” (248). Rachel’s not “undress[ing]” nonetheless leads her to “imagine what [is] hidden underneath the folds . . . at [the] accuracy [of which] [Rachel] [is] amazed” (249). The hidden becomes attractive just like it is so in reference to the veil. Their story is not as stressed as the one depicted in *The Book of Saladin* since Catherine and Rachel do not make for the major characters, but still the intimacy between them displays a repressed side of the “Oriental” woman.

The second subject whereby the limits of acceptability are transgressed, that is, incest is introduced in the first book of the *Quintet*. It cannot really be called a relationship since the partners, the mother and the son, unite only for once. Yet, they suffer agony and feel cursed. The medium set for this socially and religiously unacceptable affair originates from Asma’s old husband Ibn Farid’s death dating six years back; and from Miguel’s (or Meekal before his apostasy) old ill habit of washing with his mother in the same bath (*PT* 93). The incident is narrated by al-Zindiq, depicting the nature of the atmosphere:

She was not yet past her prime. I do not know who initiated what happened, but I can understand her dilemma. She was still a woman, and she still yearned for that one particular joy which had disappeared from her life since the death of Ibn Farid. When it happened it was so warm, so

ecstatic, so comfortable, so familiar, that she forgot who she was and who he was and where they were. (94)

This excerpt from *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* explains the possible motive that leads her into an extreme occasion. She is justified by the lack of that most natural incentive in life, sexual fulfilment. In this sense, their unethical crime is portrayed through her giving in to her most humane feelings. The narrative aims at portraying her as a simple human being and makes one empathize with her. Therefore, she may be redeemed from the prejudices labelling her as essentially being sensual. However, this justification does not help her in qualms of conscience and causes her stigmatization as an immoral, lustful woman. Her longing for sexuality is so intense that she surrenders to her desires and breaks the everlasting taboos.

The subjects of lesbianism and incest support the Western prejudices set upon the Oriental women, through which they are viewed as being sensual and sexually eager. The facile image of the Oriental woman in the Western mind is exemplified by an anecdote uttered in *Letters from Egypt* (1983) by Lucy Duff Gordon. In one of her letters, Gordon mentions “two English men who [want] to make the [Arab] girls dance naked, which they [object]” (100). The English men, who are formerly introduced with the distinct images of an exotic Orient, think that these women can be easily manipulated. They believe that the women of the region, though passive in character, are open and used to fantasies and eroticism. Rana Kabbani presents the thoughts of the “Western” males about the Oriental women as follows:

[The Oriental women] [are] part of the goods of the empire, the living rewards that white men could . . . reap. They were there to be used sexually, and if it could be suggested that they were inherently licentious, then they could be exploited with no qualms whatsoever. (51)

According to this masculine way of thinking, lesbianism may account for a kind of sexual fantasy. The Oriental women, then, in male perspective, are accepted to be extremely sensual since they turn to each other in the absence of men. The lesbian characters in the *Quintet*, thus, ratify and strengthen the lascivious female figure which, in fact, relates to their submissiveness:

“I could tell you stories of harems which would make you die of shame on their behalf,” [Shadhi] chuckled. . . . “Do not plague your heart with the problems of women, Ibn Yakub. Leave Jamila and Halima to be happy. They will never be as *free* [emphasis added] as you or me.” (*SAL* 97)

As Shadhi remarks in *The Book of Saladin*, the lustiness of Oriental women covertly derives from their imprisonment and subjugation.

### 3.3 Submissive & Secondary Oriental Woman

The *Islam Quintet* represents the “Oriental” women in two main categories, the indecent and the passive, which expose a reciprocal interpretation. Throughout the *Quintet*, the indecent “Oriental” female figure is depicted in several portraits and forms. Among them can be noted Halima’s courage in *The Book of Saladin*, Mariam’s running after an adventurous life and betraying her husband in *The Stone Woman*, Balkis’s sticky tongue in *A Sultan in Palermo*, and Zaynab’s sharing her maid’s husband in *Night of the Golden Butterfly*. However, what leads the “Oriental” women into insolence is closely related to their secondary position in the culture since they struggle to create individual lives for themselves. The inferior place of women when compared to men in “Oriental” societies is symbolized by the man “walking with [his] [wife] in the street . . . go[ing] in advance and she follow[ing] on behind him” (Pollard 84). She is stated to follow behind him both literally in the street and generally in daily life. Moreover, “she come[s] from a background where [she is] expected to segregate [herself] from men” (Mumtaz and Shaheed qtd. in Jamal 62). In the *Quintet*, this docility of her is embraced in several interrelated topics that project her disposition in multifarious detail.

#### 3.3.1 Concept of Marriage – Woman as Child-bearer

What marriage signifies for women and men and in what way it changes the lives of both sexes are explored within the main framework of the *Quintet*. In all the novels of

the *Quintet*, young couples who are about to get married, unhappy or betrayed marriages, re-marrying males or females leaving their spouses are depicted. Some marriages are based on intimacy, some are established on materiality, but what is common for both cases is that “marriage . . . is never a free choice for women” (*SAL* 26). It is rather “the destiny traditionally offered to women by society” (de Beauvoir 415). This idea is exemplified in the story of the princess in *The Stone Woman*. In this novel, the princess is depicted as being not driven into an involuntary marriage by her brother, the Sultan. The significant detail of the case is the motive leading to this decision of the Sultan. The fact that he does not force her sibling to get married is said to be an award in reply to her ability to make him laugh (*SW* 63). It is remarkable that freeing a woman from the boundaries of a marriage is acknowledged as being a reward. Since, as a woman, she is not allowed to name her own man, her freedom from compulsory marriage is presented as something benevolent. The benevolence of this freedom relates to the link between marriage and gender. Although marriage is not an enslaving institution for men, it is seen as a prison for most women. The reason behind this difference lies in the different cultural conventionalities of marriage in reference to men and women.

Women cannot agree to marry the man they love without getting permission from their families. As Ilan Pappé notes in his study *The Modern Middle East* (2005), there is definitely a “need to elicit consent from male family members if they wanted to marry the man of their choice” (238). The general attitude to the marriage of the women in the Orient, especially among the Arabs, is not based on romance. In fact, “marriage is seldom an affair of the heart, but is purely a commercial transaction” (Pollard 85). The young women are also “for sale as wives when they become of a marriageable age” (Pollard 85). As most women in the *Quintet* do not experience marriage as an act of freewill and that are usually forced into the marriage by their elders, they generally do not marry the men they love. They may not get married due to family restrictions, they may be married for their laden dowry or they may get married just because the tradition necessitates so. A related reference that explains a type of marriage and exhibits one of the reasons to get married is stated by Jindié, the Golden Butterfly:



On a personal level I have no complaints. Our marriage was one of convenience. Neither of us pretended we were in love. We knew each other reasonably well and that helped. Better than marrying a complete stranger. There were no hidden corners in our lives. We both had our ghosts. He knew everything about D and me. I knew a few things about him and Anjum. Her loss had hurt him more than he would ever acknowledge. In the early days of our marriage I would try and draw him out, but the pain was too strong. He told me: "Talking about her to you or anyone else won't help. If it did I would." I never mentioned her name again. (GB 154)

This comment of Jindié on her marriage with Zahid attributes to different types of relationships concerning marriage. The latent relationships referred to are that of Jindié and Dara, the main narrator of the novel, and that of Zahid and Anjum. The similarity of the relationships lies in their failure to advance because of the familial repudiations. As Dale F. Eickelman in *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach* (1981) asserts, "marriage in most Middle Eastern contexts involves not only the personal wishes of the man and woman concerned but the responsibility of many of their respective relatives," it serves to "maintain the economic and social status quo of the couple" (124). Dara's mother rejects Jindié, mostly because of her father's lower social status.

Similarly, Zahid is not considered an ideal groom for the daughter of a general, Anjum, who gets engaged to an equivalent. Not only the woman but also the man agonizes over this problematic situation. The disavowals experienced in both relations, hence, lead to unhappy or impassionate marriages. Accordingly, it is clarified by Jindié's words that her union with Zahid serves as a shelter for both of them, helping them to heal their heartaches. Yet, what is missing in this marriage is ardour. They lack devotion; they do not feel the same way they used to do in the past and for different people. The background for the espousal, then, is merely the world order: "I often told you that Zahid was a nice man, but I never felt passionately about him. What's so unusual about that in a marriage? It's the story of the institution, is it not?" (253) As Jindié hereby summarizes the perspective of the aforesaid marriages, she draws attention to the institutionalized ties such as friendliness and procreation but without real prurient drives and love. It is the very condition in which originates the foregone conclusion; the third person singulars: "[Zahid] pleasure[s] young nurses. [Jindié] [is] pleased by a middle-aged African professor" (254). Their institutionalized espousal

ends in twin perfidy of the couple. Taken more casual on the male part, this betrayal labels the Oriental woman as a betrayer. She risks her name in order to seek bliss with an unwedded man.

The marriage of Jindié and Zahid stands for the type mostly centred upon conventionalities that present a less passionate but a safer life. Not that it is inaccurate to view this safer life to emerge out of imposed sanctions. These sanctions give way to a marriage carried out by private interference. In these marriages, the male is exposed to the familial impact. As the families do not take women as serious as men, it is primarily the man who is forced to marry her for various reasons. How she responds to the idea is not paid enough attention. That is why some forced marriages in the *Quintet* are narrated through the man's viewpoint such as that of Iskander Pasha. It is informed that Zeynep and Halil's mother marries him upon his first wife's death "during childbirth" (*SW* 22). Yet, "[h]er marriage to Iskander Pasha [is] arranged in a hurry" (22). Despite being "desolate at the time . . . he bow[s] to family pressure and marrie[s] her to provide Salman with a mother" (22). The marriage, which aims just to establish and conserve the family institution, is promoted by the elders and it is the man who surrenders to the social pressure. The emotions of the woman, on the other hand, are kept hidden in her own world.

Whilst a marriage is to be established because of a needed mother in the example of Iskander Pasha, it may also be compelled for financial reasons. Forcing the man into an unwanted marriage that is backed up by a massive dowry is another type of union in the Orient. This is briefly explained by Eickelman:

. . . [W]omen possessed movable capital as opposed to land rights. Marriage with such women was regarded principally as alliances with long-term economic and integrative significance between extended families and hence marriages tended to be more stable. (124)

In the *Quintet*, especially in *The Stone Woman* where this subject is referred to, the charm of the to-be-bride is in inverse proportion with the dowry. The less attractive she is, the bigger the capital becomes. In this sense, it is evident that her physical disfiguration is supported by the family prosperity to guarantee her against remaining a

spinster. That is how Uncle Kemal is “forced by Father to *contract* [emphasis added] an arranged marriage” (*SW* 215) with his intended bride:

[Father] was straightforward. The dowry was phenomenal. I was not even allowed to see the woman. I’m not surprised they didn’t permit that. . . . So I was compelled to marry her, sight unseen. And as Allah is my witness I shut my eyes very tight and did my duty. Three children. (216)

The wedding is considered something dependent not on emotions but on mathematical calculations. As Eickelman states, “[m]arriages . . . are arranged less with a view to conjugal happiness than to serve the temporary interests of those who arrange them, the parents of the spouses and the intermediaries” (124-25). It is considered as a task to be accomplished. The aim of the marriage is reduced to the continuation of the man’s lineage. The union is used to keep the family name alive. Thence, the concept of marriage in the Orient degrades the position of women in the society. The depiction of the women in the *Quintet*, then, parallels the Orientalist thoughts about them. They are not respected as individuals and not generally even asked if they have consent in that marriage. As Mounira Charrad states, “[c]onsent to marriage is not expressed by the bride, but by her father or male guardian” (*Women and Power in the Middle East* 65). On the other hand, it is worth noting that they do not try to do anything to change this situation. They mostly surrender to the plans designed on behalf of them, without their knowledge or will and this leads to a conclusion that they deserve what they live. The passivity of the Oriental women, then, emerges not only as a biased Orientalist image, but also as a reality of which she is characterized. Accordingly, the *Quintet*, with the help of several numerous examples about marriage discussed, blurs the line between Orientalism and the transparent vision of the Orient.

That is the very notion whereof “Said’s conception of Orientalism as a self-contained set of representations is called into question” (Prakash 206). In relation to this notion of blurring the transparency, Said is criticized for overlooking the relation between the set of representations and their actuality. Robert Young argues that Said never resolves “the original theoretical problem of how a representation that it is claimed bears no relation to its putative object could nevertheless be put in service of the control and domination of that object” (qtd. in Prakash 207). In other words, a concept or discourse such as

Orientalism, which is claimed to represent the Orient, cannot be free from its relation to it. It cannot be totally apart from the Orient and must have some roots in its reality. The otherwise situation, accordingly, is denounced to be able to shape it.

However, this criticism of Said is to be challenged by his own ideas in advance in his *Orientalism*. He discusses a similar position and labels Orientalism “as a dynamic exchange” (14). The scope of this exchange is subsequently clarified through examples relating to the styles of some authors:

What interests me most as a scholar is not the gross political verity but the detail, as indeed what interests us in someone like Lane or Flaubert or Renan is not the (to him) indisputable truth that Occidentals are superior to Orientals, but the profoundly worked over and modulated evidence of his detailed work within the very wide space opened up by that truth. (15)

In relation to the *Quintet*, Said’s point of view can be applied to the secondary position of the Oriental women. If it is to state that Tariq Ali also deals with that “wide space,” then the concept of marriage, as one of the aspects marking the “Oriental” women as submissive and second rank, stands for the “evidence” of the detailed work. Hence, the representation of the women in the *Quintet* is not wholly deprived of the real Orient, which, indeed, parallels the Orientalist mindset.

In *A Sultan in Palermo*, paralleling the experiences of Kemal Pasha, Idrisi also establishes an unwilling wedlock with his first wife Zaynab “whom he ha[s] glimpsed for the first time on the day of his wedding” (26). Yet, it is the question of social obligation that results in four children. Evidently, one of Idrisi’s two daughters, Sakina is subjected to the same circumstances as her mother. This situation is revealed in the conversation of Idrisi and his son-in-law, Abu Khalid when the son-in-law confesses that “[their] marriage [with Sakina] has not been a happy one and was forced on [him] by [his] parents” (80). In accordance with the consideration of marriage as a duty to be performed, he admits that “[t]he hurried union that produced Khalid [has] never [been] repeated” (80). This situation once more proves that marriages in the Middle East rely more on financial and social concerns, and on child-bearing potentials than romance (“Marriage and Family,” *Gale Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North*

*Africa*). Besides, Abu Khalid's remarks are important in interdependent perspectives. Mainly, it is the man, not the woman, who is hustled into the marriage. Despite the conventionalities that prioritize the elders, it is still the man who takes the last decision. It is the man himself to agree with his family members or to reject totally and face the consequences. The woman, on the other hand, is not even conceded as an individual that has her own state of mind and emotions. She is portrayed as not having a personal identity that would otherwise help her to take a stance against society.

The fate of the couple after the man makes a good husband and performs his marital duties is determined in the successive months or years of the marriage. Not in contradiction with the predicted solution for this impassionate relationship, the man does not hesitate to console himself with "another wife" (*PAL* 79). He is, after all, free to either divorce his constrained wife or take a new woman if he desires. Bestowed with the advantages of being a man, the husband feels relaxed and does not undergo a heavy-hearted destiny. That is, however, the very occasion the "Oriental" woman is left to live. Not permitted to marry another man that she might choose, she is likely to spend her days in depression. She is already deprived of her own life as an unwed; she is deprived of her husband as a newlywed and the only fact she has in hand is the children whose full responsibility she has to undertake.

The inclusion of children in the narrative is how the incident of Abu Khalid relates to the former stories of Kemal Pasha and Idrisi, whose wives are left aside with several sons and daughters. These women assert their identities through their children. It is the newborns that provide them with a title as *the mother*; and in this aspect, the submissiveness of the "Oriental" woman in marriage relates to her being labelled as a child-bearer. Cloistered at home, she is expected to be a prolific child-bearer; in fact, her value as an individual is judged primarily on this basis. When she possesses children, she also possesses significance and integrity. In the Orient, "[y]oung girls [are] . . . placed in many cases at the bottom of the domestic hierarchy, waiting to become mothers in order to re-establish their position through their relations with their sons" (Pappé 234). Motherhood is extremely noted.

Bearing sons is more important than having children in terms of social respect and appreciation. The explanation for this attitude and the reason behind it by Hamed Ammar is quoted by Eickelman:

Boys, he writes, tend to be regarded as a capital investment in peasant settings and a greater contribution to the social prestige of the family. A man with a number of sons is thought to be able to speak with more authority as the sons mature. Consequently, midwives are given more substantial presents on the birth of a boy than that of a girl. Ammar indicates the lesser enthusiasm which greets the birth of a girl . . . villagers say they regard girls as burdensome and a potential source of shame to the family, so that girls must be carefully protected until their marriage. (144)

The phrase “potential source of shame” means that she might dishonour her family through a pre-marital sexual relationship with a man either willingly or unwillingly. Hence, being a mother of a boy, who is superior to girls in the patriarchal system, increases the status of the mother. Accordingly, it is said that in ancient Arabia women used to sing happy songs when rejoicing in maternity:

Behold the wife hath brought forth; She has risen from the bed whereon she reposed, whereon she slept! She hath brought into the world a child, the fairest of *boys* [emphasis added]; He will learn to play with the sword. No sorrow or harm shall come to thee if thou hast *sons* [emphasis added]. God will give them to thee. He will make thee glad, Esteemed and honored throughout the country; Thou who art in the race as a gazelle. (Pollard 85)

The lyrics of the song summarize the public view of motherhood. The appreciation of women with children in the *Quintet* is indicated when Nilofer admits that “as the mother of two children, [her] status [has] suddenly risen, at least as far as [her] mother [is] concerned” (*SW* 69). The drive that pushes Nilofer to think the way she does is that she now feels being held in esteem as her mother responds even to her very personal questions. She is quite surprised at the situation; yet, does not fail in attributing it to her children, especially to the existence of her son Orhan. In addition, it is the very “presence of Orhan” (*SW* 5) in her parental house that prompts Nilofer’s father, Iskander Pasha, to elucidate a long-term “ignored” (5) question asked many times

previously by her. It is only when he is with Orhan that Pasha decides to mention that topic. Just in the same manner, their old and faithful servant Petrossian breaks his “custom” and instead of neglecting her, he “smile[s]” to Nilofer “in acknowledgement of Orhan’s presence” (6). All these changes in the attitudes of the household are ascribed to her being “mature enough” as “a mother of two” (6). The identity she receives through her maternity is symbolically reinforced when her Uncle Memed addresses her not by her name but as “the mother of Orhan” (*SW* 30).

Evidently, this reference would be without weight if it lacked the underlying emphasis on what the word ‘mother’ represents in the Orient. The tradition of entitling the woman via her own descendants is casually carried out around the Orient and it is clearly exemplified in several other references in the *Quintet*. In *The Stone Woman*, in addition to Nilofer, the second wife of Iskander Pasha is introduced as “Zeynep and Halil’s mother” (22). She is sometimes called only as “Zeynep’s” (23) or “Halil’s mother” (33); but throughout the book, her actual name is never mentioned. In fact, she does not need a name, since the only identity she has is being the mother. By her motherhood she wins esteem and protection in the patriarchal order. Likewise, Zubayda is mentioned as “Yazid’s mother” (*PT* 16) and probably the most conspicuous one is when Idrisi’s son-in-law, the husband, talks of his wife as “Ali’s mother” (*PAL* 79) but not Samar. Besides the advantage it brings to the women of the Orient, making children is taken as the function of marriages; it is not only the man, but also the woman who feels under pressure so as to honour her husband with a child. She is expected to bear offspring for the man and this leads to her estimation, basically, as a means of procreation.

In a world where men do not “care much about women,” the “Oriental” women apprehend that “[they] are there to produce children” (*PAL* 84). The idea that the woman is “utilized” for biological purposes is put forward in several instances in the *Quintet*, one of which is related to Najma, the first wife of Sultan Salah al-Din. As “a noble but . . . ugly lady,” Najma is stated to be found “repulsive” (*SAL* 94) by the Sultan. However, “that [does] not prevent him planting his seed in her” (94). The ground for this is plainly given in the following lines, saying that “[t]he marriage . . .

[is] hardly designed for pleasure. It [has] only one purpose, and that [has been] fulfilled when she [bears] him three sons in succession” (94). With three sons as a result, she relieves herself from the burden of a social must. Subjected to the imposed identity as a child-bearer, Najma, “too, [feels] her duty done, and never [leaves] Damascus” (94). Another woman that shares the same experience with Najma is Halil’s wife Catherine. Like Najma, she also “feel[s] [she] [has] done [her] duty by producing two healthy boys” (*SW* 245). Fulfilling an ordinary yet significant obligation, she feels content with her late position. She is so obsessed with this task that she recapitulates it some other time in her successive words: “I gave him two sons. I think I have done my duty” (249). This attitude explains how the “Oriental” woman orients herself to the enjoined ideals that shed light to her submissive position. It is not her mind or will but the customary practices that dominate her life in the first place.

In this sense, it is deduced that the institutions of marriage and motherhood serve as an important step in the “Oriental” woman’s life. In neither concept her thoughts or feelings are paid attention to. She generally practices what she is told. Not having a voice, she becomes passive. The fact that she does not have an active life compared to the men condemns her to a life of public and domestic submissiveness. She does not deal with business, she does not travel as much as men do, and she grows up either being the damsel of a notable estate attended by several servants, or the servant at a wealthy residence subservient to her lady. In each case, still, her status relates to amenability and compliance.

### **3.3.2 Master-Slave Relationship – Woman as Sex Objects**

In the *Quintet*, certain scenes relate to the usage of women as sex objects not only through their position as domestic slaves, but also through their titles as wives. Yet, the relationship between the master and the slave derives literally from the concept of slavery. In the Orient, keeping servants in the household has been, like many other places in the world, a long tradition dating back to the early times of civilization. Every affluent family employs attendants, the number of which depends on that of the ménage. Indeed, owning slaves used to be a part of social life. An example of this can be found



in the Ottoman Empire, which reigned over the lands of today's Middle East. Yvonne J. Seng's study on the institution of slavery in the Ottoman Empire of the sixteenth century underlines that the masters demanded loyalty from their house servants, assistants, mistresses which settled down the "dynamics of slavery within its domestic setting" (Seng 138). Both male and female, these attendants keep the residence alive and are expected to be attached to their masters with unswerving ties.

The well-off "Oriental" women, supported financially by their fathers or husbands, enjoy being served and let their maids work on their behalves. Being "confined to silence and to unlimited service" (Aydın, "Travel Writers and Their Oriental Woman"), they are continuously assisted even in most casual acts. This regime is often touched upon by Tariq Ali in all of the volumes of the *Quintet* where the "Oriental" women are depicted with their "attendants to serve [their] needs" (*SAL* 94). Every narrative depicts them being served by their congeners; but the most picturesque and detailed portrayal of the scene, however, is drawn out in the first novel:

The room was filled with serving women, who were undressing Yazid's mother and Kulthum . . . [Hind's] personal maid-servant rushed to pick the discarded clothes from the floor. The three women were soaped and scrubbed with the softest sponges in the world, then containers of clean water were poured over them . . . [Yazid's] mother clapped her hands and the maid-servants who had been waiting outside entered with towels and scented oils . . . [T]he three women were dried and then rubbed with oil. (*PT* 13-14)

The thing that makes the lives of the "Oriental" women easier, at least in domesticity, is surely the assistance of the servants. As for the maids, they are presented as the indispensable members of the house that provide them with a living. They are supposed to be faithful, caring and, of course, obedient. Such understanding of loyalty is the point in which the master-slave relationship emerges.

In the *Quintet*, Tariq Ali includes female slavery stories through which the "Oriental" woman is portrayed. Although he takes a stance against the Orientalist ideas imposed upon the "Oriental" countries, he makes use of the same Orientalist clichés in relation to the representation of the native women. Instead of depicting and discussing the

“Oriental” women and their experiences within the culture of the related society, he uses the problematic discourse of Orientalism itself.

Seen in the light of the historical context, the servants are considered under the service of all family members regardless of what they are specifically responsible of. They submit to the infants, to the lady or ladies of the house, and surely, to the imperious male masters. When the men of the house are at stake, however, this servitude is not necessarily restricted to mainly housework and other daily duties. Apart from all other responsibilities the maid has, she is often expected to accompany the masters in their own closets as well. Reina Lewis notes that “[a]lthough some women slaves were purchased explicitly as concubines rather than as domestic labour, all women slaves were liable to be sexually subject to their masters” (130). This condition can also be discerned in Seng’s study about Ottoman social life. Informed by two-volume study of Robert Mantran (1986), Seng cites that “[w]hereas male slaves were sold in public in near naked condition, female slaves remained fully covered (except for their faces) and were auctioned in a separate room” (139). Moreover, “[a]rrangements could be made to inspect female slaves for defects” (Mantran qtd. in Seng 139).

Inspecting female slaves for defects brings into mind that they may be expected to have a nice physical appearance in case of a physical relationship. Moreover, this possibility is once more underlined by naming the servants, which, at the same time, refers to their treatment as the objects of their masters.

Unlike the more religious names of their Muslim-born counterparts, more poetic names were usually given to both male and female slaves, often alluding to physical attributes. These included names associated with flowers, such as Benefge ("Violet"), or others such as Ferah ("Cheerfulness") and Hogkadem ("Bringing Good Luck"). (Seng 144)

These examples of female slave names point at the manner they are viewed by the masters. Although the physical intimacy may just be a possibility, they are likely not to be respected enough. It is noteworthy that although the main aim of slavery is enabling the non-Muslim slaves’ “transition into the Ottoman community” (Seng 140), they are

not given motivating religious names but ones attributing to physical and entertaining qualities.

As such, they are still marked as outsiders, which makes them open to various forms of servitude. Therefore, as Tariq Ali exemplifies in the *Quintet*, the maid is likely to bow to every kind of demand of the men in the house whether the grandfather, the father or the son. This situation is accepted to be “a longstanding tradition” (36) in which the woman, such as the kitchen maid, the Circassian, is abused in *The Stone Woman*. Although “Circassian women occupied a special position in domestic slavery, being legendary for their pale beauty and much sought after for elite *harems* and the palace” (Lewis 132), they are actually degraded as women. Her physical appearance being the focus of her existence in the household, the Circassian is not even named. As Ali depicts her as a desperate and powerless creature, she becomes the embodiment of “anger and sadness and helplessness” (*SW* 37). She is regarded as the master’s property, which permits him to assert his will liberally; yet violating that of the female. In this sense, although Tariq Ali aims at defending the so-called Eastern culture against Orientalism, he perpetuates its problematic aspects in his narratives through the experiences of his female characters.

The master-slave relationship is also to be interpreted that the women of the Orient are inclined to be used as sex objects. They are treated as if they do not have feelings, souls; what they have is their salutary bodies. In fact, this way of thinking is not necessarily confined to the borders of the so-called Orient. The nature of the male involves a tendency of seeing the female as “a means of enjoyment” (de Beauvoir 187). Yet, this biased attitude finds itself a stronger place when touched upon in the stereotyping Orientalist discourse. Simone de Beauvoir clarifies the idea by referring to Henry de Montherland’s argument about it:

Montherland approves the Oriental attitude: [woman] as an object to be enjoyed . . . it finds justification in the pleasure the male derives from it and in this pleasure alone. The ideal woman is perfectly stupid and perfectly submissive; she is always ready to accept the male and never makes any demands upon him. (215)

In other words, the “Oriental” woman is supposed to be there to comfort the man in every way. It is generally accepted that the man is not to be blamed for harassing her sexually. He, after all, behaves appropriate according to the socially promoted masculinity.

The issue of assessing the woman as a sex object is also included in the *Quintet*; and it is not necessarily restricted to the relationship of masters and maids. It is observed in a husband-and-wife relationship as well. The fact that the man is legally united with the woman does not indubitably prove the otherwise conception of her image. She may still be treated as a sex object. Such treatment of her manifests itself in two possible ways. Firstly, despite being a married woman, she may still be the target of other men, either wedded or not, and mostly within the knowledge of the husband. Secondly, it may be the husband himself to disdain and not treat her as his partner. These occasions are interlinked since the type of the relation between a husband and a wife determines the destiny of the woman. In both cases, what imbues the *Quintet* with the Orientalist perspective is the approach of the women to this social standing.

Exemplified within the sexually abused atmosphere, the female characters taking part in it lack the courage, determination or the consciousness to take a stance against it. They are portrayed as unhappy with the traditions that suppress them, but since Ali depicts them yielding to domination, he gives way to the generally accepted Orientalist mindset of the Oriental women being passive, subservient and too weak to resist.

Implying only on their sexual identities, the wedded Oriental women are stated to be “indigenous commodities” used “for rest and relaxation” (*GB* 188). The motive for such an account is quite obvious:

The pretty wives of the more obedient junior and not-so-junior officers were regarded as fair prey, occasionally to be had with the full agreement of husbands eyeing a rapid promotion or a sinecure in the military-industrial enterprises and pleasantly surprised that their wives had turned out to be such lucrative investments. (*GB* 188)

Attributed to “Fatherland’s armed forces” (188), it is put forward that the women serve for the welfare and promotion of their husbands. The so-called servitude is a proof of the “Oriental” women’s treatment as sex objects, even by their own spouses.

Moreover, the husband’s own exploitation of his wife is exemplified by the marital relationship of Captain Lateef, “a junior officer desperate for promotion” and Khalida ‘Naughty’ Lateef, “the spirited spouse” (*GB* 175). Introduced to be the “mistress” mainly of General Rafiq, a senior of the Captain, she is nicknamed Naughty which hints at her sexual aptitude. Throughout the narration, she is portrayed to be a part of “an unremitting account of moral, political and financial corruption” (211) in reference to her affairs with the general or the generals. Exploited by the French media as a political project, she reveals her life story that proclaims the fraudulent aspects hidden:

My father gave me to [Captain Lateef] because he didn’t want a dowry. . . . Never treated me well. He gets home from the office and drags me to bed. . . . Then he *mounts* [emphasis added] me like a dog. . . .

One day [General Rafiq] sent his car for me. I thought the car would take me to Begum Neelam. It took me to a small hotel in Isloo. General Sahib was waiting for me. . . . Lateef knew. He said, ‘Open your legs for the general, you prostitute. It’s good for me.’ (225)

That she cannot resist the general’s advances determinedly denounces her as a weak character. Rather than a wicked ensnaring woman, she is revealed to be the victim of the circle. Upon the release of the fifth volume of his *Quintet*, Tariq Ali comments on the significant female character Naughty Lateef in a video:

She is an ordinary woman who comes to Europe and is transformed into a *victim* [emphasis added] of Islam. It becomes victimhood [*sic*]. And the French intelligentsia and the mediatic intelligentsia and the French papers make her into a big heroine and she writes her book and is very successful. . . . And that is very much part of the twenty-first century world in which we live. (Tariqali.org)

Tariq Ali claims that Naughty is a “stereotype” which is created by “strong elements of French political culture” (Tariqali.org), which is observed throughout the narrative. It is discursively narrated how the Orientalist point of view moulds this female character in

accordance with the needed gap to present so-called Oriental clichés such as “Islamic barbarism” (Said, *Covering Islam*, iii). Tariq Ali, in a way, defends Naughty against the cliché construction and leads the “French readers think a bit and not think in stereotypes” (Tariqali.org). While doing this, however, he overlooks that what Naughty represents long before she meets the French intelligentsia is already an Orientalist stereotype. If she had not met Europe, made into a heroine by papers, or become a popular culture make-up, she would still be the representation of the stereotyped Oriental woman due to her inability to react even if she knew she could not have changed her situation. Her “victimhood” by her own culture, her passivity both in action and mind and the helpless and unhappy tone created on her side result in the Orientalist discourse flourish in the narrative.

In Naughty’s speech, the noteworthy detail is the use of the word “mount.” She is stated to be “mounted like a dog.” The choice of this word to refer to the sexual intercourse is striking since it places the woman into the position of an animal. The same word is repeated in *The Book of Saladin* when Halima mentions Salah al-Din to “mount” (SAL 93) her in his *harem*. A similar simile is attested by Sultana Jamila when she remarks that “Salah al-Din [*rides*] [emphasis added] her as if [she] [is] his favourite mare” (SAL 124). In both references, the woman is likened to an animal. Additionally, the common thing in these three examples is that they are all uttered by the women in question. That is to say, it is not Captain Lateef or Salah al-Din who notes that they mount or ride their women. If it had been the men saying it, it would create a possible area to examine it in terms of Orientalism. The absence of the women in the conversation would result in the possibility of their rejection of the labelling. Their silence would be an opening for another discursive scope leading to the otherwise analysis of the issue having its roots in Orientalist mindset.

The key point determining this usage of vocabulary as relating to Orientalist discourse or not is the attitude of the women when uttering it. If she is depicted in a miserable mood pitying her own condition, then it is not wrong to tell that they are proving the value system of a biased “Oriental” social code. Yet, if the woman makes it as a usual part of her conversation and act neutrally, the narrative is not to be mirrored

through an Orientalist discourse since they have naturally identified within their own culture without offence. As such, the comparison of the Oriental women to an animal, either resentfully or neutrally, proposes that they are not only sex objects but also properties of men.

### 3.3.3 Woman as the Property of Man

In the *Quintet*, the submissive and secondary position of the “Oriental” woman is presented through various thematic depictions, one of which is her representation as being a property of men. Rather than a liberated individual, she is depicted to be subordinate to men who wish to dominate her both physically and emotionally. Until marriage, she is under the hegemony of her father and when she is attached to another man as his spouse, she becomes “his.”

Nayra Atiyah’s novel *Khul-Khal* (1982), which is a collection of stories by five Egyptian women, unveils the *khul-khal*, “the golden or silver anklet worn by married women, [as an ornament] signalling their possession by their husbands” (qtd. in Pappé 231). The significance of the stories become visible when that of Om Gad [one of the women] presents an opportunity to observe the “Oriental” women’s perspective of their own lives and own culture:

Om Gad: With us if a man cares for his wife properly, he never lets her go out or do anything. This is the real sign of his affection. It is shameful to let her out. It's different with our educated daughters of course. But I felt contented with life this way. (*Khul-Khal* 11 qtd. in Pappé 231)

Although the Orientalist set of beliefs insistently depicts the Oriental women as victims of patriarchy, the women may not feel “victimized” or view the culture as a threat to their individuality.

The narratives of Ali’s *Quintet* are constructed in relation to such a fact-based fictional background and the female characters are depicted as the commodities of men. The idea that all the women in the royal *harem* are, “[a]fter all . . . possessions of the

Sultan” (*SAL* 188) summarizes the general point of view in the so-called Orient. Since the ordinary men are the sultans of their own *harems*, their position as the possessor of their women prevails. Furthermore, the women characters of the *Quintet* are depicted to have admitted to this tradition without resentment. Indeed, the quotation taken from *The Book of Saladin* is uttered by Sultana Jamila who is a key figure in the narrative.

However, what breaks this tradition and leads to its criticism in the *Quintet* is the handling of the situation from a contrasting perspective. The portrayal of Kamil ibn Zafar’s former servant, new wife, Halima exemplifies how it can be otherwise. The way Kamil feels as the owner of his wife is revealed by his own words after he kills the lover of his wife, who is also a close friend of him. He says, “If you had asked me . . . I would have given her to you” (*SAL* 22). Although Kamil claims a right over his wife, Halima does not feel a sense of belonging to him. She has an affair with another man and of her own accord, too.

The inclusion of Halima as a character in the story makes it possible to criticize the culture in an Orientalist way. The Orientalists think of the women of the region as “oppressed by local patriarchy” (Hasan 31). They believe the women to be the victims of cultural masculine hegemony. This belief stems from their submissive position observed in the public and domestic affairs and results in her perception as “the second sex.”

### **3.3.4 “The Second Sex”**

One of the most dominant features of the Orientalist discourse in relation to the Oriental women is their “perceived (sexual, psychological, and religious) unhappiness with Muslim [native] men” (Hasan 35). The discourse views the Oriental men as if “traders in female bodies” (Kabbani 78). Moreover, “they are the cruel captors who hold women in their avaricious grasp, who use them as chattels, as trading-goods, with little reverence for them as human beings” (Kabbani 78). This inured conception situates the women in a less significant condition compared to their opposite sex both in



public and private. The term “second sex,” which is derived from the remarkable study of Simone de Beauvoir, suggests that the Oriental women are inferior to their men.

The inequality between the woman and the man unfolds through many references in the volumes of the *Quintet*. One of them is delivered by the character, Idrisi in *A Sultan in Palermo* who tutors her daughter Elinore in a style underlining the status of men over the woman. The dialogue taking place after she asks her father about her stepbrother Walid and his long journey unveils the social difference between women and men:

‘Sometimes *children* [emphasis added] become gloomy and indolent if they are permanently in the shadow of their *fathers* [emphasis added]. A period of separation can help. I was no different myself at that age.’ ‘Do you think that all these years in my mother’s shadow have made me lazy and miserable?’ . . . ‘No, my child. . . . Also you are a woman. Men have different needs.’ (*PAL* 93)

In his initial attempt to answer his daughter’s question, Idrisi tries to justify and set the background for Walid’s departure. While doing so, he generalizes the topic and makes use of the words “children” and “fathers.” In this generalization, however, “children” stands only for the sons, which becomes evident in his successive parallelization of his own youth experience with that of his son. The second word, similarly, refers to only one part of the parents, leaving aside the mothers. In this sense, it may be deduced that the appreciable people in a family, hence, in a society, are only the fathers and the sons. They are the fathers who are equipped enough to overshadow their sons; and sons, only, are able to benefit from a “separation” during which they can establish their own characters, businesses, that is, their lives. What Idrisi summarizes in his last sentence is this very idea. When Elinore puts herself in her brother’s shoes and refers to herself in her “mother’s shadow,” she is reminded and acknowledged that she is not the same sex as her brother; so, not included in the need for separation.

The women’s subjugation is so taken for granted that when the woman does not want to be discriminated and wishes to find a proper place in men’s world, she is announced as an outcast. The claim that she, too, can behave as men do is not approved. In this

sense, the manners of Halima in *The Book of Saladin* and the men's reaction to it tell much about the social code of the Orient.

The comment of the Kadi on Halima's behaviour while he is breaking the news of her trouble with Kamil and Messud to the Sultan is worth noting. The Kadi remarks that Halima "speak[s] to [Messud] as an equal, and regale him with the latest stories and jokes from the bazaar" (*SAL* 20). While passing information to the Sultan in the second half of his sentence, he makes a covert judgement about her attitude in the first half. The specific mentioning of her speaking to a man "as an equal" underlines the general opinion that woman and man are not equal. Despite being stated by only one man, this judgement could be said to represent the general male mentality.

Another incident adding to the idea that the Kadi's comment stands for the manly accepted code is demonstrated by Ibn Yakub, scholar and Sultan's trusted scribe. Being brothers of the same race, Ibn Yakub, like the Kadi, reveals his thoughts that Halima "[speaks] to the Sultan in a confident voice as though addressing an equal" (*SAL* 24). Although to whom she speaks changes, her conduct does not change, which causes the scribe to think alike with the Kadi. This detail mostly proves that the men do not consider the women as their equals; and they tend to feel surprised when they witness a woman talking with impunity.

The secondary position of the "Oriental" woman has been passing from one generation to the other for so long that even the women accept it without questioning. Generations are raised with the consciousness of their inferiority. Gayatri Spivak, in her famous essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" discusses the subalternity of the groups that are oppressed by imperialism and successively relates it to the subalternity of the women within these groups. Essentially, she claims that the consciousness of the subaltern is something that cannot be recovered from the imperial historical inscription. Accordingly, the consciousness of women of the Orient becomes troubled both by Orientalism and local male hegemony:

If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' . . . 'disappearance' with something other than silence and nonexistence, a violent aporia between subject and object status. (Spivak, "CSS" 83, 102)

Therefore, just like the consciousness of the subaltern that cannot establish itself freely, the consciousness of the "Oriental" women cannot free itself from the cultural patriarchy. There emerges a sense of internalization reflected through the manners of the women which is narrated also in the *Quintet*. The claim of inequality is so readily present in the female mindset that "Kamil's mother and his oldest wife [are] shocked by Halima's behaviour" (*SAL* 20). They take it as a sign of moral corruption.

Another woman who is well aware of her secondary rank is Jamila in *The Book of Saladin*. Yet, what differentiates her from Kamil's mother and wife is that Sultana Jamila merely states that she symbolizes all women, and is considered deficient in a man's eyes. Unlike the two former women, she does not express a sign of conformity; but admits that this is the ongoing stance in "Oriental" conventionalities. In her observation, "[i]t is almost as if, in [Salah al-Din's] eyes, the knowledge [she] possess[es] [transforms] [her] into his equal. She [becomes] a temporary man" (*SAL* 124). In this way, she refers to the Sultan's tendency which ranks Jamila as an equal only due to her educated background. Her intellectual potency leads her to the same level as that of a man, yet, still "temporary." It can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, a man does not need any extra idiosyncrasies to make him as valuable apart from his gender. Secondly, since only a sophisticated woman can be a candidate to be ranked equal to men; it is perceived that all men are already bestowed with an ascribed status that defines them as being intelligent.

The "Oriental" woman's consciousness of her subalternity is also evident in Nilofer of *The Stone Woman*. As she joins the Baron and Uncle Memed and shares the same table with them, she is surprised that "[t]he two men [have] resumed their conversation"

(*SW* 59). The fact that they do not cease talking is a revelation to Nilofer since she finds it “[s]trange . . . that [her] presence never seems to bother them” (59). She deduces that “[t]hey trust [her]” (59). The same acquiescent attitude of Nilofer towards the favoured male superiority is revealed once more during her talk with her father Iskander Pasha. Having a conversation with him “for many hours . . . for the first time she [feels] that he [treats] [her] as an equal” (114). Although these two experiences of Nilofer claim at equality between the two sexes, they lack objectivity. In other words, the woman is ranked “equal” in reference to the masculine norms, promoting men. If the woman is the subaltern that derives its definition from a certain positionality, it could only be represented in reference to a certain essence. As Spivak argues in her essay “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography,” the attempt to equalize women with men becomes a “success-in-failure” (208) and turns out to be an equality in difference. She becomes differential, “a deviation from the ideal [patriarchal norms] . . . which is itself defined as a difference from the elite [men]” (Spivak, “CSS” 79). Hence, the acceptance of women into male sphere still reveals a certain sense of the superiority of the masculine as opposed to a true equality.

### **3.3.5 Education and Honour-killings**

The inequality between women and men is also observed in terms of the rights to education. In the Orient, there is a tendency to exclude women from academic training. Since the intellectual realm belongs only to men, the “Oriental” women are deprived of the chance to know about social or political topics. As such, Sultana Jamila is an exception. For instance, when Nilofer is conversing with her lover Selim on the politics of the Ottoman Empire, she admits that she “ha[s] never thought of these matters before and [she] [has] found them dull” (*SW* 164). Yet, “for [Selim] they [are] the subterranean dynamos that charged every fibre of his body” (164). Their contrasting attitudes show the consequences of the inequality between them in terms of access to knowledge and its importance in their respective lives.

In *Night of the Golden Butterfly*, despite Zaynab’s education provided by “private tutors” (131) and her proficiency in six languages, “[t]he only Stendhal she [has] ever

read [is] his compendium Love” (162). Being “intrigued” by “[Dara’s] reference to Stendhal,” she “*confess[es]* [emphasis added] that [she’s] still besotted with Balzac” (162). That she uses the word “confess” when she mentions her literary experience hints that she feels somewhat humiliated by having failed to respond to Dara’s referring to Stendhal. Similar to Nilofer of *The Stone Woman*, she is situated in an inferior position to her man due to her lack of knowledge.

The representation of the “Oriental” woman as being ignorant in these two examples relates directly to their gender. The women have generally been “identified with the . . . domestic, and private or family side of life, while men [are] identified with the cultural, technological, and public sphere” (Richmond-Abbott 22). It means that women have been brought up mostly unaware of the social or political angles of public life, whereas men have been active in the intellectual sphere. The education of men is given priority to that of women and generally the “females [are] discouraged from [attending schools] by tradition or marriage” (Pappé 252). Even if they are educated, they face limitations, a condition that is also depicted in the *Quintet*.

For instance, in *Night of the Golden Butterfly*, Zaynab’s private tutors are remarked to be all female. Similarly, in the work, Zahid’s first love Anjum is a student in a “ladies’ college . . . [that] train[s] young women to be housewives” (*GB* 44). Indeed, such schools in the Middle East are generally “intended to create better-educated Muslim wives and mothers able to share in the Westernised concerns and social habits of their husbands’ careers, rather than to produce independent women” (Lewis 56). Furthermore, in *The Stone Woman*, Catherine’s attempt to “study art history in Vienna” is rejected by her parents and it is agreed that she can “study in Istanbul, because the Caliph of Islam reside[s] [t]here” (*SW* 246). The idea is that she is supposed to “[live] by a conventional code of female morality” (Lewis 91). And the main concern of this ‘female morality’ can be summarized as “appropriate sexual behaviour” (Durakbaşa qtd. in Lewis 91). The women are educated within the cultural and religious restrictions. As education signifies different things for women and men, it is quite natural that they are not equally sophisticated. In this sense, what stigmatizes the “Oriental” woman as simple, stupid and primitive is her being “define[d] . . . not in herself but as relative to

[the men]” (de Beauvoir 15). In references related to Nilofer and Zaynab, the inferior image of the female characters emerges once they communicate with men on a specific subject. When they talk about a serious issue, they display an alienated vision that unveils the discriminated “Oriental” woman devoid of equal educational opportunities with the men.

As reflected in the *Quintet*, the “Oriental” woman is subject to the double standards of society which succumb her to subjugation and, consequently, to depression. She grows estranged to her milieu and to herself, and realizes that she is leading a life not of her own but in a way she is made to. “[O]n [her] head, [she carries] the burden of being a woman” (*SW* 104) and she is expected to adjust herself to the everlasting customs. She is mostly under pressure and she learns to submit so as to pass her days not in bliss but in security. Hence, an “Oriental” woman, who is looking forward to breaking free from onerous circumstances, is a figure that the Orientalist discourse celebrates. Ali makes one of her female characters, Nilofer, stumble as she tries to endure her subjugation:

Dmitri [her husband] had offered an escape from the closed world of our family and I had foolishly made the leap with him. I spoke of how I felt my mind beginning to atrophy in the house in Istanbul. I was imprisoned by its routines, stifled by its traditions, crushed by the weight of its history. I was overwhelmed by a desire to experience the real world. . . . Dmitri just happened to pass by at the right time. It could have been anyone. (*SW* 67)

She looks for a remedy for her repressed thoughts, feelings, desires and longings. The deterioration of her mind emphasizes how an “Oriental” woman suffers within the male oriented society that marginalizes her. Hoping that this pain would end if she is to leave the parental household, she eagerly tries to set up her own family. Yet, the decisions taken desperately generally result in tragedies.

Nilofer’s marriage to a Christian Greek man refers to the Orientalist mindset that aims to “save native women from patriarchy” (Hasan 28). The Orientalist representations of Oriental, especially Muslim, men establish a dichotomy between the Western/Christian and Eastern/Muslim men. According to this set of beliefs, “Western men (Christians) are adventurous, gallant, energetic, saviors, and rescuers, whereas

Eastern men (Muslims) are lethargic, slothful, inactive, oppressors of women, and readily concede to western heroes” (Hasan 35). Although Nilofer’s marriage to Dmitri fails, her attempt to find a shelter in a man of different culture reinforces the Orientalist ideas to a certain degree.

If an “Oriental” woman, unlike Nilofer, chooses to remain secondary, she has to sacrifice and renounce her individuality. One of the female characters in the *Quintet* who renounces her character is Nilofer’s mother, Sara. She has “sacrificed too much for the sake of a comfortable existence” (*SW* 59). So as to live a peaceful life, “she [allows] her own personality to be dwarfed by the family of Iskander Pasha” (59). This is not a new concept in the Orient. The man is the head of the household and she is forced to obey if she wishes to exist. She should not pose a threat to male authority.

In the last book of the *Quintet*, the image of the sacrificing “Oriental” woman grows sharp as the story unfolds. The woman is depicted to face the problems stemming only from her gender. That she is pitied because of her faith as being a woman is portrayed by Zaynab, and her brothers adding to the idea:

Samir Shah, the small-minded, bigoted oldest brother, was smitten with jealousy of his sister. He knew that had Zaynab been born a man, she would have displaced him completely. She was still only twelve years of age, and already tales of her small kindnesses to the families of serfs who served in the household had spread throughout the villages, and there were many expressions of regret that she had been born a woman. (*GB* 132)

Her brother Samir Shah is quite happy that she is a female since she could be a tough rival against him otherwise. Therefore, it is seen that a true and strong character is not enough for a person to claim power; he first has to be a male. Moreover, even if she is as presentable as Zaynab, she has no chance if she is not a man. Her gender is what the villagers feel sorry about since they believe that she could be a perfect master to rule over them, but she is not allowed to do so as a woman. She is not welcomed in the male world of rivalry.

This rivalry has its roots in economics. The men, Zaynab's brothers, do not want to share the family wealth with their sister. Since the familial estate is already divided among the brothers, an extra person means less property taken on a man's part. Although a female's share is "under Islamic law . . . a half of what men inherit" (*GB* 134), it is still not accepted by them. As Richmond-Abbott refers to Engels's ideas in her work, "[m]en wish to pass surplus on to their heirs and make sure that only their blood relatives [can] inherit it" (23). In this sense, if their sister Zaynab is to marry a man, which she probably will, she will bear his sons and the welfare of the family will pass on to another man who is a stranger. As Engels suggests, "[r]estrictions on women [increase] as men [attempt] to limit sexual access to their wives so that they [can] be sure the children their wives [bear] [are] their own" (Richmond-Abbott 23). The domestic pressure on women stems from the desire of men to secure their blood line.

Simone de Beauvoir believes that, the feudal system reduces the Muslim women to "an abject condition" (183). Zaynab's abjection reveals in her limitation to sexual access so that she bears no children. With no children of different blood, the brothers will be able to possess all the assets. Hence, her brothers look for a solution and that is why "Samir Shah call[s] a conference of male elders to decide his sister's fate" (*GB* 132). The final resolution of the meeting is that "the only bridegroom worthy of her, clearly, [is] the Koran" (132). By being "married to [their] Holy Book" (134), she is no more "a female whose right of inheritance threaten[s] her family's estate" (135). She is even expected to "take [her] own life" since her marriage means being "locked up with [the] Holy Book and nothing else" (135).

Her life being shaped according to the social economy, Zaynab symbolizes the "Oriental" woman who is ignored for the good of the male social fare. Moreover, if she tries to challenge the traditions, she is punished by honour killing. The basis of such an honour killing is described by Zaynab when she explains the cause for not "escap[ing] from [her] prison" (*GB* 138): "Had I met a man and married him it would have been a suicide wedding. The primitives would have met and decreed that I had dishonoured the Koran, and pirs would have been found to pronounce the death sentence" (138). She would be believed to have betrayed the Holy Book and be punished for her disloyalty.



For the women who choose “a life that ‘violated’ their family’s ‘honour’: the personal price [is] very high, quite often fatal” (Pappé 229). Yet, since “patriarchy plus property equals murder” (GB 139), the issue of honour killing is more likely to derive from economics than the morality of the woman. On condition that she cannot be hindered by means of this “holy” marriage, she is to be murdered in order not to re-pose a potential threat; and this murder is justified by her so-called disloyalty.

Murdering women under the name of honour killing is once more touched upon in *Night of the Golden Butterfly* in the subplot of an old acquaintance of Plato, Ahmed who kills his wife just for her bad language. Yet, she is tempted into such behaviour by Ahmed’s betrayal and remorseless conduct. Even though he “abandon[s] his wife and children for a younger mistress” he does not cease “mounting her every Friday afternoon” (GB 25). In this sense, she feels humiliated twice and expresses her anger in fierce “obscenity” (26), which contradicts the image Ahmed used to identify with her so far. The atmosphere provoking Ahmed to kill her and his own views about it is narrated by Plato:

Ahmed told me that the sight of the woman he had chosen to mother his children suddenly transformed by hatred was a blow to his self-esteem, his idea of himself: he had been filled with anger at the thought that he’d married a woman who had turned out to be so vulgar. It was the discovery of this unknown side of her that made him lose control and kill her. (GB 26)

Deprived of the ability to see his own faults, he handles the situation in self-interest. Rather than paying attention to her reasons for such temper, he gets annoyed by her manner which he finds indelicate. According to the patriarchal values, women have to be “frail and delicate” (Richmond-Abbott 25). When “[t]his fragile image” (Richmond-Abbott 25) is suddenly destroyed by her swearing, he takes it as indignity, for she is connected to him by the children. In other words, she becomes the one to betray her partner’s trust. He judges the situation from his point of view and he places himself into the centre of the case. His selfish judgement results in the unfair murder of the woman. In this sense, she is, once more, taken not as a feeling human being, but as a property of man that has to shape her personality and attitude in relation to the typical portrayal of a

woman. She has to be “pure, nurturing” (Richmond-Abbott 27), and obedient. As a woman, she is “to be the support system for the man and [is] expected to be cooperative, oriented toward people, and concerned with nurturance and peacemaking” (Richmond-Abbott 27). If she lacks such vision, she deserves death under the name of “honour killing” (*GB* 26) as she is thought to mock her husband’s pride.

In both references that deal with honour killing in the *Quintet*, the standpoint is that of the man and everything is shaped according to his decree. It is because they make the rules, adjust when necessary and expect every woman to abide by and obey in any case. This reality justifies the “Oriental” woman’s secondary position in the society and the very same image reflected in the *Quintet*.

### **3.3.6 Oriental Woman vs. Her Western Sisters**

The conception that women are inferior to men in this male-oriented world is drawn out by H. M. Parshley in the preface he wrote for Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*:

The central thesis of Mlle de Beauvoir’s book is that since patriarchal times women have in general been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men, a position comparable in many respects with that of racial minorities in spite of the fact that women constitute numerically at least half of the human race, and further that this secondary standing is not imposed of necessity by natural ‘feminine’ characteristics but rather by strong environmental forces of educational and social tradition under the purposeful control of men. (9)

The second rank position of women is resembled to that of the racial minorities in a society although the women do not constitute a minority in number. They are still disregarded and thus fail “to take place of human dignity as free and independent existents” (Parshley qtd. in de Beauvoir 9). As an example for the link between the women and the racial minorities, de Beauvoir notes that “there are deep similarities between the situation of woman and that of the Negro. Both are being emancipated today from a like paternalism, and the former class wishes to ‘keep them in their place’ – that is, the place chosen for them” (22). Therefore, both the woman and the Negro are

dominated in men's code and they cannot claim equality with them in the world order since "the dominant class bases its argument on a state of affairs that it has itself created" (de Beauvoir 22). The inferior class of a society is not able to cope with the social rules set beforehand by the class labelling themselves as being superior.

It is this idea that relates the clash between the woman, the Negro and the man to the conflict between the so-called West and the so-called East. Accordingly, the "Western" societies, represented by superior men, treat the "Oriental" societies in more or less the same way they do the women or the minorities. This inequality claimed by the "Westerners" is touched upon by Edward Said in his *Orientalism*:

There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power. (36)

Since the Occident tend to rule over the Orient, the "Oriental" societies as a whole are reduced to the position of women whom "man makes . . . the *Other*" (de Beauvoir 20). An "Oriental," thus, is meant to be second rank in relation to a "Westerner" just as a woman is so in relation to a man. Hence, an "Eastern" woman, both being "Oriental" and female, becomes *othered* twice. She is subjugated not only due to her gender but also her national identity.

This double otherness, which is akin to Spivak's subalternity theory, is evident in the *Quintet*, especially in *The Stone Woman* where the Ottoman women are compared to the French ones. As the protagonist of the novel, Nilofer, talks of her "[f]ather's sitting-room [which is] organised and decorated on the model of a French salon," she states that "Ottoman women [are] barred from entering this sanctuary" (*SW* 27). However, "French females . . . [are] permitted entry, but only if accompanied by their husbands or fathers" (27). This specific reference sheds light on the hierarchy among both the races and the sexes. The double-other "Oriental" women lie at the very bottom of the social ladder which is followed by "Oriental" men and European women. Yet, French women are still subjugated due to their gender as they are not allowed into the salon alone.

Similar to their “Oriental” sisters, they still face the same inferiority as females. Still, they are situated in a higher level than the Ottoman women.

Simone de Beauvoir notes the “Western” viewpoint that positively differentiates “Western” women from their “Eastern” sisters in *The Second Sex*:

Among the Arabs and the Indians and many rural populations a woman is only a female domesticated animal, esteemed according to the work she does and replaced without regret if she disappears. . . . She is the housekeeper, the wife, the mother, unique and undiscriminated . . . But modern Western woman wants, on the contrary, to feel that people distinguish her as this housekeeper, this wife, this mother, this woman. That is the satisfaction she will seek in social life. (504)

While the Orientalist discourse presents the “Western” women as being conscious of their rights, it represents “Eastern” women as passive, submissive recipients of patriarchal domination.

The tendency to rank “Oriental” women as secondary to European women is observed also in *Night of the Golden Butterfly*, in the character of Alice Stepford. Alice Stepford is “a [British] feminist art critic and painter who loath[es] being referred to as a feminist painter” (*GB* 118). Her introduction with both her name and surname is noteworthy. Although she is sometimes referred to only with her first name, she is mentioned many times in both names throughout the novel. Except for Naughty Lateef, she remains the only female character in the novel with a surname. Yet, Naughty’s presentation with her surname is a literary device to unfold the subplot in which she is identified as Captain Lateef’s wife. Her experiences are significant in relation to her identity as a wife.

The naming in Alice Stepford, however, has a slightly different meaning when compared to that of Naughty. It provides Alice Stepford with a sense of weightiness in her character development. It is as if she is taken more seriously than the other “Oriental” women who are devoid of their surnames such as Zaynab, Jindié, or Anjum. Additionally, both Zaynab and Jindié have nicknames. Zaynab is sometimes called the “Lady married to Koran,” and Jindié gives the novel its title as the “Golden Butterfly.”

However, Alice Stepford gets angry when people call her shortly “Ally.” Her anger at being given a nickname can be accepted as a symbol for her quest for individuality and a kind of self-determination. This implication of her strong personality is reinforced with Alice’s temperament that discourages other people to interfere in her life. Being the daughter of “Lord Stepford,” she has a noble “family name,” but she is depicted as a “bohemian” who rejects getting married to the family’s “milieu” (*GB* 119). She is depicted as a rebellious character.

She does not surrender to the codes and social sanctions, which differentiates her from Zaynab, Jindié, and Anjum. The difference between her and her “Oriental” sisters is exemplified once more in the breakfast scene involving “Eastern” women, “Eastern” men, and Alice as the only “Western.” Just before the breakfast, the narrator, Dara “warn[s] the others to ignore [the] . . . tinned and slightly mouldy orange juice” (*GB* 257). In spite of his warning, Alice “ignore[s] [him] and down[s] a tumbler of the foul stuff” (257). Her disregard for Dara’s remark can be accepted as a clue that signals her questioning character. Although she suffers from “diarrhoea” at the end, she does not hesitate to taste “the rusty orange juice that none of [the others] [touch]” (260). Unlike other “Oriental” characters, and especially the women she is compared to, she acts far from being obedient. She is in search of a life in which she is not hindered by conventionalities.

Meanwhile, Alice Stepford’s insubordinate character is contrasted with that of an “Eastern” female character in *The Stone Woman*. She is “one of [Uncle Kemal’s] numerous mistresses” and is introduced by Salman who “meet[s] [her] in Tokyo” (*SW* 157):

She was beautiful and, on the surface, submissive in her exquisitely embroidered red silk kimono. She had prepared a meal for us . . . but did not touch her food till she had fed my Uncle Kemal. She did so with some delicacy. . . . I could see why he spent so much time in the East. (157)

She is portrayed as a delicate woman that gives priority to her man’s comfort. In a way, she sacrifices her individuality so as to please the man to whom she is attached. The

“Eastern” woman in her kimono serving her man is surely a reflection of her own culture. By such gesture, whether she embodies the Orientalist image of the woman or just behaves accordingly to her social norms can be questioned. However, Salman’s manner in dealing with this “Eastern” woman marginalizes her. His realization of the reason why his uncle spent so much in the “East” places the woman within the Orientalist discursive space. Although Salman himself is an “Eastern” man, he makes use of the “Western” discourse. To sum up, by depicting women of two different cultures, Tariq Ali reinforces the stereotypical image of the Oriental women as submissive and obedient, despite his otherwise intention.

## CONCLUSION

In his seminal work *Orientalism*, Edward Said focuses on the scope of the Orientalist discourse and its effects in the modern world. He points to the discursively constructed divisions between cultures and peoples. Said denounces not only the intentional dichotomy between the “East” and the “West,” but also the hierarchical division of humanity that is perpetuated by Orientalist discourses. As such, the primary question raised by Orientalism is put forward by Said as follows:

Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly? By surviving the consequences humanly, I mean to ask whether there is any way of avoiding the hostility expressed by the division, say of men into “us” (Westerners) and “they” (Orientals). (*Orientalism* 45)

The emergence of hostility between the cultures and societies becomes inevitable due to the lack of tolerance and objective knowledge. The “Orientalizing” project constructs artificial poles that are animated by this hierarchical division. This result of “Orientalizing” is the very notion within which Said calls for a new form of humanism based on openness to other cultures. In his posthumously published work *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004), he discusses that “humanism . . . must excavate the silences . . . the places of exclusion and invisibility” (81). His postcolonial humanism calls for an ethical awareness of the other’s difference so that it can be released from prejudice and imperialist discourse.

The issue that is to be paid attention to in the contemporary web of relationships is to understand the peoples in the context of their own culture. This mutual consciousness parallels the core of humanism. On the contrary, the sharp separations between the societies result in dislocations. What the Orientalist discourse lacks or dissolves is the tendency to represent the “Orient” in its own culture and on its behalf. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said defines culture as a set of “practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social, and political realms that often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose

principal aims is pleasure” (“Introduction” xii). As such, the application of culture into the aesthetic forms relates to the need to represent it independently. Since the representation is claimed to be a part of the culture, it should *be* a part of the culture and be free from hierarchical identities and discourses. The mediums dealing with the Orient need a display of apprehension of the local people and their way of life. Rather than criticizing the culture in which the so-called Oriental people are born and “othering” them for their differences, the observant discourses should respect the people and their culture, and shape the aesthetic mediums accordingly.

The Orientalist aesthetics and scholarship lead a set of biased ideas about the Orient. The writers and scholars, who write about the Orient, establish a certain “Oriental” knowledge by means of the citation circle of Orientalism. However, for an objective and humanistic representation, these literary and scholarly works need to focus on the multi-directional opportunities of representation that are provided by the novelty of the culture. Thus, in order to go beyond the clichés, the writers are called for a consciousness of the culture, out of which flourish the multifarious perspectives in both literature and scholarship. Accordingly, these perspectives provide the canon with authorial prolificacy and release it from the imperial knowledge. In such processes, the strategy that is to be applied by the writers on the Orient is suggested by Said in his *Orientalism*:

Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself vis-à-vis the Orient; translated into his text, this location includes the kind of narrative voice he adopts, the type of structure he builds, the kinds of images, themes, motifs that circulate in his text – all of which add up to deliberate ways of addressing the reader, containing the Orient, and finally, representing it or speaking in its behalf. None of this takes place in the abstract, however. Every writer on the Orient . . . assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which refers and on which he relies. (20)

Therefore, in order not to be involved in the scope of Orientalism, the writers should construct a contextual and stylistic awareness. Yet, what Said subsequently focuses on is the impossibility of such a stance. In their literary or scholarly works, the writers cannot represent the Orient as an independent system of values. The relative autonomy of the works, which are there to represent the Orient on its behalf, does not rely on the



culture to which they belong. Instead, they still reflect the Orientalist discourse to which the writer, either consciously or unconsciously, is attached.

The reason for the fixed perceptions about the Orient, within which the writers are trapped, relates to the affiliated “material investment” of Orientalism. Orientalism has such a dominance that “no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by [it]” (Said, *Orientalism* 3). These limitations set the basis for the Orientalist discourse that is employed in relation to the women in Tariq Ali’s *Islam Quintet*. This study has tried to argue that although the *Islam Quintet* is a set of novels that claim an “anti-Orientalist” perspective, and although the characters are developed according to this premise, certain depictions related to the women characters of the series reveal the enduring prevalence of the Orientalist mindset.

In this thesis, the discussion of the latent Orientalist representation of the women has primarily focused on their vivid visual portrayal through elevated vocabulary. This vocabulary, which is used to depict their physical appearance, consists of the references to the elements of nature, such as fruit, animals or the celestial. The depiction of the female beauty in an idealized style results in the exoticism and mystification of the women of the *Quintet*. The Orientalist approach continues to unveil during their character development along with their physical description. Tariq Ali presents them in such characterization that they reflect the Orientalist stereotype. The stereotypical “Oriental” woman is sensual, secondary, and passive. The idealization of the women that is embellished with rich visualization in the *Quintet* is reinforced by their perceived sexuality. Moreover, the stories in which they are involved depict them as being helpless and victimized by despotic male superiority. This study has tried to argue the so-called sensuality of the “Oriental” women in reference to their courage, seductiveness, and disloyalty, which are observed in the flow of events. Likewise, the plots in which they are portrayed as submissive are scrutinized mainly in relation to the concepts of marriage, motherhood, and servitude.

The second framework of this study has dealt with the Orientalist representation of the culture itself through the women's stories. The reactions of the women to the patriarchal social norms illustrate their discontent with their lifestyles. Their voiceless and helpless portrayal establishes a basis on which the Orientalist belief flourishes. As the discourse justifies itself in relation to the women of the *Quintet*, it centres on the veil and the *harem* as the symbols of the subjugation of the local women. Meanwhile, the sexual connotations of both also render them as the symbols of the putative "Oriental" sensuality and mystery. The desire to know behind the veil and the *harem* walls reflects the Orientalist yearning to possess and rule. Accordingly, what this thesis tried to assert is the difficulty in freeing the literary discourse from the previous Orientalist knowledge as it becomes manifest in Ali's *Quintet*. Although the volumes employ an adverse viewpoint that aims to deconstruct the Orientalist discourse and although the characters (both women and men) serve for this aim, Ali's women are still trapped in the same discourse in specific portrayals. The attempt at representing them in their own culture and according to their own social norm does not always materialize in a consistent stance. To sum up, the intention of this thesis has been to highlight the disclosure of the latent Orientalist ideas in relation to the women of the *Quintet*.

If studied from an anti-Orientalist perspective, the *Islam Quintet* would serve as a felicitous example for the mentioned agenda. The women characters of the volumes would help to overturn the negative image of the Orient, especially that of it in relation to its women. The necessary atmosphere for this idea to flourish depends on the strong, clever and respected portrayal of the "Oriental" woman. Therefore, if this thesis focused primarily on the expected stance such as claiming both the stories and the female characters as mediums of anti-Orientalist viewpoint, it would be conspicuous that the *Quintet* stands against the Orientalist scheme in every aspect.

Likewise, the *Quintet* could have been studied through several different standpoints since the volumes narrate different periods of history. The first volume *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree* aims at celebrating the culture of the Muslim world, which is razed by the Spanish Re-conquest and the enforced Christianization in the last decade of the fifteenth century. Secondly, *The Book of Saladin* is the story of a real historical figure,

Sultan Yusuf Salah al-Din, who succeeded to unite the Arabic Islamic world, for the liberation of Jerusalem from the Crusaders in the twelfth century. Dating back to the end of the nineteenth century, *The Stone Woman* portrays a wealthy Ottoman family on the last days of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, the fourth volume of the *Quintet* is set in medieval Sicily, going back to the twelfth century once more. Finally, *Night of the Golden Butterfly* is the only novel in the series that is set in modern times, displaying modern catastrophes. In this sense, it would be acceptable to claim a sense of “timelessness” within the narrations of the *Quintet*. The question whether the volumes urge the idea that the Orient is a “timeless” place which blurs the lines between fact and fiction would be an area that is worth focusing.

Moreover, since Naughty Lateef, who is characterized formerly as “naughty” and revealed to be victimized, flees to France in search of protection and wealth, *Night of the Golden Butterfly* could have been suggested to be combining the “East” and “West.” This combination would serve as a parody of the Westerners’ prejudices about the Orient which indeed reflect the very same notions present in the “West.” By focusing on the fact that the Western media misused Naughty in favour of its slanderous ideas about the Orient, this project could once more be approached through an anti-Orientalist stance.

However, rather than highlighting the explicit standpoints which will eventually lead to an anti-Orientalist viewpoint, this study has focused on the minor details in relation to the women, which underlined a diversity in anti-Orientalist claim. In her work, Yeğenoğlu discusses a similar issue:

If the legacy of Orientalism is with us today, and if it has been able to survive despite the collapse of empires, it is because it has articulated itself differently in each instance. As an unconscious memory it reappears through displacement, association, disruption; it intersects with newly emerging discourses. Each intersection, each interruption and displacement does in fact multiply and complicate as much as it fixes the discursive unity of Orientalism. (72)

The idea is that although Tariq Ali portrays strong, clever, and conscious women in general, he has been caught back within the Orientalist scheme in specific

representation details of them. However, what this study has tried to display is that although Ali does so, the overall anti-Orientalist message of his project is not hindered. In conclusion, despite the minor Orientalist depiction of both female characters and the culture itself, the main stance in which the *Quintet* stand as a response to the biased Western attitude towards the Orient is still underlined.

## REFERENCES

- Ali, Tariq. *A Sultan in Palermo – Islam Quintet*. London: Verso, 2005. Print.
- . “Cinema in the Muslim World.” *Protocols of the Elders of Sodom*. London: Verso, 2009. 237-41. Print.
- . “Literature and Market Realism.” *Protocols of the Elders of Sodom*. London: Verso, 2009. 142-51. Print.
- . *Night of the Golden Butterfly – Islam Quintet*. London: Verso, 2010. Print.
- . “Protocols of the Elders of Sodom.” *Protocols of the Elders of Sodom*. London: Verso, 2009. 5-19. Print.
- . “Remembering Edward Said.” *Protocols of the Elders of Sodom*. London: Verso, 2009. 273-80. Print.
- . *Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree – Islam Quintet*. London: Verso, 1993. Print.
- . *The Book of Saladin – Islam Quintet*. 1998. London: Verso, 2010. Print.
- . *The Stone Woman – Islam Quintet*. London: Verso, 2000. Print.
- Ali, Wijdan. “Clichés of Muslim Women in the West and Their Own World.” *Quaderns de la Mediterrania*. N.d. 29-35. *Iemed.org*. Web. 25 Mar. 2012.
- Anderson, Dorothy. *Miss Irby and Her Friends*. London: Hutchinson, 1966. Print.

- André, Amy, and Sand Chang. "There and Back Again: Revisiting the Femme Experience of Genderfucking." *Visible: A Femmethology*. Vol. 1. Ed. J. C. Burke. Michigan: Homofactus, 2009. 93-97. Print.
- Aydın, Kemal. "Travel Writers and Their Oriental Women." *Fountain 2* (1993): N.pag. Web. 3 Jan. 2012.
- Baddeley, Oriana. "The Orientalists: Delacroix to Matisse." *The Oxford Art Journal*. 7.1 (1984): 69-71. *Oxford Journals*. Web. 12 Mar. 2012.
- Belilos, Claire, and Giulia Savio. "An Oriental Fantasy: The Altering Portrayals of 'Oriental' Women in Art by Jean-Augustine-Dominique Ingres, Eugène Delacroix and John Frederick Lewis." *Kunstgeschichte*. (2011): N.pag. Web. 12 Mar. 2012. <[http://www.kunstgeschichte-ejournal.net/261/3/Belilos\\_Savio\\_Oriental\\_Fantasy.pdf](http://www.kunstgeschichte-ejournal.net/261/3/Belilos_Savio_Oriental_Fantasy.pdf)>.
- Buj, Lorenzo. Interview. "Tariq Ali in Conversation (Pt. I)." *Le Panoptique*. 01 Oct. 2007. Web. 15 June 2012.
- Burton, Richard. Trans. and Ed. *The Arabian Nights*. 1885. *Blackmask Online*. 2000. Web. 7 Jan. 2012.
- Charrad, Mounira M. "State and Gender in the Maghrib." *Women and Power in the Middle East*. Eds. Suad Joseph, and Susan Slyomovics. Pennsylvania: U of Pennsylvania P, 2001. 61-71. Print.
- Coleridge, Samuel T. "Kubla Khan." *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Eds. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy. New York: W. W. Norton, 2004. N. pag. *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*. Ed. James F. Knapp. 2005. Web. 31 July 2012.

- Curtis, Michael. *Orientalism and Islam: European Thinkers on Oriental Despotism in the Middle East and India*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.
- de Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. 1953. Trans. H. M. Parshley. London: Lowe and Brydone, 1956. Print.
- Dellios, Paulette. "Reframing the Gaze: European Orientalist Art in the Eyes of Turkish Women Artists." *Petru Maior University*. Faculty of Science and Letters. N.d. 619-31. Web. 15 Dec. 2011.
- Durrell, Lawrence. *The Alexandria Quartet - Justine*. London: Faber and Faber, 1968. Print.
- Eickelman, Dale F. *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1981. Print.
- "Excerpt from 'Conversations with Edward Said'." Blog. 20 Sep. 2010. N. pag. *Seagull Books*. Web. 21 July 2011.
- Gordon, Lucie D. *Letters from Egypt*. 1865. London: R. Brimley Johnson, 1902. *Project Gutenberg*. 22 Jan. 2010. Web. 25 Mar. 2012.  
<<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/17816/17816-h/17816-h.htm>>.
- Griffis, E. "A Literary Legend: 'The Oriental.'" *The Journal of Race Development*. 3.1 (1912): 65-69. *JSTOR*. Web. 21 Mar. 2012.
- Harvey, William R. "Charles Dickens and the Byronic Hero." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. 24.3 (1969): 305-16. *JSTOR*. Web. 13 Jan. 2012.
- Hasan, Mahmudul. "The Orientalization of Gender." *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*. 22.4 (2005): 26-56. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 June 2012.

- Hiddleston, Jane. *Understanding Postcolonialism*. Stocksfield: Acumen, 2009. Print.
- Hussein, Aamer. "Night of the Golden Butterfly by Tariq Ali: Passions of another Pakistan." Rev. of *Night of the Golden Butterfly*, by Tariq Ali. *The Independent*. 28 May 2010. Web. 5 June 2012.
- Jamal, Amina. "Feminist 'Selves' and Feminism's 'Others': Feminist Representations of Jamaat-e-Islami Women in Pakistan." *Feminist Review*. 81 (2005): 52-73. *JSTOR*. Web. 17 Feb. 2012.
- Kabbani, Rana. *Europe's Myths of Orient: Devise and Rule*. 1986. London: Pandora, 1988. Print.
- King, Bruce. Rev. of *The Stone Woman*, by Tariq Ali. *World Literature Today*. 75.1 (2001): 111. *JSTOR*. Web. 25 July 2011.
- Kolos, Valeria. "Ottoman Women: Myth and Reality." *Fountain* 65 (2008): N. pag. Web. 3 Jan. 2012.
- Lewis, Reina. *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004. Print.
- Lowe, J. E. *Magic in Greek and Latin Literature*. 1929. London: Kessinger, 2003. Print.
- MacFie, Alexander L. Ed. *Orientalism: A Reader*. New York: New York UP, 2000. Print.
- "Marriage and Family." *Gale Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa*. Web. 31 Mar. 2012.
- Mayhew, A. L. "On Some Etymologies of English Words." *The Modern Language Review*. 7.4 (1912): 499-507. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 June 2012.



- McC. Pastner, Carroll. "Englishmen in Arabia: Encounters with Middle Eastern Women." *Signs*. 4.2 (1978): 309-323. *JSTOR*. Web. 17 May 2012.
- Mohanty, Chandra T. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." Durham: Duke UP, N.d. 333-358. Web. 31 Mar. 2012.
- Pappé, Ilan. *The Modern Middle East*. 2005. London: Routledge, 2010. Print.
- Parshley, H. M. Preface. *The Second Sex*. By Simone de Beauvoir. Trans. H. M. Parshley. London: Lowe and Brydone, 1956. 7-11. Print.
- Peirce, Leslie. "Writing Histories of Sexuality in the Middle East." *The American Historical Review*. 114.5 (2009): 1325-39. *JSTOR*. Web. 17 May 2012.
- Pevehouse, James M. *Spiritual Truths*. Pittsburgh: Dorrance, 2010. Print.
- Pollard, Edward B. *Oriental Women*. Philadelphia: George Barrie and Sons, 2004. *Project Gutenberg*. 18 May 2010. Web. 1 Mar. 2012.  
<<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/32418/32418-h/32418-h.htm>>.
- Prakash, Gyan. "Orientalism Now." *History and Theory* 34.3 (1995): 199-212. *JSTOR*. Web. 7 Dec. 2011.
- Richmond-Abbott, Marie. *Masculine and Feminine: Gender Roles over the Life Cycle*. 1983. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992. Print.
- Ross, Leslie. *Medieval Art: A Topical Dictionary*. Westport: Greenwood, 1996. Print.
- Saadawi, El Nawal. *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*. 1980. London: Zed, 2007. Print.

Said, Edward. *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. London: Vintage, 1997. Print.

---. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993. Print.

---. *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*. New York: Columbia UP, 2004. Print.

---. *Orientalism*. 1978. London: Penguin, 2003. Print.

---. "Orientalism Reconsidered." *Orientalism: A Reader*. Ed. A. L. MacFie. New York: New York UP, 2000. 345-61. Print.

Seng, Yvonne J. "Fugitives and Factotums: Slaves in Early Sixteenth-Century Istanbul." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*. 39.2 (1996): 136-69. *JSTOR*. Web. 17 May 2012.

Spivak, Gayatri C. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. Eds. Patrick Williams, and Laura Chrisman. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994. 66-112. Print.

---. "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography." 1985. *The Spivak Reader*. Eds. Donna Landry, and Gerald M. MacLean. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.

Szyliowicz, Irene L. *Pierre Loti and the Oriental Woman*. London: Macmillan, 1988. Print.

"Tariq Ali on *Night of the Golden Butterfly*." Video. *Tariqali.org*. 1 Dec. 2011. Web. 25 Dec. 2012.

Quayson, Ato. *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or Process?* Cambridge: Polity, 2000. Print.

*The Holy Bible*. Eng. Standard Vers. Wheaton: Crossway-Good News, 2003. Print.

Weber, Charlotte. "Unveiling Scheherazade: Feminist Orientalism in the International Alliance of Women, 1911-1950." *Feminist Studies*. 27.1 (2001): 125-157. *JSTOR*. Web. 17 Feb. 2012.

"Women in the Middle East." *Middle East Resources*. 19.2. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998. N. pag. Web. 23 Apr. 2012.

Yeğenoğlu, Meyda. *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*. 1998. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. Print.