

**FIGURING THE ORIENT: A DISCUSSION OF ORIENTALISM
WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF FERZAN ÖZPETEK'S FILMS**

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By

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June, 2004

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to inaugurate a thorough reading of two films by Ferzan Özpetek that employ Orient as their setting and major narrative element, *Hamam* (1997) and *Harem Suare* (1999), to examine their complicity with the Orientalist practices of representation. The discussion is informed by just as it responds to some of the crucial issues within postcolonial theory. Inspired by the deconstructive critique, the intrinsic relation between the Orientalist discourse and the general economy of Western subject formation has been elaborated through the analysis of the films. A three-fold approach has been pursued to be able to diagnose the latent Orientalism signing the films, since three constitutive moments authorize the attempt of giving a static form to the Orient. Therefore visual, aural and sexual registers of the Orientalist figuration has been explored.

Keywords: Orientalism, Cinema, Ferzan Özpetek, Representation, Deconstruction, Postcolonial Theory.

ÖZET

DOĞUYU BİÇİMLENDİRMEK: FERZAN ÖZPETEK FİMLERİ ÇERÇEVESİNDE BİR ORYANTALİZM TARTIŞMASI

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Yüksek Lisans

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Bu çalışma Ferzan Özpetek'in konu ve mekan olarak Doğu'yu gereksindiren iki filminin Oryantalist temsil pratikleriyle olan ilişkisini araştırmak amacıyla; *Hamam* (1997) ve *Harem Suare* (1999) adlı filmlerin ayrıntılı bir okumasını amaçlamaktadır. Tezde yürütülen tartışma Postkolonyal kuram içerisindeki bir takım temel problemler tarafından belirlenmiştir ve yine bu problemlere yanıt vermek çabasıdır. Yapıçözümcü eleştiriden esinlenilerek, sözkonusu filmlerin çözümlemesi yoluyla Oryantalist söylem ve Batılı özne oluşumun genel ekonomisi arasında varolan içsel ilişki ayrıntılandırılarak açıklanmaya çalışılmıştır. Filmleri biçimlendiren örtük Oryantalizmi açık edebilmek amacıyla üç katmanlı bir yöntem izlenmiştir, çünkü Doğuya sabit bir biçim verme çabasını üç kurucu an belirlemektedir. Bu nedenle, Oryantalist temsil görsel, işitsel ve cinsel ayrımlarının kuruculuğu açısından incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Oryantalizm (Şarkiyatçılık), Sinema, Ferzan Özpetek, Temsil Yapıçözüm, Postkolonyal Kuram.

For my mother

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And so she did: wandering up and down, and trying turn after turn, but always coming back to the house, do what she would. Indeed, once, when she turned a corner rather more quickly than usual, she ran against it before she could stop herself.

'It's no use talking about it,' Alice said, looking up at the house and pretending it was arguing with her. 'I'm not going in again, yet. I know I should have to get through the Looking-glass again – back into the old room – and there'd be an end of all my adventures!'

—**Lewis Carroll**, *Through The Looking Glass*

1 INTRODUCTION

One of the puzzling challenges of the early childhood is surely learning orientation, which is basically learning to gain the sense of directions, to be able to posit oneself according to an abstract map which tells, for instance, what lies right or left side of you. This puzzle becomes even more intriguing when the elders finally manage to convince the child (which is, I suspect, always an attempt initially aims to re-prove the “fact” to themselves) that the earth is indeed like a ball squeezed from both of its poles. For the child, whose borders are still uncertain and “rational faculties” do not yet properly function, there remains the vexing question: If the world is actually like a ball, how we can name places East or West, since some place will be West if one stands at the right hand of it and will at the same time be East if one stands at the left hand of it? Probably, no answer will truly satisfy this child who clings vainly to this simple fact, up until she will eventually give up debating on this little confusion. This surrender, which is only one among many, will also be her ticket to *the* world.

The world maps strikingly points to the same enigma of the inscription of the world. Being bird-eye view demonstrations of the world, they assume an imaginary spectator that owns the encompassing gaze over the whole globe, which is carefully sliced and flattened out to be properly projected. This so-called impersonal and all encompassing gaze that enables the map hides as much as it reveals about the world it represents. This point of view that situates itself in out-space seems to be a deliberate attempt to efface the terrestrial spectator that tries to bring the world into his own terms. To be able to see the whole world means also to be able to win it, this is practically learned from the long history of battles and discoveries. There seems to be an intimate relationship between the attempt to visualize and the constitution of *the* world. The world, that seems to lie naturally out there, is but always already the site that is marked with force. This marking engenders the difference, which properly distributes and labels the earth into geographies and territories and brings *Terra*, which means “country” in Latin, into being. Nonetheless, this difference that constitutes the world is not difference on its behalf; rather it is the difference from a certain “same”, whose norms are historically determined with dynamics of power. Then, the question of what actually operates the geographical (hence, cultural, economical, even onto-epistemological) allocation is itself a potential threat to the existing framework, which effaces its premises by naturalizing its own conclusions and reflects them back on the world it constitutes.

Orientalism, which can be broadly called as the body of practices, institutions and manners destined to produce, circulate and disseminate the knowledge of Orient, had to wait Edward Said to receive the first extensive critical attention. Said, in his groundbreaking study, examined the development of Orientalist discourse via his

meticulous analysis of primarily British and French scholarly studies and artworks on and about Orient from the periods of seventeenth and nineteenth centuries to the media images and area studies of twentieth century. Despite numerous reworks, further contributions, important reformulations and affirmative criticisms that follow the path his work has opened, his analysis still holds invaluable critical value and provides many start points for any further discussion on Orientalism. Three of them will be briefly mentioned, since they actually constitute my start point. First is the broad definition of Orientalism given by Said in the introduction as “style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the ‘Orient’ and ‘the Occident’” (Said, *Orientalism* 2). This ontological and epistemological distinction brings the Orient as an object of knowledge and thereby constitutes the identity of the West by this primary differentiation and objectification. This clarifies what Said means by saying that “the Orient is Orientalized”

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 designates as different from “ours”. (Said, *Orientalism* 54)

With this definition, we may also avoid the futile effort to distinguish what the real Orient is, since places called “Orient” only come into being by taking the proper form and name. Before this Heideggerian installation, before their entry into this primarily Western discourse that presences them forth as simply the “Orient”, they had an

ontological and epistemological constitution that was different in nature, not a natural and pure state as the quest for any “real” Orient assumes.

Said’s analysis gives us the second important point with which we can deal with how this installation works. “The legitimacy of such knowledge as Orientalism was during the nineteenth century stemmed not from religious authority, as had been the case before the Enlightenment, but from what we can call the **restorative citation** of antecedent authority.”(Emphasis mine, Said 176) He emphasizes the citationality, the intertextuality of Orientalism, how the discourse is built upon citing its own body of work. Then we can conclude that, like any other discourse, Orientalism may work only by constant circulation, repetition and citation. This citation re-validates, re-adjusts and re-structures the discourse and is the only way for it to last and prosper. However, this necessary mechanism of citation is also the site for possible difference, deviation and transgression which may distort the discourse as well as maintain it.

The final point that must be mentioned and taken over from Said is his remark on the visibility and Orientalism. “In all cases the Orient is *for* the European observer, and what is more, [...] the Orientalist ego is very much in evidence, however much his style tries for impartial impersonality. [...] The Orient as a place of pilgrimage is one; so too the vision of Orient as spectacle, as *tableau vivant*.” (Said, *Orientalism* 158) Why there is this obsessive desire on the part of Western intellect to visually demonstrate, to figure out, and to properly bring the Orient into light? This visual quality that dominates the Oriental discourse is not only evident in, for instance, Oriental paintings, though it reveals this over-determination most successfully. The scholarly work mostly dealing

with linguistics, geography, history and ethnicity of the Orient also demonstrates a good deal of anxiety to bring the Orient into light with the heavy employment of strict categorizations, schemes, ideal types and maps. This visual characteristic that dominates the whole range of Oriental discourse could be read as a symptom of *eidetic* nature of Western Metaphysics and provide a critique of the foundations of Western Thought.

I believe that film as a specific visual medium offers an excellent ground to such critique taking its impetus from the three theoretical remarks of Said mentioned above. First of all, film, as the hegemonic visual medium of twentieth century, is one of the fiercest battlegrounds of representation where image, voice, writing, time, space and motion and by the same token basic philosophical positions are constantly reformulated and altered. Moreover, film, especially in its hegemonic Western form, already has a set of norms and practices with which it deals with other cultures and especially with Orient. Therefore, film could be a perfect ground to discuss the basic operations of distinction, citation and visualization on which Orientalism and hence Western Thought heavily depends to sustain themselves. Nonetheless, these operations do not bring about a monolithic discourse and are not necessarily enunciated by essentially the Western subject. Two films of Ferzan Özpetek, *Hamam* (1997) and *Harem Suare* (1999) do indicate this point most splendidly than any other film could do. They do show a great variety of conflicting moments and are complex texts that are already negotiated with transgressions, deviations and even with a certain criticism of Orientalism that is primarily operated through explicit citation. However, neither bringing such conflicts into ground especially with the help of sexual transgressions nor the so-called “indigenous” identity of the filmmaker is able to destabilize the Orientalist discourse

played out within these texts. On the contrary, I believe that they help to further consolidate and re-structure the Orientalist discourse whose primary aim of figuring and locating the other should not be forgotten. At the most fundamental level, this consolidation is executed by authenticating these texts with the help of apparently indigenous signature of Ferzan Özpetek. This gesture of conceiving the non-Western author as “native informant” reveals how Orientalism vitally depends on truth production and the deliberate avoidance of the problem of mediation. This authentication helps the Orientalist discourse to posit its own premises that construct the whole text as the immediate truth coming out of the mouth of the native informant as if what the “native” enunciates comes from a pure outside which lies beyond the Western mind-set . This tautological gesture is crucial for such discourse to operate and it works specifically by locating itself as the pre-discursive difference that cannot be bothered with necessary mediative quality of representation.

Another instance that these films provide consolidation for the Orientalist discourse is the specific handling of visuality and narration to depict the Orient. The visual regime of these films provides a rich and sensual picturesque quality for the Orient. The Orient is again demonstrated as a site for pleasure and transgressive sexuality with excessive tactility, sensuality and richness. By such gesture, the Orient is over-determined with desire of a self that is transferred to the other, which in the end helps to draw the line that separate and constitute them better. This anxiety to bring the Orient to foreground, to give it a form and to visualize is not far from the desire to produce knowledge of it. Both operations point towards an asymmetric relationship that is marked by power and domination of one over the other. Therefore this anxiety of visibility, which is not even

confronted or exposed by Özpetek, should be thoroughly examined with a philosophical inquiry which will dwell on the *eidetic* feature of thought and its intimate relationship to the subject formation.

This *eidetic* feature of Western thought is also intimately related to the logo-centrism it bears on. The hegemony of speech and the word over writing to proclaim truth also helps to clarify the anxiety to narrate which attempts to conclude and finalize what it depicts specifically in its conventional Western instance. Hence, classical narrative operates to stand for and conclude about what it tells. This compulsion to narrate exposes the desire to reach a final form and is heavily present in the films mentioned.

Second, such desire that dominates these texts can be read as an excessive anxiety in this specific context to delineate the East, which strangely resists proper handling in both representative modes of theory and arts and hence becomes the favorite site for such attempts. Again in this special context, it can be read as a desire to re-create an Ottoman history and identity, which is surely a long-standing controversial and confusing issue specifically for the Turkish Modernity.

Within this context, the function of voice-over in the film deserves a good deal of discussion. Voice in film is generally employed to give a sense of unity and to connect the series of images and narratives into a coherent main plot. It manipulates the spectator to choose and select from the multiple elements that constitutes the *mise en scene*, editing and character. Even the most controlled visual tableaux cannot totally control the items to be selected and perceived. The cinematic image is potentially

open to dissemination even in the most extreme controlled cases and potentially has the power to multiply the subject positions. Voice-over can be seen as a remedy to block this potential proliferation and to re-introduce a stable point from which the whole series of images and events to be organized. The voice centralizes, selects, reveals and highlights some elements as much as it conquers, excludes, silences others and therefore operates upon the series of images to bring about a secure identity position. The employment of voice-over that connects the sub-plots and intrudes to rule the overall meaning in *Harem Suare* can lead us to conclude that there is an over-determined anxiety establishes and operates the text that will be analyzed and exposed in detail.

This crisis and the counter-actions that try to efface or resolve it brings us back to citation and repetition, which are supplemental for Orientalism to last, and the “irreducible cognitive failure” (Spivak, SR 207) in bringing the Orient to foreground. This failure is as unavoidable as the failure of any attempt of counter-hegemonic representation as Spivak illustrates with the example of Subaltern Studies. Every attempt to bring the Orient or the subaltern whose presence is marked with a certain negativity and non-presence will face with the handicap of handling this absence-presence with the specular tools of thought, which depends on a more or less verifiable presence. The films of Ferzan Özpetek are also failed attempts in this sense that cannot avoid paradoxes and incoherencies of this lack of presence. Like any other texts they carry their own limits and handicaps within their margins. Nonetheless, this surplus that cannot be properly effaced from the text does not mean that they automatically hold an overt political/philosophical counter position. Indeed I believe that this essential deviation and difference must be understood as something essentially neutral, yet which

can be worked on and strategically utilized to destabilize the text. This can be done only by affirming such attempt as a project which will never be completely achieved.

Keeping such theoretical framework in mind, I aim to develop a discussion of Orientalism around the key terms of visibility, citation and difference with the help of the films mentioned. My primary aim is to launch a critique of Western metaphysics that I claim to be intimately connected to the discourse of Orientalism, and it is radically different from blaming and correcting whatever representative frame that these films bring forth. If Orientalist practices, meanings and representations do subsist and can always find a place within the realm of culture, then they must be far from being little mistakes or prejudices that can be simply corrected by referring back to historical or sociological “facts”. Rather, they must be taken seriously and read as an important symptom of phallogocentric philosophical discourse that penetrates itself upon every single thing with a violence disguised in the appearance of benevolent medical operation.

Therefore, my discussion begins with a brief summary of certain problems and questions the post- colonial critique posits and follows a trajectory that pursues the different contributions and methodologies of prominent figures such as Said and Spivak.

In the next chapter, the relation between Orientalism and visibility will be studied. Linked to the specific handling of visibility within Western metaphysics that has been critically demonstrated by Lacoue-Labarthe and Derrida, this connection will be discussed in detail on this visual characteristic with the help of the context the films

provide. The visual regime that represents the Orient as an ahistorical and timelessly still locality, characterized by excessive sensual visuality will be discussed according to such theoretical scheme.

Within the following chapter, the argument will be further developed by a detailed discussion of the strategies of voice-over usage and narrative structure both films employ and the gesture of authentication that has been mentioned previously.

The discussion will move next to the discussion of identity in general and the questions of gender and sexuality in particular with focusing on the “Oriental” settings that the films heavily employed. Both of these settings are marked with transgressive sexual desires for the part of the Western subject and constructed as enigmatic places that signify the hidden treasures and joys of the Orient.

Finally, in the conclusion chapter, the whole argument will be revisited. An overall analysis will be given on the question where to locate both films within the Orientalist discourse.

2 SURVEYING POST-COLONIAL STUDIES

2.1 Said and Orientalism

An introduction is a selection which is assumed to represent, that is to stand for or in the name of, a body of work by sketching out the most broad lines and most significant features. Or, else by following an imaginary boundary, it attempts to establish what it aims to introduce. An introduction may draw on the generalities, the most common traits of what it introduces, or else it may focus on the extremities, the most un-common features of what it aims to introduce. Either case, it selects by the same way it excludes. This introduction will be no different. Like any other exemplary of what is called as “introduction”, this brief explanatory section will be necessarily partial, excluding and sometimes ex-orbitant to what will be discussed later.

Secondly, it will necessarily deviate from the pre-determined route that had been presumed because the field that will be introduced is far from being a field “proper” though it is not simply possible to say that it lies outside or essentially counter to institutionalization or it does not tend to become an academic sub-discipline. Indeed, if one considers the various publications of readers and volumes dedicated to the field

broadly called as “postcolonial studies”, one may be inclined to think that it has already become a sub-discipline within the academic division of labor.

Then the problematic which will inevitably lead this introduction errant concerning what it intends to introduce, which is the field of post-colonial studies, is not the suppositions of insufficient maturation into a discipline or ambivalent institutional identity. Then what causes this difficulty is the ambivalent nature of its focus and locus. It could be best illustrated as a constant movement on ground, which is itself also moving. First of all, the subject of the critique is vast and dispersed from the institutional and academic practices to the grand Western metaphysical texts, from literature to international policy, from media productions to feminism and psychoanalysis both as theoretical work and clinical practice: all interwoven, adjacent and intersecting each other. While constantly targeting the Western subject, it also implicit or explicitly point to an ontological and epistemological condition for the non-Western subject with the concern not to commit the same ventriloquism that it exposes and criticizes in the Western discourse. Then, post-colonial studies lack its subject proper, as the “subaltern”, oriental or the non-Western (all of which are different subject positions not different names of a monolithic position) subject can be found only at the margins of what has been inscribed as history, scientific discourse, literature or film, not by being present but by constituting the trace that has been inscribed but crossed out, by deferment. The trace of the other points to a presence which “does not henceforth exists” or/and (both at the same time) “never exists yet” as the paradoxical statement of Derrida on mother language points to (Derrida, *Monolingualism* 69). Very much alike, the topography it traverses along is varied, discrete yet very much related and it is subject to further modifications from almost all

disciplines such as philosophy, psychoanalysis and literary theory. It tactically, strategically, and even “essentially” allies with and also confronts to feminism, post-structuralism, cultural theory and so on. Even the naming and most basic notions of the field are still subject to intense debates: like the controversy on the “post” prefix whether it implies an “after” or a “beyond” and the debates on naming subject matter such as neo-colonialism, Third World, East/ West and South/North divisions. These controversies and debates signal the active crisis and rich critical potentiality that the field promises rather than an infertile stasis of a self-content. This un-properness is actually the strength and promise of the field while making the attempt to “introduce”, to name and summarize all the more difficult.

Being aware of its exclusion, partiality and dispersed nature, my introduction takes Edward Said’s analysis on Orientalism as a start point , rather than giving a linear historical account of the field which precedes Said’s work afar. It is well known that the first significant intellectual moves from the periphery, or the Third World precedes far Edward Said’s analysis on Orientalism, largely feeding from and in turn feeds the anti-colonial movements following the post-war, especially by French intellectuals responding to the Algerian resistance. Nonetheless, Fanon should be mentioned briefly here as one of few figures that deviate from the standard receptions of Third world anti-colonialist theories, which opened the path for the post-colonial studies.

Frantz Fanon’s theoretical work combines a certain existentialism, psychoanalysis and Hegelian-Marxian dialectics to shed a light on the dynamics of the colonized and colonizer as complex subject formations and it compels to invoke psychoanalytic

concepts such as unconscious, fantasy, desire and identification. His theoretical work retroactively attracted much interest in the wake of post-structuralist articulation into the post-colonial discourse and subjected to different re-readings as in the case of Homi Bhabha's introduction to the re-print of *White Skins, Black Masks* (1967) that principally points to irreducible tensions inherent in Fanon's dialectical historical progressiveness that opens up the most complex moves of his thought. (The difference between the reception of Fanon's works is very well illustrated when one compares Bhabha's introduction from the re-print of *White Skins, Black Masks* (1967), with Sartre's for the *Wretched of the Earth* (1964).) His position as an anti-colonial thinker is still and from time to time bound to an existential emphasis on the subject as the active agent that engenders itself by a Hegelian sublation by negation and a (though non-proper) version of nationalism as an umbrella term to establish an ambivalent identity dialectically stemming from its Otherness for the reified colonized to recover the *trauma* of degradation and long-standing exploitation. However, his body of work is far more complex and promising for the up-coming post-colonial critique than most of its contemporaneous theory-politics such as Negritude movement or naïve materialism that reduces everything to class antagonisms. His great contribution to the upcoming critique is his mobilization of psychoanalysis and related notions of sexual difference, desire and fantasy to deal with the intricate power politics invested in imperialism and its more-than-simple violence upon the psyche of both parts that in turn shapes the imperial/colonial practice itself. Fanon's analysis pushes the anti-colonial critique on its move to divert from simple dualism and vulgar reduction to economy-politics by opening up a space where racial difference is marked by a sexual difference with an emphasis on identification processes and hence subject formations. This approach is promising for

especially for its attempt to relate the politics of dominance and social oppression to a certain symptomology of positioning other for consolidating self. This pathology of the colonizer self is also the remedy for the colonized other with a double move of negation in Fanon's analysis which will inevitably lead to an emancipatory moment deferred to the future. Fanon's analysis is still far from the sophistication that poststructuralist challenge brought to the opposition between ideology and truth, or on a more concrete level between "natural" laws of economy and "cultural" differences. Meyda Yeğenoğlu demonstrates that:

Positioning the colonizer and the colonized other in a relation of dialectical opposition as in the Hegelian model of master/slave, self/other opposition suggests that the politics of subversion resides in the act of inversion of such opposites. Such a strategy of reversal, which forgets that the reversal itself remains locked within the same logic, should be seen as an inevitable extension of the adoption of a totalizing dialectics of self and other. (Yeğenoğlu 59-60)

But his work pulsates with and preserves much of the ambivalence that later theorists, primarily such as Said. Since, Said's critique will be different from un-problematized Third-Worldisms that base themselves on problematic authenticities, ethnicities and simple-minded economic determinisms that confine the issue of racism to an unsophisticated version of ideology. Of course this does not mean that post-structuralism solve the knot at once and totally absolved the former issues to free the field from its impediments, rather it exposes their being irresolvable *aporias*, which, yet and for that reason, cannot be given away as Spivak's work brilliantly exemplifies. (Spivak, PCCI 136)

Edward Said primarily owes his deserved reputation to his 1979 study called *Orientalism* which is itself the first and foremost part of a series of studies such as *The Question of Palestine* and *Covering Islam*. He builds up a meticulous analysis of the specific instances of Orientalism as a constitutive frame through which phallogocentric Western “stance” receives, inserts and en-genders an Oriental object in accordance with a historical self-positioning that justifies its superiority.

Edward Said was attentive to the critique of imperialism enunciated by anti-colonialist thinkers such as Fanon. Different from these thinkers, his interest will be focused sharply on a “mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary- scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles” called Orientalism which had been considered as a popular nineteenth century engagement so far in specifically Middle Eastern culture within a wide range such as anthropology, philology, archaeology, painting and literature. (Said, *Orientalism* 2) The strength and importance of Said’s analysis is not merely due to its novelty and uniqueness in its critique that aims high-calibrated Western intellectual efforts to produce knowledge of the Oriental in respectful fields. Since as early as 1960s, Anwar Abdel Malek had initiated a critique of Orientalism which he posited as a specific practice of Western knowledge and pointed to the implicit assumptions behind its logic of operation. He pointed to the inherent assumption that Orientalist studies posit Oriental subjects as being incapable for enunciating and analyzing their own conditions of being.

Said follows and also radically bends this line of criticism toward a groundbreaking analysis that re-formulates the relation of Orientalism to a dynamically conceived

Western Imperialism/ (neo) colonialism. Said weaves his approach from a variety of theoretical frameworks such as provided by Foucault and Gramsci while at the same time he utilizes various concepts such as psychoanalytically inspired one such as desire and fantasy and literary analysis techniques to broach Orientalist texts.

Nonetheless, his method cannot be reduced to none of these theoretical positions and this irreducible and plural approach gives much of the strength and potential to his analysis that at the same leave it vulnerable to criticisms.

His handling of imperial discourse and Orientalism as its specific yet constitutive instance is different from previous perceptions which conceives colonial practices with a strong economic determinism and sees it as the simple outcome of economic exploitation. This is fundamentally due to the fact that such economic determinism and consequently teleological euro-centric revolutionism shares most of the premises of what Said calls “latent Orientalism” with its bourgeoisie counter-part. Even when such position advocates a universal liberation from economic exploitation, such redemption stays largely Eurocentric and formulated as a utopian moment where all cultural difference will be melt in a post-revolutionary sameness.

On the other hand, approaches relying merely on “ideology” conceive colonial representations as a subterfuge: that subverts and hides the “real” one for the purposes of legitimization as if a real other is immune to the material effects of ideology that alter and shape the reality. Paradoxically, if ideology has only the power to manipulate the appearances and representations but has no effect on “real” things, then the whole operation of ideology suddenly enters a grave crisis. Of course, ideology in Althusser

and Gramsci is much more sophisticated and intricate considering how ideology shapes the reality, yet it still preserves the problematic distinction between the domain of ideology and truth that waits for the critical agent to unveil itself. Ideology as the only term, then, cannot respond to the complicity in colonial discourse such as Orientalism where knowledge and lies, science and pseudo-science, fantasy and reality are woven into each other and no final decision can be easily made without an essential failure.

On the other hand, Said's analysis of Orientalist discourse and structures, though at times glimpses back at this opposition which is almost impossible to surpass, sweeps the ground by carrying the discussion away from the question of truth, validity of knowledge or aesthetic judgment. His ambivalent emotional attitude towards the masters of the field whose motives and fears he harshly exposes and criticizes while expressing admiration and even empathy for their painful, sometimes creative efforts grasps the reader with surprise. Further, Said's concern is not primarily to disprove the validity of knowledge that has been accumulated within the field, but rather to give us an account *how*, for whom and especially under which circumstances this knowledge is desired, produced and circulated.

Such re-formulation reveals the discursive nature of knowledge, in accordance with what Foucault calls as regime of truth, and its intricate relation to power, an infinite series of complex moves on each other which is more difficult to understand than it seems at the first glance. First of all, this necessary relational bind is not instrumental, that means knowledge is not simply subjected to and determined by the demands of power. In this specific case, the Orientalist is not necessarily a zealous patriot or agent

of, let us say, East India Company, but rather whose conditions, standpoint and even the opportunity to produce the knowledge of Orient is historically marked by the (omni) presence of Empire within the Orient. This term “historical” does not only refer to the material presence of the Western imperial force in Orient but also to the fictional quality of history itself which carries the marks of fantasy and desire of the subject that inscribes it.

With Said, the question whether the knowledge on Orient is right or wrong shifts its ground and leaves its place to the question of how and under what conditions this knowledge has been produced and how it gains its circulative power to carry it to the collective common sense of Western mind which is shared both in high and popular instances. This circulation and citation is the constitutive moment for Orientalism to become a discourse proper, which will shape and normalize what it inscribes. One method for such operation, as Said brilliantly exposes in the Orientalist masters’ language, is the ontological constitution of the subject matter maintained by the claim of transparency and immediateness which is invoked by a “scientific”, impersonal style.

[...] that Orientalism makes sense at all depends more on the West than on the Orient, and this sense is directly indebted to various Western techniques of representation that make the Orient visible, clear, “there” in discourse about it. (Said, *Orientalism* 22)

This operation of pointing toward the Orient, this seemingly transparent transmission of what has been perceived by the Western scholar/traveler/artist is the constitutive moment for *an* Orient to be *the* Orient. That is how it is signed and therefore gains its

name and figure. Said draws our attention to the two fundamental operations through which the discourse of Orientalism is founded.

One is the meticulous, almost obsessive effort to name, catalogue and differentiate the Oriental, which is exclusively evident in the realm of philology. The immense effort to sort and classify the Oriental (especially Semitic) languages marks and also effaces the desire of the Western scholar to excavate the origin of and hence constitute the common Christian- European identity, which was hardly historically self-evident when one considers the vast difference between European cultures. Language plays the lead role in such project and one does not surprise considering its archaic relation to Western metaphysics. The first sentences of the Bible and the myth of Adam as the human prototype, his quasi-divine power to name which has been borrowed from Judeo-Christian God may be evoked alongside the historically contingent transformation of Greco-Latin language into the official language of Christianity. The first point will help us to conceive the critical role of language through its almost-mystical power to name and, hence to let be things which would otherwise be undifferentiated and nebulous. Therefore, entrance to language means to crossing to presence and gain form, which will in turn lend the enunciator the position of master over things that he names. The nomenclature theory, which has single-handedly dominated the reception of language until structuralism, signals the symptom of obsession with origins when dealing with linguistic phenomenon. This provides us a partial answer for the deep-seated investment in language and the will to know the origins of language, thereby the search for proof of mastery over the phenomenon. The first step towards this goal is to sweep all heterogeneous and convergent relations between languages, to determine the degree of

purity and essence and hence declare the supremacy of Western-originated (whose origin was indeed messed up with “alien”, Middle Eastern and primarily with Semitic “origins”) language. This desire to distinguish and to determine the language according to its origins and/or essence is simultaneously to construct an identity. This analysis enables us to see the nature of relation between the attempt on the part of Western scholars to seek the origins of language and purify its distinct essence, and the explicit religious drive, invested within, which aims to differentiate and essentialize the Christian-Western identity that was in fact historically interacted and complicated with its Oriental predecessors and neighbors.

Then the operation of “ontologically and epistemologically constituted distinction” (Said 2) is no simple misunderstanding or prejudice but it is necessarily supplemental for the construction of European identity. This is one of the strongest and innovational aspects of Said’s analysis. The desire to know, name and decide on the Orient, which is ambiguous, heterogeneous and devoid-of-totality in itself, is to give it a form, a form that has its permanent traits and recognizable features. Only with this condition, the “knowledge” (in its specifically Western form) may gain its proper identity. Formulated as a static and/or arrested movement itself, knowledge may only reflect and represent a static and permanent phenomenon whose characteristics and essential traits it has determined.

This is how Said’s remarks on the static, anachronistic and rigid conceptualization of the Orient may be read towards its limits. Actually, Said claims that Orientalist discourse has created and circulated an immobile and ahistorical representation of Orient in

accordance to its own rigid methodology, which in turn signals the over-determination of the desire to determine Western course by movement, progress and historicity.

The oriental was linked thus to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien. [...] If that group of ideas allowed one to separate Orientals from advanced, civilizing powers, and if the “classical” Orient served to justify both the Orientalist and his disregard of modern Orientals, latent Orientalism also encouraged a peculiarly (not to say invidiously) male conception of the world. [...] Moreover this male conception of the world, in its effect upon the practicing Orientalist, tends to be **static, frozen, fixed eternally**, [...] as if each man saw Islam as a **reflection of his own chosen weakness**. (Emphasis mine, Said, *Orientalism* 206-208)

But this specific failure of Western epistemology and methodology might be used as lever to scrutinize a more general failure of knowledge, which has been turned into a success at grasping and arresting things. Knowledge in its self-legitimizing claim to bring its object into light is primarily dependent on the operation of distinction between the object and subject and such distinction is always already marked by power and supremacy of subject over the object. In this specific instance, Orientalism as a body of knowledge is marked by a desire and a claim on the part of Western subject to know, to bring its Oriental subject into terms within his cultural frame of values and beliefs. The desire to know Other leads simultaneously to the constitution of a counter-part, an opposite figure to define the Self better. This is what Said brilliantly exposes in Orientalist writing.

The other point he discloses is how such operation gains the transparency of truth, excessively and collectively cited and referred in every instance to represent Orient. This

citational quality enables the circulation of Orientalist attitudes and, by the same token, they are not restricted solely to the realm of high culture such as scholarly work or art. This “regime of truth”, as Foucault would call it, sustains its validity as truth and supports itself partially depending on the respectful status of science and art. But it cannot simply be claimed that this wide circularity is a direct result of the institutionalized knowledge. Rather the dissemination and circulation of this recognizable mode to represent Orient signals two interdependent things at once.

The first and most immediate diagnosis was one of the main engines of *Orientalism* and strikingly exposed by Said following Foucault’s theoretical frame of Power/Knowledge. It is the crisis of pure knowledge as Said shows how, by and to whom the knowledge of Orient has been historically produced and the extent that it supplements, enhances and complies with the colonial/imperial institutions and practices. This conception of knowledge and the genealogical analysis of its modes of production/circulation not only in policy sciences but also in supposedly free ones such as anthropology and philology over thrones the deep seated belief in the supposed independence and purity of knowledge production from the social and historical circumstances. In the specific instance of Orientalism, Said uncovers the individual ambitions of scholars, their mimetic rivalry with their predecessors, the sources of inspirations for the artists and state sponsored institutionalization of Oriental Studies which shape, transform and continually perpetuate the discourse. Indeed, Said’s attempt in *Orientalism* could be considered as a grand effort to go back to the immense archive of Oriental studies to show its complex complicity with the ongoing development of colonialism.

The second important critique available in Said's analysis derives from the common ground that has been shared by both high and low instances of Western culture, though it is much more subtle and implicit. It could be considered as a radical critique of Western epistemology and its lineage could be justly traced back to Nietzsche, who was also the inspiring start-point of Foucault's reformulation of history. This radical critique, which grew mature and sophisticated with post-structural intervention in diverse areas of theory and for which Said has an ambivalent attitude, is one of the central themes that is intended to be developed throughout this study. Though it does not exclusively aim to strip the Orientalist discourse, it would help a great deal to contextualize, re-locate and disclose its significant characteristics, its multifarious connections to a wide range of intellectual activity and to re-formulate and ground the political immediacy of a certain critique whose scope includes, yet extends beyond the limits of post-colonial critique. Such an extended project inhabits and determines the strongest points of analysis in Said and must be carried further to understand the far-fetching implications and interrelations that post-colonial critique is to more expanded critique of Western metaphysics. In such re-formulation, colonial discourse will no longer be just another reflection of a correctable Western failure but a constitutive moment for its foundation.

To construct an idea proper to a certain Orient is neither without a motive other than knowledge itself nor comes transparently and reflect an immediate truth about its presumed object. It is and will always be a certain representation whose means and ends will be determined according the culturally specific values of the society from which emanates. First of all, it will be defined by the ontological and epistemological *bestell* (if we recall an enabling Heideggerian terminology) that will give the very condition of

phenomenon and making knowledge of it. Western thought, in its hegemonic form, relies on a static (though this static quality can be formulated as instantaneous, which will formulate movement as a series of instants) imagery/ vision of phenomenon which in turn gives its place to a certain conception of idea that has well-defined borders and hence a distinct shape. Because of the insurmountable movement and allusiveness of phenomena and also the disseminating nature of language that constantly distort this well-defined form of the concept/ idea, it must be consolidated and affirmed at each instance to assure its conformity with what it masters. Said explicitly reveals such zealous desire to borrow and repeat by citation in the specific instance of Orientalist discourse whose subject-matter is all the more disquieting since it is at once a site of desire for Western culture and due to the economy of this desire, it must be marked by a constitutive difference from the knowing subject. Knowing subject gains such self-mastery through forming himself in response to whatever qualities he yields to his object. This perpetuation of the attempt to form, to give the Orient its proper name and traits to construct a proper Western self is the signature of Orientalist discourse.

Then, it can be claimed that Said's most striking and enabling departure is his attempt to show what perpetuates and remains a more-or-less consistent body of work, while also giving a detailed account of how such discourse transforms, abruptly changes its course along with the changing regimes of power but remain recognizable. He describes this preference to emphasize the continuity rather than individual change in another context where he discusses Bloom, but which shed a great deal of light to understand his oeuvre:

If you see literary history as quintessentially embodied in the work of heroic, radical figures, whose importance is that their work is epoch-making, you are not misreading cultural history, you aren't reading all of it. [...] Instead of seeing culture as finally a more regular and regularizing process than not, Bloom holds to a notion that delegates tradition (and culture, by implication) to individual figures; I am saying that poetry makes poets, whereas Bloom believes that poets make poetry. (Said, *Diacritics* 10)

Here in this interview with *Diacritics*, controversially, Said also seems to engage in a debate on the nature of intellectual, which he pursues in numerous books such as *Beginnings*, *Traveling Theory*. He favors a much more overt political position for the literary critic (or the intellectual in more general terms), who has been more and more marginally institutionalized and whose work is dramatically confined to mere textuality and trapped in high and far peaks of theory that always tends to turn into “totalizing systemicity” when not checked and balanced with social “reality”. Rather according to Said, the critic must engage in the “world” and with immediate and present political consequences of Western hegemonic practices. To evaluate these remarks better, the phrases he uses such as “worldly”, theory and “textuality” should be taken with their face value with their “narrow sense”. At this level, Said’s critical warning and his step-back from Foucault’s skepticism for the leading role of intellectual makes sense and justifies itself considering its historical location and addressee to the hegemonic American academic context that normalizes even the most radical theory. (Said 86)

However, when we move out from the here-and-now of academic debates and come face to face with his writing whose claims, partly because of the nature of writing activity itself, demand a generality that overarches any particular present, Said’s criticism should

be considered with more scrutiny. Here, the condition of being “worldly” must be examined thoroughly since “worldly” cannot escape two interdependent problematic meanings. One is the inherent opposition dwell in the phrase where world and text stands opposite to each other as if world and what is “worldly” is out there and awaits the access of the intellectual who is receptive and open-minded enough to take what it offers. From such position, a further implication of a certain ontological privilege is granted to a kind of brute reality lying at least partially independent from the textuality that surrounds and shapes it.

Second point, which is the source of the strongest criticisms such as of Paul Bove, is the privileging of the status of intellectual by granting him/her an exit from and a rupture to the existing social and historical framework by an ability to launch a general critique of the existing political repression. Such a rework of the concept of intellectual as a generalist and pioneering political figure whose relations to the world must be in broader terms seems appealing when one considers Said’s own bifurcated career as a respectable scholar in literature and a political activist and spokesperson of Palestinian resistance. However, such conceptualization may engender a certain dislike for seemingly too abstract practices such as theory, which in fact provides the very horizon of criticism and political action and that which cannot be thought on its own terms without its interaction with and potential to alter the “reality”. One may recall the citation from above to see the inherent and unresolved contradiction resides in Said on this matter.

Paul A. Bove argues for this moment in Said’s theory and his later reserve on Foucault:

Given Said's concerns in "Traveling Theory", his criticism can, of course, be taken as a caution against the wholesale importation of Foucault into the academy and as a warning against the quietistic temptations of Foucault's textual practice. [...] But there is another reason for it to be here. Although it was never possible to identify the Said of *Orientalism* with Foucault because of their essential differences over the role of the individual subject vis-à-vis discourse, it does seem fair to point out that in this passage Said is revising his own previous authorization of Foucault as an alternative to "metaphysical aridity" and in so doing is projecting a seemingly different image of himself as intellectual. [...] And it is indeed a battle of authority that Said enacts in this essay between his own "unstoppable predilection" and Foucault and between this self-image and his other, "earlier" "Foucauldian" "self". (Bove 48- 51)

On the other hand, James Clifford's criticism that similarly utilizes Foucault as a lever seems to miss the point that Said attempts to formulate. Clifford argues that:

One notices immediately that in the first and third of Said's "meanings" Orientalism is concerned with something called the Orient, while in the second the Orient exists merely as the construct of a questionable mental operation. This ambivalence, which sometimes becomes a confusion, informs much of Said's argument. Frequently he suggests that a text or tradition distorts, dominates, or ignores some real or authentic feature of the Orient. [...] Yet Said's concept of a "discourse" still vacillates between, on the one hand, the status of an ideological distortion of lives and cultures that are never concretized and, on the other, the condition of a persistent structure of signifiers that, like some extreme example of experimental writing, refers solely and endlessly to itself. Said is thus forced to rely on nearly tautological statements, such as his frequent comment that Orientalist discourse "orientalizes the Orient", or on rather unhelpful specifications such as: "Orientalism can thus be regarded as a manner of regularized (or Orientalized) writing, vision and study dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient"(p.202) (Clifford 24)

Nonetheless, this criticism seems to take Said too literally (which implies more than a simple misunderstanding) and ignores the central argument that gives the impetus to the critique of colonial discourse.

...
[Clifford] finds a contradiction in Said between an argument of distortion or misrecognition (of a real Orient) and an argument of pure textual construction (of an idea of Orient). But given that this contradiction is self-evident in his text, why, one needs to ask, does Said make this “mistake”? Should we not see the very economy of discourse here? Since the Orient is produced only insofar as it is displaced, Orientalism is also the production of the very difference between the real Orient and its concept, image, etc. There would be no Orient without this difference. Clifford’s criticism misses this crucial point, for he locates contradiction outside meaning. Contrary to what Clifford suggests, we should read in Said’s tautological expression “Orientalizing the Orient” not his but orientalism’s tautology. [...] The actual Orient is not a natural guarantee of a non- or anti-Orientalist knowledge, for, as the site of a struggle, it is always already contaminated by representation. (Mutman, *Sign of Orientalism* 133)

The problematic of the actual Orient returns at every instance of the discussion around Said’s work in particular and post-colonial critique in general. This condensation of discussions around the “actual”, the “real” or “authentic” Orient reveals how much have been invested to the persisting division between the text and the world, the actual and textual or the representation and truth. This distinction haunts the discussion of Orientalism as discourse, its textuality and the gap that insurmountably persists between the Orientalized Orient and the “actual” one no matter how hard we try to denounce this duality (or how to draw such line properly). It is also same duality that Said’s arguments on the intellectual’s supposed task to dwell into the “worldly” issues, that is “human activity and its intricate relation to power relationships” rather than to habituate in the “ivory tower of technical criticism” constantly revolve around (Said, *Diacritics* 84).

I believe that such problematic will remain and (it should remain so for the sake of a critical alertness) as a problematic and cannot be easily absolved by a sleight of hand that Clifford's reference to Foucault seems to offer.

Another related point that should be mentioned in Said's work is his (dis)location of identity for the intellectual and his favoring of "going in and out" (Said *Diacritics* 83) of cultural identities to be able to explore zones for criticism otherwise remain taken-for-granted within a single cultural domain. By such positioning, he both advances his criticism of technical intellectual / academic and at the same time he formulates an identity for the intellectual, though not a quite proper one, that is located at the borderline between different cultures. He attempts to invent a cultural/political space for the critic, whose borders are tangent to differing cultural domains and hence give him a non-proper place that may grant him/her access to a privileged critical vision. Said seems to be content with such ambivalent cultural identity presuming that this marginal positioning would guarantee the individual the emancipation from the essential frames that these intersecting cultures (one of which must necessarily prevails and dominates) provide. This is the crucial point where the moment of humanism returns to Said's work and grant the intellectual a privileged position

This crucial turning point is not inevitable, (contrary to a more general and necessary "failure" to point to an Orient that lies outside of the discourse that engenders it to mobilize such critique) to enable the criticism of prevailing cultural formations. Rather where Said's strong attack on the premises of Western thought returns and consolidates the seat of individual back to its omnipresent position in the name of intellectual who is supposed to be insurgent to the established norms.

2.2 Spivak and the Question of Subaltern

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who calls herself as a “deconstructionist Marxist Feminist”, is attentive to such paradoxes without eliminating their irreducible presence in every instance of enunciation for the part of the suppressed and colonized. Her oeuvre is fragmentary and dispersed into a vast area such as philosophy, culture and literature.

Her work on the Subaltern Studies Group points to the blind zones of such valuation of the intellectual/critic and shows us how the production of these texts in the name of a subaltern are dependent on the impossible attempt to show the presence of subaltern insurgency that the Subaltern Group sociologist has to determine through the documents inscribed by hegemonic power that erases this very same presence. Then, the intellectual must assume a subaltern identity whose essence would be marked by a differential logic, which could be formulated in Guha’s words as “in a difference from elite groups”. In the messy historical setting of imperialism the subaltern will eventually signify the heterogeneity as it derives its definition from a certain positionality, but then again, it could only be represented in reference to a certain essence. Spivak calls this as “cognitive failure” for the part of the intellectual/ sociologist and states its inescapability for any inquiry that tries to represent who “cannot represent themselves” if we recall the famous proverb of Marx.

Spivak's complex attitude on the post-colonial critique in general, and the above mentioned debates within the field in particular should be mentioned briefly through her diverse and multiple works that are related on the ground that they constantly return to the ethico-political critique of colonialism and its sovereign Western Subject.

Firstly, her attitude towards what has been called as theory and textuality which has been opposed to the concrete materiality called as "world" and "actuality" is different from both positions that Said and his critiques occupy. She conceives "textuality" as a certain inscription of the world, a certain kind of writing in the general sense as Derrida uses the term. Her alliance with post structuralism could be conceived as a "radical acceptance of vulnerability" (Spivak *PCCI* 23). She offers the Western intellectual: "Try to become as if you are part of the margin, try to unlearn [their] privilege" (*PCCI* 30). Contrary to Said, though she defends his skepticism for French thought, especially of Foucault's ignorance of ideology, she thinks that Derrida's body of thought is practical and enabling. "It is more of a way of looking than a programme for doing: a way of looking at the way we do things so that this way of looking becomes its doing." (*PCCI* 133). Being the English translator of *Of Grammatology*, she insists on certain misconceptions that Derrida's work seems to suffer from:

Derrida is interested in how truth is constructed rather than exposing the error [...] Deconstruction can only speak in the language of the thing it criticizes. So as Derrida says, it falls prey to its own critique, *in a certain way*. That makes it very different from ideology-critique, even from auto-critique. The investment that deconstruction has to make in the thing being deconstructed is so great that it can't be made simply as a result of a decision that something must be deconstructed. It is a matter of looking at how one is speaking, knowing that one is probably not going to be able to speak in a very different way. [...] The

only things one really deconstructs are things into which one is intimately mixed. It speaks you. You speak it. (*PCCI* 135)

According to Spivak, Said's comparison between Foucault and Derrida, where he says that the latter's criticism moves us into the text, former's in and out" (Said, *Diacritics* 87) is due to a "profound misapprehension" on the nature of textuality: "When they say 'there is nothing but text, ; they mean the net/weave/ text that the subject is an effect within a much larger text of which ends are not accessible to us, and it is very different to say that everything is language (*PCCI* 23-24) textuality is not a pure category belong to the language, but the "category of language, then, embraces the categories of world and consciousness even as it is determined by them" (*PCCI* 55). Spivak argues that "textuality is also in the world and self, all implicated in an 'intertextuality'" (*PCCI* 55) and the text should be seen as "that area of the discourse of the human sciences (humanities) in which the problem of the discourse of the human sciences is made available" when considered in the narrow sense. (Spivak, *PCCI* 54) When you define textuality in a broader sense, then all practice will turn out to be already pre-inscribed. "The privileging of practice is in fact no less dangerous than the vanguardism of theory: What is beyond practice is always organizing practice. No practice takes place without presupposing itself as an example of some more or less powerful theory." (*PCCI* 2) Then, deconstruction, as the "persistent critique" that can "neither properly begin nor properly end (differance at the beginning and aporias at the end)" (136) aims to deconstruct what one cannot not want. (*PCCI* 28).

It is not the exposure of error. It is constantly and persistently looking into how truths are produced. That is why deconstruction doesn't say logocentrism is a pathology, or metaphysical enclosures are something you can escape. (Spivak *PCCI* 28)

Hence, her theoretical position within the project of decentralizing the subject is highly critical as one can observe in the famous essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), where she criticizes both Foucault and Deleuze & Guattari for being deceptive in their formulizations. According to Spivak, both theorists try to avoid and even denounce the ideological, and hence secretly consolidate the Western "S/subject" by re-locating them into the subject as unconscious and subject as desire. Conversely, Spivak argues that Derrida is "not decentering the subject. The subject must identify itself with its self-perceived intention. The fact that it must do so is not a description of what it is. That is the difference between decentered and centered." (Spivak, *PCCI* 147) Since, it is not possible to decenter the subject. "The subject that is centered begins with that kind of a un-endorsened error. [...] If it is, it has already, that first "yes" is, the auto position of the subject. The subject is, because it must give itself the gift of procreation, it is proper to itself. [...] For Derrida is describing the necessary centering of a subject in terms of a paracentrality that cannot be *yet* makes the centering of being possible. (*PCCI* 147)

Similarly, for the debate on essentialism, she employs the same deconstructionist attitude where she does not denounce the dichotomy but attempts to re-work and displace it. It is not simply possible to not-be an essentialist.

One , no rigorous definition of anything is ultimately possible, so that if one wants to , one could go on deconstructing the opposition between man and woman, and finally show that it is a binary opposition that displaces itself. [...]I cannot recommend that kind of dichotomy at all, yet, I feel that definitions are necessary in order to keep us going, to allow us to take a stand. The only way that I can see myself making definitions is in a provisional and polemical one. (Spivak *PCCI* 54)

She will call later this provisional but necessary essentialism as strategic essentialism.

One can see why she has drawn to the definition subaltern from the quotation above, as subaltern is truly a provisional, transitive and situational one (one hopes and also carries her doubt for one's hope, of course).

To return to the problematic of intellectual, maybe it would be useful how she expresses her personal experience as an itinerant non-Western intellectual. One immediately senses how she is aware of the almost romantic tendency dwell in the subject whose cultural identity is subjected to the imperialist history. However, she relieves such temptation by gestures of joke (it is useful to remember the psychoanalytic definition of joke here since it may help us to understand Spivak's position better): "I've been doing it for so long because it undermined some of the seriousness with which I was beginning to take myself. How seriously each institution takes itself! That was a wonderful antidote for me. It was impossible for me to take myself seriously anymore in that sense of "I will save the world", which begins to infect middle-aging academics when others want to listen to them." (*PCCI* 37) Within the same interview, she also declares the difficulty she faces with when she is traveling between the institutions and languages because of not rooting in one place and one language. But, "this relation between languages compels me to recognize that neither is a natural nor an artificial language.

I'm devoted to my native language, but I cannot think it as natural, because to an extent, one is never natural. One is never at home" (*PCCI* 37-38). She seems to be an accurate example of Said's remarks on the image of intellectual, who is never at home, but she does not seem to offer such homelessness as a home, she does not canonize such contingent and violent conditioning as the true locale for the intellectual creativity to flourish. Moreover, she prefers to situate the intellectual in the constant interaction with ideology and she chooses to expose the inevitability of "failure" and "misreading", both of which are also the strengths of intellectual activity, which operates within a battlefield of ideology and discursive practice. "That you have to take seriously the fact that you could always be wrong. It is not just a rhetorical gesture." (Spivak, *PCCI* 147)

To give a better account of Spivak's position concerning these interdependent debates on the role of intellectual, the formulation of textuality and humanism, it is useful to focus on her two major works on the Subaltern Studies Group and her *Postcolonial Critique*. These three texts carry the gist of her argument and give a novel insight on the formulation of oppressed, (the Oriental in our case) whom she prefers to call with diverse names such as aboriginal rural or urban gendered subaltern with a concern not to homogenize and hence objectify the other. She reads some of the major philosophical texts such as Kant's, Hegel's and Marx's and literature to track the figure of subaltern whose presence is foreclosed, but not excluded, which in turn constitutes the very category of human for the Western post/enlightenment thought.

In her famous essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), Spivak, firstly, brings a grave criticism to Foucault and Deleuze for their dismissal of ideology in their body of work.

According to Spivak, such dismissal of the concept of ideology re-consolidates the Western Subject by ignoring the condensation of power structures working on the agent, which in turn require the agent to subsist and survive. Her major criticism aims the implied opposition, uncritically accepted by both post-structuralists, between the consciousness and interest. Both thinkers strongly reject the notion of false consciousness and grant the subaltern a self-consolidating subjecthood. By such move, they inevitably strengthen the sovereignty of Western subject who is self-aware and whose interests are not alienated from self but flourish wherever desire dwells. Spivak argues that “These philosophers will not entertain the thought of constitutive contradiction. In the name of desire, they reintroduce the undivided subject into the discourse of power.” (CSS 69) Similarly, these theorists reject the duality between theory and practice and declare that theory is itself an action, not representation of anything or anyone. Though Spivak agrees with such displacement, she investigates how such operation is taken by Deleuze and Foucault to the point where theory is declined to be a representation. She thinks that such radical rejection of ideology and the distinction between action and practice is due to a certain misapprehension or confusion between representation and re-presentation.

Representation means standing for something and its meaning is akin to its legal and political usage while re-presentation is a mode of re-creation like in art. “Since the theory is only ‘action’, the theoretician does not represent (speak for) the oppressed group. Indeed, the subject is not seen as a representative consciousness.” and hence “the unrecognized contradiction within a position that valorizes the concrete experience of the oppressed, while being so uncritical about the historical role of the intellectual

[consolidating the international division of labor], is maintained by a verbal slippage.”
(Spivak, *CSS* 69-70)

She, then, moves to the famous Marxian passage, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louise Bonaparte*, to discuss and reveal the “shifting distinction” between these two senses of the term. Marx differentiates between *vertreten* (representation) and *darstellen* (representation). Spivak reads Marx’s concept of class as not a natural category that should be recovered by a recognition but as something that is situational, transformative and differential to other classes and that is something “artificial and economic” and interest or agency (subject) as “impersonal” (71).

“Full class agency (if there were such a thing) is not an ideological transformation of consciousness on the ground level, a desiring identity of the agents and their interest – the identity whose absence troubles Foucault and Deleuze. It is a contestatory *replacement* as well as an *appropriation* (a *supplementation*) of something that is artificial to begin with. [...] Marx’s formulations show a cautious respect for the nascent critique of individual and collective subjective agency. [...] Conversely, contemporary invocations of ‘libidinal economy’ and desire as the determining interest, combined with the practical politics of the oppressed (under socialized capital) ‘speaking for themselves’, restore the category of the sovereign subject within the theory that seems most to question it.” (Spivak, *CSS* 73)

Spivak says that this operation of conflating the two meanings and hence consolidating a knowing subject who can speak for herself has consequences. One is the re-consolidation of the intellectual who gains a new transparency, “for they merely report on the nonrepresented subject and analyze (without analyzing) the workings of (the unnamed Subject irreducibly presupposed by) power and desire. (Spivak, *CSS* 74)

Spivak, at this moment, adds Said's criticism of Foucault that "notion of the surreptitious subject of power and desire [is] marked by the transparency of the intellectual" (CSS 75), which, I believe, strategically ignoring how Said also consolidates the position of the intellectual by automatically granting him a place of a kind of "privileged" homeless. Contrary to Paul A. Bove's position that had been mentioned in the previous section, she argues that "Foucault's challenge [to the leading role of both hegemonic and oppositional intellectuals as formulated by Bove] is deceptive precisely because it ignores what Said emphasizes- the critic's institutional responsibility" (CSS 75).

Further, Spivak reveals the implicit Eurocentrism for this re-formulation of subject whose intention/ interest and desire is equated and how such constitution of the Subject also helps the production of the "unnamed subject of the Other for Europe". To give an account of such proposition she asks, rather rhetorically: "on the other side of the international division of labor from socialized capital, inside *and* outside the circuit of the epistemic violence of the imperialist law and education supplementing an earlier economic text, *Can the subaltern speak?*" (CSS 79) And, she turns to the Subaltern Studies Group, whose aim is to bring a subaltern insurgent consciousness to ground to re-inscribe the imperialist history.

She distinguishes the Group's effort to represent a subject and a consciousness (though non- proper) from Deleuze and Foucault's attempts to formulate a "pure form of consciousness" which they share with a certain 'internationalist' intellectual Marxism. One of the reasons for difference is the fact that "the colonized subaltern subject is

irretrievably heterogeneous” and its definition can be only an identity-in-differential, whose category, in Ranajit Guha’s words “represent the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the “elite”. (Qtd. in Spivak, *CSS* 79).

At the first glance the subaltern group’s declared interest to “identify and measure the specific” is essentialist and taxonomic and seems to aim to represent and access to a subaltern consciousness *as such*. However, “because of the violence of the imperialist epistemic, social and disciplinary inscription, a project understood in essentialist terms must traffic in a radical textual practice of differences.” (Spivak *CSS* 80) The object of study becomes a differential, “ a deviation from the ideal- the people or the subaltern- which is itself defined as a difference from the elite.” (Spivak, *CSS* 79)

It is towards this structure that the research is oriented, a predicament rather different from the self-diagnosed transparency of the first-world intellectual. Whether or not they themselves perceive it, their text articulates the difficult task of rewriting its own conditions of impossibility as the conditions of its possibility. (Spivak, *CSS* 79)

Listening to the silent zones and refusals of enunciation within the Group’s study, Spivak argues that the consciousness of subaltern is something that the Subaltern studies cannot properly define (*CSS* 82). The consciousness of the subaltern is something that cannot be recovered from the imperial historical inscription. Neither the subaltern, nor the message has an ontologically verifiable, positivistic presence. Furthermore, the intellectual is far from being a transparent agent who may be able to read the lost text of

subaltern consciousness. These entangled positions bring a productive crisis to the operation.

Firstly, there could be no nostalgia for the lost origins of subaltern, since it is not directly accessible and also the very definition of the subaltern is situational and differential. For what is differential, one cannot form a proper identity and origin to be discovered.

Secondly, what is pursued, for its differential nature, would resist to be stabilized into an object for study and hence, it would disrupt the rigid discourse of knowledge. Thirdly, the intellectual will have to traverse along his own consciousness. “The postcolonial intellectuals learn that their privilege is their loss.” (Spivak, *CSS* 82)

However, this does not mean to hide behind an indeterminate sketching of the subaltern, which would mean sharing the violent success of imperial history, and then ostensibly to go silent to leave space for the non-represented to represent herself. Any critical study must show how such gestures are complicit with the imperialistic phallogocentric discourse, and even constitute its basic premises: “The narrow epistemic violence of imperialism gives us an imperfect allegory of the general violence that is the possibility of episteme” (Spivak, *CSS* 82)

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.[...] On the other side of the international division of labor, the subject of exploitation cannot know and speak the text of female exploitation even if the absurdity of the nonrepresenting intellectual making space for her to speak is achieved. The woman is doubly in shadow” (Spivak, *CSS* 83-84)

Here, she introduces the ironical term “benevolence” for the part of the first-world or elite-indigenous intellectual by “constructing a homogeneous Other referring only to our own place in the seat of the Same or the Self towards the people whose “consciousness” we cannot grasp. To confront them is not to represent (vertreten) them but to learn to represent (darstellen) ourselves.” (Spivak, *CSS* 84). The third-worldism of the western academic circles, which is confined only to the part of the third-world already inhabiting within the West and executed by third-world intellectuals, is a very good example of the benevolence Spivak harshly criticizes. “This benevolent first-world appropriation and reinscription of the Third World as an Other is the founding characteristic of much third-worldism in the US human sciences today.” (Spivak, *CSS* 84)

When Spivak mentions the re-inscription of the (in actual fact very rare) practice of widow burning tradition, sati, she implicitly links the two versions of Western benevolence: “Imperialism’s image as the establisher of the good society is marked by the espousal of the woman as object of protection from her own kind” which exposes the fantasy of the Imperial subject formulated ironically by Spivak as “white men rescuing brown women from brown men”. (*CSS* 98) While on the other hand, the reversal of Imperialism, the nationalist Hinduism represents the self-immolation act as the sign of the free-will of woman and defend the tradition as a sign for freedom of Hindu woman. Spivak argues that:

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’ caught between tradition and modernization” [...] the case of suttee as exemplum of the woman-in-imperialism would challenge and reconstruct this opposition between subject (law) and object-of-knowledge (repression) and mark the place of ‘disappearance’ with something other than silence and nonexistence, a violent aporia between subject and object status. (CCS 102)

Then, benevolence is not simply a covert violence coming from the Imperialistic western power, but also a strategy employed by the indigenous modernization policy to constitute the subject position that it requires to operate its power, whose structure is partially borrowed from the Western humanist/colonialist discourse and already sharing the same patriarchal ground.

The postmodern critique of neo-colonialism reveals benevolence as a denial of difference and constitution of hegemonic subject. The production of Western sovereign self is disguised by other-ing the Third World disenfranchised as lacking appropriate agency. Thus, in benevolent discourse, difference is accepted and denied at the same time. [...] Rather than representing or helping the subaltern, benevolent discourse performs the hegemony of the neo-colonial subject and constitutes his/her world a naturally superior. This blocks the possibility of talking with the subaltern.” (Mutman, *Encyclopedia* 37-38)

Spivak cites Said’s comment on Derrida and Foucault and his rather problematic notion of textuality, where he argues that Derrida’s criticism moves us into the text, Foucault’s in and out and calls such conception as a “profound misapprehension”. (87)

Spivak, conversely, argues that Foucault’s seemingly political analysis “hides a privileging of the intellectual and of the ‘concrete’ subject of oppression” and hence she believes that Derrida, although his style is esoteric and demanding as he deals primarily

with philosophical texts, is “less dangerous when understood than the first-world intellectual masquerading as the absent nonrepresenter who lets the oppressed speak for themselves.” (CSS 87)

“To render thought or the thinking subject transparent or invisible seems, by contrast, to hide the relentless recognition of the Other by assimilation. It is in the interest of such cautions that Derrida does not invoke ‘letting the other(s) speak for himself’ but rather invokes an ‘appeal’ to or ‘call’ to the ‘quite-other’ (opposed to the self-consolidating other), of ‘rendering *delirious* that interior voice that is the voice of the other in us’.”(Spivak, CSS 89)

With such deconstructive move that destabilizes the opposition between inside and outside, self and other, both are formulated as self-consolidating, we move towards a new politico-ethics and leaving the domain of humanism and a certain Levinasian ethics, which repeats the humanist failure by inversion; by means of granting an infinite transcendental to the Other and hence an insurmountable distance between Self and Other. By *maddening* the interior voice in us, we can participate in “a persistent critique”, as Spivak would call, with an ongoing alertness for the privilege of the intellectual and his/her institutional/ discursive participation “disgui(ing) itself in transparency” within the hegemonic power. (CSS 90)

Maybe it is useful to return to her earlier essay “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography” (1985). Spivak reads the Subaltern Studies Group both for and against their grain and point how their methodology bears the same mark with what they attempt

to accomplish, that is to present a subaltern/ insurgent consciousness. This mark is the irreducible cognitive failure that the group shares with what they study and the paradoxical attempt to represent that cannot be represented, or that which once represented will lose its proper name and will be, inevitably, objectified and totalized for the seemingly disinterested investigating subject. The same failure goes for the insurgent or any other oppressed group that is supposed to achieve self-consciousness, since such misrecognition is inescapable and, indeed essential for recognition and representation of identity. Spivak insists that such misrecognition of identity for any class is irreducible and it is nothing to do with the failure or success of any discursive displacement attempted. It is rather as in the case of Orientalism, the “sophisticated vocabulary of much contemporary historiography successfully shields this cognitive failure and that this success-in-failure, this sanctioned ignorance, is inseparable from colonial domination” (208)

Spivak clarifies this subtle point by referring to the Group’s attempt to excavate and re-establish self-consciousness for the insurgent, that seems “at first a positivistic project- a project which assumes that , if properly prosecuted , it will lead to firm ground, to some thing that can be disclosed.” (*SR* 211) However, as the Group dwells onto the project, such consciousness turns out to be “subject to the cathexis of the elite, that it is never fully recoverable, that it is always askew from its received signifiers, indeed that it is effaced even as it is disclosed, that it is irreducibly discursive.” (*SR* 212)

Though the Group’s aim is to re-establish consciousness of the subaltern, their only method is to retrieve it from the texts of the counterinsurgent hegemonic elite. Such

method signals the “counterpoint” deconstructing the very foundations of the metaphysics of consciousness that the Group tries to re-establish for the subaltern. Spivak offers to read the Subaltern consciousness as a perfect allegory for all consciousness and thought. She argues that such attempt to retrieve the subaltern consciousness only brings about a subaltern subject-effect. By calling it subject-effect, the subject is relocated within a multi-layered and complex web of different inscriptions such as gender, language and economics that are inscribing and displacing such effect for the cause, as a “sovereign and determining subject”. Such misrecognition and replacing the effect for the cause is at the heart of metaphysics of the Subject and to a certain extent is inescapable. Spivak formulates such failure-in-success or, in other words, substitution of the effect for a cause as “strategic essentialism”. This term plays a significant role for inventing a place that will host a deconstructivist positioning in the essentialism debate, which, implicitly or not, dominates the post-colonial critique. Spivak formulates such position by reading Subaltern Studies against their grain:

I would suggest that elements in their text would warrant a reading of the project to retrieve the subaltern consciousness as the attempt to undo a massive historiographic metalepsis and “situate” the effect of the subject as subaltern. I would read it, then, as a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest. [...] this would allow them to use the critical force of anti-humanism, in other words, even as they share its constitutive paradox: that the essentializing moment, the object of their criticism, is irreducible. (Spivak, *SR* 214)

Spivak’s reading reveals how the Group’s employment of consciousness, though not explicitly, exposes their “strategically adhering to the essentialist notion of consciousness, that would fall prey to an anti-humanist critique, within a historiographic practice that draws many of its strengths from that very critique.” (Spivak, *SR* 216)

Spivak locates an uneasy, yet responsible position for the intellectual as exemplified in the Subaltern Studies Group and contribute to the long-standing debate for the role of intellectual. She argues that "Subaltern Studies' own subalternity in claiming a positive subject-position for the subaltern might be reinscribed as a strategy for our times."

(Spivak, *SR* 217)

It [such reinscription] acknowledges that the arena of the subaltern's persistent emergence into hegemony must always and by definition remain heterogeneous to the efforts of the disciplinary historian. The historian must persist in *his* efforts in this awareness that the subaltern is necessarily the absolute limit of the place where history is narrativized into logic. It is a hard lesson to learn, - but not to learn it is merely to nominate elegant solutions to be correct theoretical practice. [...] Theoretical descriptions cannot produce universals. They can only ever produce provisional generalizations, even as the theorist realizes the crucial importance of their persistent production. (*SR* 218)

Spivak then opposes both positions that circulate and compete for the role of intellectual, one being the intellectual as the savior and representative of the ones that "cannot represent themselves", a position more or less represented by Said's later period on the debate; the other is a learned "refusal to represent and privilege the oppressed subject, who could seemingly speak for himself" as in late Foucault, which is lengthily discussed and criticized by Spivak in other occasions.

Spivak here takes a critical attitude towards the globalisms and migrant hybridisms that plays with a sanctioned ignorance by an invocation of "globality"- a word serving to hide the financialization of the globe, or "hybridity"- a word serving to obliterate the irreducible hybridity of all language." (*PC*164) Enunciating a cautionary remark for

feminism that works with the notions of ethnicity only within the national boundaries of Western metropolitan centers and also for the post-colonial studies that attempts to un-do the subsisting difference by elaborating it with terms such as hybridity, Spivak urges us against such pluralisms and anti-essentialisms: "If Feminism takes its place with ethnic studies as American studies, or post-colonialism a migrant hybridity, the South is once again in shadow, the diasporic stands in for the native informant." (Spivak, *PC* 169)

Spivak, instead of engaging with proving the falsity of stereotypical representations of the indigenous figure, focuses on the very foundational texts of Western culture and locate the native informant, whose name has not been pronounced yet, clandestinely constitutes the category of the (Western) Subject. "In one way or another, an unacknowledged moment that I will call "the native informant" is crucially needed by the great texts; and it is foreclosed." (Spivak, *PC* 4) She borrows the term from Lacanian terminology for the purposes of both connoting the psychic aspect of the issue and to attract the emphasis to the rejection of an idea and together with the affect attached to it by the ego- consciousness. The name of the native informant is encrypted and buried within the psyche of the subject if we invoke a certain Abraham and Torok terminology as Spivak does. Then, Spivak proposes "encrypting of the name of the "native informant" *as the name of Man* - a name that carries the inaugurating effect of being human. [...] I think of the "native informant" as a name for that mark of expulsion from the name of Man - a mark crossing out the impossibility of the ethical relation"(Spivak, *PC* 5-6)

Native informant, a term Spivak borrows from ethnography, designates "a blank though generative of a text of cultural identity that only the West (or a Western-model discipline) could inscribed" and such belief clandestinely operates beneath the "benevolent cultural nativists" practice, " although the cover story there is of a fully self-present voice-consciousness". (Spivak, *PC* 6) Spivak prefers to read the foreclosed name of the native informant not in the ethnographic studies that somehow celebrate its figure as a pure and innocent human stage that have not yet contaminated by the civilization but rather in the grand Western texts that " take for granted that "European" is the human norm and offer us descriptions and/or prescriptions. And yet, even here, the native informant is needed and foreclosed." (Spivak, *PC* 6)

Such operation of misreading adopts the deconstructive strategy as it necessitates the attentiveness to the silences and blind spots that deconstruction lends its ears and eyes. "We are deeply interested in the tropological deconstruction of masculist universalism. [...] We know the "correction" of a performative deconstruction is to point at another troping, and thus to another errant performance, that the critique must be persistent." (Spivak, *PC* 168) This is the invaluable lesson of deconstruction: a never-ending oscillation between active-forgetting and remembering if we re-call a certain reading of Nietzsche , that never decides on neither side but becoming itself this movement that does not aim to find the safe shore since there is none. (Spivak *OG* xxi-xxxviii)

We must be driven by a persistent critique (which at the first hand includes our own practice) in our attempt to disrupt the hegemony of phallogocentrism that must

inevitably habit within the language of what it criticizes. “Even as we join in the struggle to establish the institutional study of marginality we must still go on saying “And yet...” (Spivak, *PC* 171) Such is not ivory-tower theoreticism, but a strictly political practice, though without an end. Being as such, deconstruction is never reducible to a mere “textual” (in the narrow sense) analysis/critique of what it re-inscribes.

This position will shape the discussion of the subject-matter throughout the study, actively disrupting each and every argument that compete to take over and claim the truth of its subject matter, which is film and inevitably introduce a critical attentiveness to the ways how films foreclose and are foreclosed by the discourse that surrounds and shape them.

In the next chapter, Orientalism will be studied in its relation to Western philosophical “reflections” on the visibility and sound and in figuring the alterity, the Other, in our case the Oriental. Such reading will be enabled and in-formed by two recent films with Oriental settings of Ferzan Özpetek, a talented Turkish director living and producing in Italy.

3 ORIENTAL: FIXED IN FRONT OF “THE” MIRROR FOR ETERNITY

It might be useful to remember Said’s remarks on the Orientalist discourse, how it is obsessed with the picturesque representation of the Orient; with bringing it visually to the foreground. Said’s analysis on the vast Orientalist oeuvre ranging from scientific records to literature and painting reveals a curious tension for the ambiguities and obscurities of the Orient that bewitches and fascinates the Western subject which, later on, turns into an immense effort to illustrate and depict the Oriental as clear as possible. Such tension plays out and signs almost each and every text from travel literature to Orientalist academic paintings.

While Orientalist discourse has altered since nineteenth century with a series of shifts including topographical inscriptions that is necessitated by the historical and contingent breaks that colonialism/capitalism has gone through, this scopic drive to give a proper shape to the enigmatic Orient has persisted. Before dwelling more on this scopic drive that compels to bring the Other before the gaze of the luminous Western thought, it must be noted here that by the term “visibility” and “scopic/specular regime”, it is not only referred to the realm of visual representations such as film or painting. Rather, what has been meant is the specific handling of phenomena in accordance with and dominated by a fixed gaze, that in turn fixes the subject of such eye. This fixed gaze upon the so-called object distributes and assigns stable positions for both parties but always

asymmetrically and in favor of the onlooker. However, such scopic handling of phenomena is not restricted solely to the literally “visual” fields of representation; it is rather a regime, an ontological inscription upon the world, or a “worlding of the world.” (Spivak qtd in Mutman, *Shooting* 3)

Said’s extensive analysis on Orientalism revolves around a theme of an “urge to make visible”, which is not confined to painting but indeed shared by scholarly works and literature. Speaking of Flaubert’s grotesque spectacular descriptions of Orient, said remarks: “the Orient is *watched* [...] the European, whose sensibility tours the Orient, is a watcher, never involved, always detached. [...] The Orient becomes a living tableau of queerness.” (Said, *Orientalism* 103). For Napoleonic expedition, he writes: “the other part (of dominating Egypt) was to render it completely open, to make it totally accessible to European scrutiny.” (Said, *Orientalism* 83) to describe Orientalism, he again employs specular vocabulary: “The idea of representation is a theatrical one; the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate.” (Said, *Orientalism* 63) This larger whole, as Said calls the collective Orient, “was easier for him [Marx] to use in **illustration** of a theory than existential human identities.” (Said, *Orientalism* 155) Despite the term “illustrative” here primarily designates the meanings of descriptive, exemplary and revelatory; still the visual quality of the term and its relation to theory cannot be undermined. When he mentions Sacy, one of the founding fathers of modern Orientalism, Said’s remark becomes most revelatory: “In Sacy’s pages on Orientalism –elsewhere in his writing he speaks of his own work as having *uncovered, brought to light, rescued* a vast amount of obscure matter. [...] Knowledge

was essentially the making visible of material, and the aim of a tableau was the construction of a sort of Benthamite panopticon.” (Said, *Orientalism* 127)

This theatricality, this urge of making the Orient visually present, or clearly seen and illustrated is a common trait shared by literature, plastic arts and even scientific and scholarly studies. This curious common characteristic is a thematic of *Orientalism* (1979) that Said follows all along the book, even if he has not pursued as a constitutive aspect of the subject. It can even be argued that Said’s keen insight has detected the crucial importance of this visual and theatrical quality and hence he constantly revolved around the theme, however his critical attitude fell short before such perpetuating quality of its subject-matter to be “theoretically” developed. We may say that this visual, picturesque quality of Orientalist texts that has never theoretically contemplated by Said signs *Orientalism* from within but remains a tangential theoretical element.

3.1 Where do *Hamam* and *Harem Suare* fit in?

Before examining thoroughly this crucial visual quality that seems to be a constitutive common element of Orientalist discourse, maybe it is useful to defer it in order to introduce two texts, which inspire and inform this study. These two texts are two recent films by Ferzan Özpetek, a successful Turkish director who has been living and working in Rome for more than twenty years. Although his oeuvre consist of four films as a director, his first and second feature films will be of concern as their setting is topographically and historically located within the Orient, in his motherland Turkey. His first feature film as a director is *Hamam* or *Steam: The Turkish Bath* (1997) which

brought him international reputation and success. Being a common production of Italy, Turkey and Spain, it even found the chance to be distributed in U.S. and met with, a significant mark of international attention. *Hamam* has drawn a considerable attention in Turkey as well. His second feature film *Harem Suare* (1999), which is a common production this time of Italy, France and Turkey, earned praises across Europe and Turkey. Leaving aside the uncritical and popular celebrations in the name of “Art” which seems to point to a modernization anxiety of “we could do it better than you” and its complementary conservative reactions that seems to be obsessed with homophobia and a brute realism of the kind “It is not the “real” Turkish Bath, harem or Turkey”, Özpetek’s cinema has largely been denied any serious contemplation. Özpetek’s distinct film aesthetics that dissociates him from the commonly received “Turkish Cinema” as a migrant Turkish director and the rich textuality his films provide deserves more intellectual effort than the present reception that confines and reappropriates his cinema within the binary politics (modern versus conservative) that reign contemporary discussions.

Before getting into detail of the singular narrative structures and fictional qualities of the two films that will be held in the next chapter, we must mention a subtle yet striking common visual regime that signs, over-determines and even grants their aesthetic verve. This visual regime could be best described as primarily a picturesque, sensual, almost tactile filmic representation of the Oriental setting sustained by low-key lightning and extensive employment of amber tones. Such lightning is supplemented by rich glamorous costumes in *Harem Suare* or employment of textiles such as tulle, lace and silk as it was the case in *Hamam* both of which invoke touchy-feely sensibility through a

dazzling visuality. The viewer comments illustrate such characteristic better: “[...] We have started to know throughout the story, being sucked into the gentle, demanding, chaotic, smoky, colourful and slow whirlpool that is this movie's Istanbul.”

“In Italy, colors are bright and edges are sharp but life was just dull. In Turkey, the screen was inundated by drab colors, worn edges and crumbling buildings, but the humble people and surroundings were full of life.” “It is full of sumptuous and colorful costumes.” “Texture, smell, color, that's how I think this movie should be judged in terms of. See the rich golden tones surrounding the young concubine asleep by the fireplace, or the sweltering Turkish bath, and let it flood your senses with impressions of spice, coarse cloth, smooth skin, scented oils, flickering flames, satin rustle.” (IMDB 2004)

In both films, the Italy sequences were sharp focused, with high-key lightning and cold colors while the main Oriental sequences were shot in a soft focus with rich, melting colors and tactile sensuality, that give both films their significant visual style that seems to “mesmerize” (a word extensively used by IMDB commentators that imply a bedazzlement whose scopic reference cannot be ignored) a primarily Western audience. The word “bedazzlement” hints at the tension between visualization and counter-visualization; in other words, between the extent from which camera deviates from what conventionally called clear-sight and the deferred and hence heightened moment of climax where the object of spectacle is revealed. Besides the soft focused and lush colored visuality, both films employ specific thematic-visual elements, which also enrich and develop the narrative: Steam, which becomes the English title for *Hamam*, that serve to hide the lovers from the camera till it comes close enough to pierce it

through; and the immense fog covering and hiding Istanbul that has also become part of the poster of *Harem Suare* together with a close still of Safiye in veils made of white tulle, resembling the fog veiling Istanbul.

Why in both films Orient plays a seek-and-hide game with camera, promising to reveal itself, promising its hidden and spectacular treasures for the camera? Why this deferral, this so-called resistance to well-focused clear sight heightens the pleasure of the moment of revealment all the same?

3.2 Thought and Vision

This anxiety to bring into light what seems to evade from grasp, that means mastering this evading phenomenon (that which appearing) by means of sight, is a major philosophical theme that cannot be adequately covered within the limits of this study. However it should be mentioned briefly as it is the constitutive moment for Orientalist discourse like it is for the very foundations of Western metaphysics which is primarily the discourse on presence and truth. This ocularcentrism, as Martin Jay uses the term for the “cultures dominated by vision” (Jay 3), also constitutes one of the founding pillars of the Subject as posited against and over the Object. Such point also would enable us to think cinema and its relation with the overlapping issues of race and gender.

3.2.1. The Quest for Light and Form

Right from its (self-claimed) Greek beginnings, Western culture in general and Western philosophy in particular seems to have a particularly strong desire for the visible and related values attached to it. Hence, all that is associated with visuality such as light and the major light source that is sun and the major light receptor; eye enjoyed a significant privilege over and against other light sources, and occasions where light is seemingly absent with the extensive denigration of other senses such as smell and touch. “The eyes are the organic prototype of philosophy. Their enigma is that they not only can see but are also able to see themselves seeing. [...] A good part of philosophical thinking is actually only eye-reflex, eye dialectic, and seeing-oneself-see.” (Sloterdijk qtd. in Jay 21)

As Hans Blumenberg argues, “For Greek thought, all certainty was based on visibility. What *logoi* referred back to was a sight with form [*Gestalthafter Anblick*], i.e. *eidos*. Even etymologically, “knowledge” [*Wissen*] and “essence” [*Wesen*] (as *eidos*) are extremely closely related to “seeing” [*Sehen*]. Logos is a collection of has been seen.” (Blumenberg 46). One brilliant example is the cave of Plato, where the human beings are confined to live in, turned their backs to the source of light (whether to the fire or its primary and transcendent source that is sun as the source of ultimate Good and knowledge), and hence take mere shadows flickering on the wall for what is their true sources. Only the philosopher may step out of the cave that is the domain of mere appearances and may glimpse at the truth of appearances, in other words the Ideas. “For

Plato, the truth was embodied in the Eidos or Idea, which was like a visible form blanced of its color. The human eye, he contended, is able to perceive light because it shares a like quality with the source of light, the sun.” (Jay 26) Hence, it can be claimed that Plato distinguishes between a clear vision washed with luminosity and a chimerical and illusionary one. Though, Plato seems to hold a subtle reservation for the human ability to directly confront the sun, or its synonym, Truth since too much light would blind one, he maneuvers to make a distinction between a “specular” vision that primarily depends on the third eye of Logos and its debased opposite, that is the imperfect human eye and its non-trustworthy perception. From such binary (which shifted, dislocated or reappropriated throughout the history of philosophy but being reserved in one or other way), Plato proceeds to a hostile categorization and hierarchization of arts and expel the ones that which rely most visibly on mimesis, which holds for Plato a degraded and second hand copy that creates a phantasmal and illusionary resemblance to the model (though he cannot expel all mimetic action from Republic as mimesis is also the only possible means for education of citizens). (Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography* 124-128)

Western philosophy has inherited this conception of light, its relation to truth together with the ambiguous Platonic duality of vision, which has later persisted as the decisive mark in its later phases as well. Martin Jay argues for a dual Western conception of light: Former, light as geometric, straight rays as Greek optics has privileged and latter being light as refraction. While the first “was seen as the essence of illumination and it existed whether perceived by the human eye or not” and called as *lumen* emphasizing form and outline , light as refraction stands for the actual experience of human sight, emphasizing color, shadow and movement and is called as *lux* and maybe called as perception or even sensation (29). “What might be called the alternating traditions of

speculation with the eyes of the mind and observation with the two eyes of the body provided fertile ground for the varieties of ocularcentrism that have so deeply penetrated Western culture.” (Jay 30) Such duality maybe also observed as vision and perception or as concept and metaphor, which could be multiplied under guise of different names and it is certainly related to the issue of mimesis, to be able to distinguish model (vision, essence, genera, Being) from copy (perception, substance, species, beings). However, to take such binary schematization too literal may lead one to ignore the clandestine anxiety to sustain such division proper through out the history of metaphysics. The division between the concept as the bearer of proper meaning and the metaphor standing for its figurative substitution is the perfect example of such duality within the language of philosophy:

In accordance with the Greek etymology in play here, that meta-phorical “carrying-over” operates in both directions. If what we call “metaphorical” uses of a word are carried over from their “literal” uses, then we must say that those “literal” uses are also carried over from the “metaphorical” ones. So vision itself, “properly understood as a phenomenon of the body, is in truth merely an artifact of the metaphorical vision instituted by (and instituting) philosophy” (McCumber 235-236)

Medieval philosophy has inherited and appropriated this specular characteristic of Classical Greek philosophy with complex shifts and even sometimes mysterious reversals, a debated and curious issue which unfortunately cannot be pursued here. It would be suffice it to note the privileging of divine vision of God whose power is intrinsically related to its eternally fixed gaze over beings, the world to see his own divine reflection on them.

With Enlightenment, ocularcentrism has taken a new twist and becomes the dominant frame through which the modern ontology has been installed. Descartes, baptizing the vision as being the “noblest of senses”, has constituted Cartesian philosophy, stamping the modern philosophy and its visual/specular ethos. Cartesian vision acts as a mathematical schematization that undermines ordinary human vision for its vulnerability to illusion, for its “bad” visuality that cannot reach beyond mere appearances.

Such division between ocularism and the mental vision do depend more on the alarmed differentiation between the good and bad vision both of which are inevitably doubling of what they represent. The contemporaneous positivism/empiricism which could be characterized by John Locke and Francis Bacon, though rejected the Cartesian idea of innate intuitions that dwell in cogito and emphasized the observer’s passive reception of what lies outside of him, nonetheless shared its ocularcentric conception of idea and truth. “Both maintained a faith in the linkage between lucidity and rationality, which gave the Enlightenment its name”. (Jay 85) Voltaire and Rousseau, the most prominent rival figures of this luminous era, have shared this specular philosophical ground.

Voltaire “shared a duality of consciousness and matter” and like Descartes used “idea” as internal, clear and distinct representations (images) of the mind while also holding the positivist belief that these images of mind are constituted by the perception of external objects. (Jay 85) Rousseau, on the other hand, has driven by the pulse to make man “become completely transparent to each other and to himself, to become absolutely authentic to himself” (Jay 91) and shared the Platonic hostility to mimetic arts and political representation, which seeks the utopian state that will abolish the theatrical

distance between “the represented and the representer, the object seen and the seeing object” and substitute it with a festival “without masks”. (Derrida, *Grammatology* 307)

The early nineteenth century also witnessed a certain reversal of light/darkness binary and a revaluation of night by the Romantics contrary to the increasingly strengthening tendency of “the third eye of mind”. They primarily emphasized the activity of mind and its “production” (rather than re-production) and hence produced a powerful position for the subject.

However, as usual with all reversals, romantics could not escape a certain “*eidaesthetics*, as Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy call it, the yearning for a plastic representation of the Idea” (qtd in Jay, 109). Hegelian dialectics, which is “often said to present the fulfillment of metaphysics, its end and accomplishment” (Derrida, *Margins* 73), sublates (*Aufheben*) the sensory immediacy (sight) with the help of sound (or more properly with the language which could be claimed to be super-visual compared to the inadequate and imperfect visuality that common sight offers) to attain the representative power of mind. By the same token, Hegelian dialectics let mind to come to itself and declare mastery over itself. With Derridean critique, it turns out that “in spite of Hegel’s attempts to critique vision, knowledge for him, even philosophical knowledge, basically a form of *theoria*” (McCumber 237), with the determining endeavor to attain the ultimate form of B/being and presence.

3.2.2 Challenging the Thought as Image

In twentieth century, which has witnessed a gigantic proliferation and domination of
visuality in almost every realm ranging from the panoptic machines of state to the
nickelodeons and world fairs, the issue seems to hold and even strengthen its crucial
importance and emerged as an issue on its behalf to be critically contemplated by many
philosophers such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas, all of which diagnosed and
further criticized the ocularcentrism traversing and marking the Western philosophy.
Though each one tried to replace this visual paradigm and break through the
metaphysics in their singular way, phenomenology as their common epistemological
ground lead them back to the operation of “unconcealment” of Being and presence
together with the persisting quest for origins.

As Lacoue-Labarthe have laboriously demonstrated, in Heideggerian philosophy
unthought, which resides in every thought and conceals itself from the investigating
mind that seeks to bring it into total light, is formulated as if it is something “unique and
distinct” and hence have a certain form and totality. Thought and concept as having
deliberate and distinct form and Being as totality whose outlines are implied to
constitute a form no matter how it conceals itself, these are the moments for Heidegger
in particular and phenomenology in general to lead back to what Lacoue-Labarthe calls

the specular/spectacular paradigm, from which Heidegger claimed to break through.
(Lacoue-Labarthe *Typography* 63-96)

Western philosophy and culture shares this major characteristic of philosophical thought's affinity with visuality and each philosophy has posited itself vis-à-vis this axiomatic trait, taking their sides between an external or internal light and a mysterious, sometimes horrible shadow, night or twilight veiling the eye and hence requiring other sensory organs (prominently ear and touch) like Nietzsche's small ears or keen nostrils. However all philosophy, necessarily operating within language, is primarily a pursuit of giving form to presence and being. This pursuit of form, which is claimed to be the truth, remains inevitably specular/speculative.

The hegemony of visuality over thought became the target of extensive criticism for the radical philosophies of many such as Nietzsche, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty and they have contributed much to its crucial relation to the constitution of subject/object dichotomy and the violent operation of mastery and reification. Phenomenology of Husserl and prominently Heidegger has inspired many thinkers such as Merleau-Ponty to surpass and overthrow such binding relation between thought and visuality. However, in all the replacements and reversals we could claim that the basic relation between thought and its inclination towards form, which is basically thought's will to bring out and retrace the form of its subject matter predominantly with sight, its desire to reveal and represent its object of study has incessantly returned at each constitutive moment of their philosophizing. It would be convenient to argue that each attempt to overthrow the

domination of visuality have found itself embracing it eventually, since each time thought has denied its impulse to form its subject matter and try to replace its most prominent model, which is visuality, with something (mostly with sound or more conveniently with speech-sound that assures the immediacy of self-presence maybe better than mere sight) that is assumed to have a better access to presence and its truth, it has fallen back to the very thing it evades, that is the desire to have/give form and order to the presence and being. Neither an easy submission nor a fierce negation of this seemingly invincible inclination-to-form, (following Lacoue-Labarthe , we could say that negation in the end always ends up with sublation that is repressing the negative and circumvent it to attain the positive, the immediate access to truth) could handle it with the gentility and vigilance it necessitates. (*Typography* 43-138)

It requires an altogether different logic, an obsessive willing to inspect what cannot be contained yet what is attempted to foreclosed in each philosophical discourse and a special attentiveness to blind spots that define and limit each ocular representation from within. Such reading also necessitates a constant watchfulness against the temptation to hastily decide on whether we should leave image as thought behind. Perhaps that is why Martin Jay places poststructuralist thought and deconstruction in particular in an ambivalent locale within his schematization of ocularcentric tradition throughout the Western philosophy and argues for: “Derrida’s vigilant refusal to valorize one side of a binary opposition, such as sensible, over another, such as intelligible, meant he was just as critical of theorists who believed visual experience could provide illuminations of truth. [...] For Derrida, the yearning to do away entirely with representation- politically,

theatrically, or imagistically- turns out to be another form of the metaphysics of presence.” (Jay 506-507)

3.2.3 Deconstructive Critique of Ocularcentrism

Though it is not possible to deal properly with primarily Derridean and generally poststructural/deconstructive contribution to the critique of phallogocentrism within the scope of this study, a vague sketching of the basic points would be needed since it will provide us with a larger network of what is consolidated and what is at risk in this connection between visuality and thought. Once such web of cross-cutting interests is illustrated, we will be able to get its innate relation with Orientalism which is actually a “textual” attitude that defines the intellectual and affectional and hence very much material relationship with the territory and people of the places geographically marked as Orient. Only after such detour, we will find the chance to ask the crucial question with a different accentuation: Who operates this marking or naming (that is equivalent to say figuring and forming) in which interests?

This instantly brief annotation of persisting ocularcentrism in different guises throughout the Western philosophy has only revealed a seemingly binding relation between thought and vision up to this moment. However, the main issue at stake here is not confined to vision per se nor perception which has been perceived as its phenomenological equivalent and time to time its opposite. Yet at the same time, it is not possible to argue that “mere” phenomenological visuality is not strategically related to the heart of this matter. One must be watchful neither to reconcile visuality with nor to oppose it to

perception. Maybe it is altogether more plausible to denounce the very category of perception as such as Derrida does: “I don’t know what perception is and I don’t believe that anything like perception exists” (Qtd. in Jay 497) which aims to denounce the category of substance as biology or as a realm proper to body antedating, supporting from beneath and engendering the culturally oriented visuality. Perception as the pure un-marked site proper to biology and nature is to assign it as the origin for visuality which is always culturally informed as if such a pure state could ever been experienced. Then, what has been meant by ocularcentrism, that which sometimes Martin Jay seems to restrict solely to the phenomenal conception of visuality and its western representations such as perspective, should not be restricted to the conceptual/metaphorical abundance of light and vision within Western philosophy . Derrida traced this (meta-) metaphor/concept within the history of Western thought from the works of prominent philosophical figures such as Plato, Hegel and Heidegger to the social thinkers and “scientists” such as Rousseau and Claude Levi-Strauss. “This metaphor of shadow and light (of self-shadowing and self-hiding) [is the] founding metaphor of occidental philosophy as metaphysics ...The entire history of our philosophy is a photology.” (Qtd. in McCumber 235). Derrida’s analysis leads us into some fundamental issues invested within thought’s so-called natural relation to sight/vision.

First of all, Derridean analysis reveals that this ocular model is constitutive of Western thought and it is primarily related to its inclination towards (self) presence; towards “the copula *is*” as Said would call it. (Said, *Orientalism* 109) What is meant by presence is the ontological certainty and stability that has been granted to phenomena sustained with

intelligible form and order which is accessible to consciousness. Such notion of presence also implies the privileging temporal immediateness, as the “independence of the present moment from past and future” for the reason that “self-presence should produce itself in the undivided unity of a temporal present.” (Derrida qtd. in McCumber 236).

This double operation guarantees two things at once; one is the simplicity and clarity of the world’s out-there-ness with a certain order and form in which everything has its own place and reason no matter how sophisticated these reasons are for the mind to appreciate fully. In other words, consciousness is sustained the indisputable and fixed ground on which it can stand upright. The other which has been induced from such indisputable transparency of self-presence of things to themselves is the very self-presence of the consciousness that perceives and thinks that which lies outside of itself. In other words, consciousness gains its properness by reflecting on that which lies outside of itself. We can easily see the consequence of such double maneuver, the constitution of the world and the consciousness that situates itself external to it. Such double gesture depends on form before everything else and that is why idea has its Greek roots in *Eidos*, that means which appears. Derrida argues that

Only a form is *self-evident*, only a form has or is an *essence*, only a form *presents itself* as such. All the concepts by means of *eidos* or *morphe* have been translated or determined refer to the theme of *presence in general*. Form is presence itself. Formality is whatever aspect of the thing in general presents itself, lets itself be seen, gives itself to be thought. That metaphysical thought is a thought of Being as form, that in metaphysics thought thinks itself as a thought of form, and the formality of the form [...] is nothing but what is necessary. (Derrida, *Margins* 158)

This formality that thought pursues in order to come to itself is supposed have clarity and distinctness that allows for its recognition, it requires an intelligible pattern that would help the mind to differentiate from what lies outside of such form. Then we could argue that each attempt to recognize form (the same that equals to itself, self-presence) and to take it out from a totalized and undifferentiated ground is to produce a figuration of the world for and within mind. If form is what gives things their essence whose borders must be fixed enough to get recognized as they truly are, the contemplation of form will give mind its own form and hence the self-proximity in such circumlocution. Since form could only be retraced by reflection and such operation necessitates a degree of distance and separateness that would enable such reflection, mind could only attain form by positing itself apart from what it contemplates. Self-proximity of consciousness is paradoxically depended on this distanciation. Form that requires a separation and distance for recognition is the only way to achieve self-proximity, the presence itself. Circumlocution enables the Subject of consciousness to come to itself, to gain its immediacy to itself and the name of such circumlocution is re-presentation antedating each presentation. Metaphysics, as the constitutive moment for Subject and its Other to be born, has to erase and bypass this anterior delay and call what is already always representation as presentation. If one could catch a glimpse of such hyperbolic relation that forces logic, one could get an insight what Lacoue-Labarthe conceives of the etymological relation between theory and theater that having the same etymology in Greek:

The theater is a place where we go to see. What? What must present itself, present itself, so that there should be things present and so that we should be able to, we, ourselves, be present, and present to these present things: so that there should be gods and men, family and city, culture and wildness, war and peace, desire and hate, freedom and servility [...] For this miracle, [...] which is the very possibility that there should be a *world*, the Greeks had a word for it: *techne*. (Lacoue-Labarthe, *Theatre des Realities* 115)

Techne indicates production that is used for both art and knowledge, “knowledge in general” as proposed by Heidegger. Such conception of knowledge reveals the intrinsic relation between knowledge and representation as “In its most eminent sense, such knowledge indicates art [...], i.e. meaning the connection of knowledge to the present and to the presence, which Greeks spoke of as *mimesis*” and *mimesis* here is not confined to its Latin substitution *imitatio*. (Lacoue-Labarthe, *Theatre* 115) Following Lacoue-Labarthe we can argue that what is at stake is the immediateness and transparency that knowledge claims for and hence the very reason it posits itself superior to art, whose representative nature is condemned for being mere imitation of nature or worse, for being distortive and illusionary, that falls away from self-presence. In fact, “*mimesis* “precedes” truth in a certain sense; by destabilizing it in advance, it introduces a desire for *homoiosis* [self-adequation] and makes it possible, perhaps, to account for it, as for everything that might be its effect, up to and including what is called the subject.” (Derrida, *Typography* 27). “There appears in [onto-ideo-logy’s] contours what must be called, in all rigors, *onto-typo-logy*” which could be equally called as *mimesis*, “fictioning and (re)presentation, *Darstellung*, including –even primarily- auto- (re)presentation (Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography* 55:122). The whole metaphysical tradition beginning with Plato, “stages the programming of *non-mimetic* discourse.” (123) and efface this non-originary origin and instead “theorize” *mimesis*

restricting it to domain of visible where it will occur safely as mere imitation of its model whose form is fixed and stabile. Hence, mimesis or the mimetician will be frozen and installed, it will be theorized as the trickster playing with mirrors, “to reduce his disquieting and prodigious power by simply revealing that it rests only upon a play of mirrors and is therefore nothing – or nearly nothing: a mere sleight of hand.” (Lacoue-Labarthe 94) What is so disturbing about *Darstellung* or *mimesis* is the implication that “repetition is “originary”, representation precedes presentation. Yet, what is more dangerous is that “pure and disquieting plasticity which potentially authorizes the varying appropriation of all characters and all the roles [...], which doubtless requires a “subjective base”- a “wax”- but without any other property than an infinite malleability: *instability* itself. (Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography* 115)

What follows this effacement of instability and plasticity is the reduction of mimesis to “what Derrida calls “mimetologism”, a visual version of logocentrism.” (Jay 505) where the re-presentation or reflection is conceived by reference to its originary referent or model. By the same token, the signified, which could be rightly named as presence, gains the privileged ontological status of the referent, the origin and self-containment, the stability of form. But, indeed, “for what is reflected is split in itself and not only as an addition to itself of its image. The reflection, the image, the double, splits what it doubles.” (Derrida, *Grammatology* 36) Following such argument, we can conclude that the hegemonic conception of form or figure whose borders are visually fixed and stabilized presupposes the Idea [of Subject], or in Lacoue-Labarthe’s words *Gestalt* presupposes the Platonic determination of Being as *eidos/idea*. (*Typography* 54)

A whole network of interests is invested within such desire of form and its revealment. The desire of form and an intelligible order is first of all about rendering an immediateness of the subject to itself, to grant self-presence. The only way to grant such positive attribute of being is to stabilize its form and to give it a figure by drawing clear-cut borders between what it is and what it is not. “It is by no means obvious that self-identity presupposes that there be an other, because, to put it quite simply, the other also presupposes identical. The Hegelian formulation of the dialectical principle, according to which identity is the identity of identity and difference in fact, presupposes an original attribution of identity. As long as the speculative logic, [...] underpins the interpretation of mimesis, one can only ever move endlessly from the same to the other- under the authority of the same.” (Lacoue-Labarthe, *Art and Politics* 81). However, mimesis presupposes an impure malleability, a constitutive instability before the subject arrives, and that is why it has to be confined to *imitatio* under which it could be domesticated as a guaranteed relationship between model and copy, whose aim is to guarantee primarily the originary and stability of the model itself. Then, such metaphysical installation or figuration does always work in favor for the subject of consciousness to give way for its birth and later efface the delay and substitute it with immediateness to itself. This belated birth of subject, whose date we can never truly indicate since it does not “happen” in positive terms, is the pure trace which cannot be confined to the fundamental duality between absence and presence. So, it is about thinking of mimesis in an entirely different way: “The difficult thing is, as ever, to think an originary secondarity- or rather to think the origin as second, as initially divided and deferred, which is to say in difference.” (Lacoue-Labarthe, *Art and Politics* 84). Identity derives

from the mimetic appropriation, the Same always derivates from the Other and subject is always indebted to the object, and the will to immediate presence could never entirely get rid of this “original supplementarity, that is the very structure between *physis* and *techne*.” (Lacoue-Labarthe, *Art and Politics* 83).

Eidetic thought tries to confine representation (or mimesis) to a degraded duplication or re-production of the essences which carry the true form of substance. And again, in its disguise of Platonic reversal eidetic thought thwarts this potentially infinite operation into self-engenderment, where the paradoxical logic of mimesis or representation teleologically brought to a halt in order to stabilize an originary subject as in the case of Hegel or Heidegger and even of Lacan as Lacoue-Labarthe argues. (Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography* 137-207) But this constitutive delay never happens at once and cannot be situated only at origin, “difference is inherent in the subject, forever preventing it from being subject (or, in other words from *being* a stable essent) and essentially determining it as mortal.”(Lacoue-Labarthe 83) Figuration first violently splits then freezes the subject /object to death.

Then, what to do with this ocularcentrism, or specular/speculative logic that seems to return at each attempt to overcome it? How this mirroring device of thought could be stopped from freezing of what it reflects on for eternity? As it is not possible to do away with re-presentation, this mirror could not be shattered, nor it is ever able to reflect itself unless one reflects its own image onto another mirror, perhaps that is why Derrida argues: “If light is the element of violence, then one must contest light with a certain other light, in order to avoid the worst violence.” (*Writing*, 117) This is to ceaselessly

attempt at displacing the conceptual order of each production which is “necessarily a text, the system of a writing and of a reading which we know is ordered around its own blind spot”, then deconstruction is a vigilant attentiveness to these blind spots that authorize each text. Pointing towards this blind spot, which is “the not-seen that opens and limits visibility”, is the remedy against the totality of the reflection. Gasche calls this disruptive strategy as looking through the mirror and revealing its tain:

In this first step of the deconstruction of reflection and speculation, the mirroring is made excessive in order that it may look through the looking glass towards what makes the speculum possible. To look through the mirror is to look at its reverse side, at the dull side doubling the mirror’s specular play, in short, at the *tain* of the mirror. It is on this reverse side – on the tinfoil – that dissemination writes itself, remarks Derrida. [...] on this lining of the outside surface of reflection, one can read the “system” of the infrastructures that commands the mirror’s play and determined the angles of reflection. (Gasche 238)

But this tinfoil is only semireflexive and “the mirror’s play cannot accommodate [the structurally limitless play of undecidables] without at the same time relinquishing the telos of its operation: the actualization of the unity of all that is reasonable. [...] In all its perfection, the specular play shows itself incapable of reflecting, of sublating its limits”. (238) This is where deconstruction differs from the dominant understanding of critique:

Derrida’s criticism does not reject reflection and speculation in favor of total immediacy, nor does it presuppose an originary unity by virtue of which the traditional problems of reflexivity can be dialectically overcome in absolute reflection or speculation [...] Focusing on an analysis of those heterogeneous instances that are the “true” conditions of the possibility of reflection and speculation without being susceptible to accommodation by the intended totality, Derrida’s philosophy reinscribes, in the strict meaning of this word, reflection and speculation into what exceeds it: the play of the infrastructures. [It] takes reflection’s exigencies seriously. It is the only way to trace the limits of reflection without falling prey to the fictions on which it is based. (Gasche 239)

We have to take representation quite seriously since it renders things present before presence arrives at its place, and without which no truth or identity could ever be possible. Hence, it is strictly necessary to destabilize its modus operandi to undo its violence.

3.3 Will to Figure: Cinema and Orientalism intersects

After such long detour, if we turn back our initial concern of the locus where cinema and Orientalism intersects, the implications are quite clear. To begin with Orientalism, we have to understand that this desire to give a form by means of visualizing the Orient is the constitutive moment for Orientalism to operate, since it strictly depends on a specular/speculative dialectic where the Western Subject of representation may attain its absolute form or identity by reflecting on what is outside of itself. Unless it can guarantee the other-ness of what lies external to itself by giving it a distinct form and name, it would not attain its so-called unity of identity whose borders are always threatened by the constitutive instability. “The Orient and Occident are then not just words, but names, proper names constructing identities which become territories. It [the Orient] is a differential term which defines what is not Western. It defines the West negatively, so that the Occident as a category cannot exist without the Orient. Inversely, the Orient will then exist only from the Western vantage point. The western surveying gaze somehow constitutes itself as Western when looking at the Orient, at the other.” (Richon 242). However, what should be emphasized here is not only the Orient’s reduction to a certain type of Western representation, which brings it into the sphere of

“presence”, and self-identity. What remains crucial in such critique is Western “self-presence”, that is to say identity comes also after such figuration of the other by negating all the values and predicates he himself attributes to the other. But this coming to itself of subject by negation-sublation could never attain the moment of absolute self-reflection. Abiding the very law of endless and abysmal mimesis, engenderment of the subject as such is necessarily deferred. The violence of metaphysical figuration of the Orient as an eternal, ahistorical, statuary figure must be understood as the signal of the immense anxiety and repression for the instability that dwells within the dialectical process.

This constitutive instability is not only monstrous for the Western subject but also for his Other(s) that seeks recognition and restitution of their subjectivity. That is one of the reasons, I guess, Said avoids the task of dealing with the intrinsic relation between visuality and Orientalism, since when this relation has been carried to its end, his critique that shares some ground with humanism would get serious damage as well. However, one must be careful to note that the issue would not lose a slight bit of ethical-political importance if it would be handled by such deconstructive alertness, but for the reason that it would lose the secure ground of humanist trust on the figure of individual/ intellectual (a Gestalt figure once again frozen in front of the mirror of *theoria*). Even more so, it would introduce a persistent doubt that will go along and simultaneously disrupt the longing for recognition which is something that “one cannot not-want” as Spivak would say. (*PCCI* 28)

If the figuration of Orient by specular/spectacular tools of Western representation renders the Orient as an anachronistic and fixed tableau, one must not question whether the Orient does really change or not, but instead why the Western reflection/representation of (a totalized and unified) Orient resists and survives otherwise enormous historical changes. It has recognizable persistent characteristics that could be traced at least back to Greeks. It is better to note here that such tracking back does not presuppose Occident's self-claimed origins lying at Ancient Greek, but points to the mimetic rivalry between post-renaissance West and a certain installation of ancient Greece. Lacoue-Labarthe cites from Pericles with a literal translation: "We love the beautiful with frugality and knowledge without softness". For the second part of the sentence Hannah Arendt offers: "We philosophize without the barbarian vice of softness." (Qtd in *Art and Politics* 97-98). Lacoue-Labarthe argues that "softness" indicates surely "the supreme barbarian vice, i.e., the Oriental vice." Such dictum clearly demonstrates that the Greek Polis is engendered, given self-birth by the negation of what has been attributed to the Oriental vices: the lavish luxury in arts and softness in thought.

The extravagance and material abundance on one hand, the ambiguity and metaphoricity of Oriental thought lacking the firmness and formality of proper (Western) thought together with feminization and servitude (which could be very well disguised under the name of "hospitality" in the modern context as we can see in the movie *Hamam*) on the other are easily recognizable traits through out the whole Western oeuvre of arts and philosophy, constituting a common model shared by Orientalist painting, travel literature and popular cinema.

Likewise, Richon argues for the Aristotelian usage of the concept-name “despot”, which originally designates the domestic mastery of Greek male citizen over his slaves and women, for Oriental governments where “people are said to be slaves by nature. It follows, therefore, that the Greek has a right to command the barbarian, just as the political is superior to domestic.” (Richon 253) One should remember the Western obsession with Oriental despots and their seemingly infinite power over his subjects that are a current theme of paintings and literature, which later becomes a powerful theme for cinema - i.e. Rudolph Valentino’s series of *Sheik*. While the despot is seemingly a ridiculous but horrible figure that threatens the sacred democratic values, it appeals to sexual phantasms of Western phallogocentrism with all the material abundance and polygamous sexuality he seems to enjoy.

Another common characteristic is the double gesture of staging the Orient either in the so-called documentary style where the immediacy of image is attempted to get a reality effect, or else in a pompously fictional manner where the Orient becomes the semi-mythological, almost surreal site where mysterious masquerade, unleashed eroticism and even sometimes a romantic revival of most rigorous Western values takes over. As Said brilliantly exposes in works of major Orientalist scholars, this type of hyper realism is obsessed with collecting and relating overwhelming data about the ways the Orient exist, to present a total picture of Orient for the reader with rich details and anecdotes. Such representative mode claims to have transparency of immediate observation and actual experience and hence it stays away from narrative techniques that reveal fictional quality. One of the correlatives of this literal mise-en-scene is, as Richon argues,

nineteenth century photography, “that has been denied the status of image: It is not picturesque, it is not a picture. A negation which gives to the photograph the status of a pure trace, an indexical fragment, a metonymical clue brought back to the mother country, where it could be endowed with metaphorical value: this is the Orient, bare, untouched and deserted.” (255) The argument above is equally plausible for the late nineteenth century invention of cinematography and such ruse of transparency still holds its heyday for mainstream photography/cinematography that is extensively used by news media and ethnographic documentaries.

In the second case, Orient becomes a pre-historical fairy locus that preserves the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian origins of the mighty Western civilization, waiting patiently for the pilgrim to unveil its most intimate secrets and hence host the rejuvenation of the Western subject. The romantic aesthetization of Orient in the works of Goethe and Flaubert are only two examples that can be given. Such romantic aesthetization and mystification of Orient should also be considered with the reaction against the violent exposition of the world picture with Enlightenment that gave way to a re-valuation of what holds adversary value: since Orient belongs to night, to evading mysteries, the play site of spirituality and sensuality and holds the origins of “man” at its reserve, it becomes the perfect site for the Western traveler to re-discover himself by losing himself. Artists like Delacroix “found in the Orient a new myth of origin: a new model in an older civilization [...] the Orient becomes like an exaggerated Italy.[...] All these references to an immutable past, frozen in the eternity of marble-like figures, build up representations of an harmonious beginning.” (Richon 248)

One can sense the proximity between these seemingly two opposite textual attitudes towards the Orient. The anthropologizing attitude of the former and the mummifying mystification of the latter do share the common presupposition that the Orient “is” only and only for the Western subject to find his own origins, which he left behind thousands of years ago. “A standard constructing an idealization: a view of the Orient as an archaeological field; a **museum in nature, nature as a museum** offered to Western scrutiny.” (Emphasis mine, Richon 255). Then, Orient serves as the mythical foundation of Western culture, an eternal natural museum that reserves the origins of Western civilization for the Western spectator. Considering this heavy burden, it comes no surprise that Orient was a real disappointment for these artists who traveled far enough to cross Italy in pursuit of direct observation of Oriental miracles. They have to retreat to their initial pictorial models that they have acquired in motherland as it was difficult to find a match equivalent to the extravagances of their imaginary.

The mythical representation of Orient in both forms, either as an uncontaminated state of nature where the prehistorical man lives or as a great outdoor museum where the beauties and vices of great antiquity waits for their true proprietor, provides the Western imaginary the coordinates of its origins and the chance to constitute itself by a movement of sublation, where the origins are repressed and incorporated to be exceeded. “References to antiquity, to an harmonious origin, become the mark of a beginning which is unlikely to be fully rediscovered, just as it is to be forgotten. The origin is like a vanishing point and consists of the forgetting of the negation which is constitutive of its very existence” (Richon 245). And the notion of origin, by definition, necessitates a precise stability, almost a punctual existence that is incapable of motion so that it may

enable perceiving movement and change, which are the two characteristic virtues attributed to West. However, such notion of movement necessitates static conceptions of both terms so that it would enable the very measurement of that movement. With this double movement, West appropriates itself.

Orient becomes the scenery of ancient memories or the grotesque stage of frenzy dreams and as dreams and memories do, it primarily informs us about the dreamer not the dream itself. Just like memories, Orient does not refer to an objective past that memory draws its content, but to an “originary deformation which is the only formation which informs us about the past” (Richon 246). Just like dreams whose form “is that of a de-formation that dissimulates its deformative character by creating a representational façade,” Orientalist representation achieves the persuading effect of transparent presentation of its object matter. “‘Darstellung’ thus becomes one of the means by which the dream achieves its goal of ‘Entstellung’ [distortion]” (Weber, 79). That is why Orientalist clichés cannot be simply fought by factual corrections as dissimulation or deformation is the very engine of Orientalist representation.

Orient as the vanishing point of Western perspective, passively returns the gaze and consolidates the superimposition between the monocular and un-blinking eye (“I”) of the representation and the spectator.

Perhaps that is why cinema, from its very beginnings, was fascinated by the images of Oriental. Camera, abiding the renaissance rules of perspective and depth more than proving their adequateness to reality, provided a panoramic and monocular vision and a

single point of view for the spectator to be identified with. Preceding the invention of camera and birth of cinema , the nineteenth century panoptical machines such as panorama (1792) and diorama (1823), as Orr argued, offered the spectator a virtual spatial and temporal mobility, whose success was dependent on the relative immobility of spectators and the creation of illusion of unmediated referentiality. (Orr 23) These protocinematic devices do share the sheer exhibitionism and persuasive pseudo mobilization with the newly emerging tourism industry and world fairs that display exotic products and freaks like Hottentot's Venus thanks to full-fledge colonialism. Perhaps it is plausible to argue together with Tom Gunning and Orr that early filmmaking, before the arrival of conventional narrative, was "closer to the bold visual display of the fairground attraction than it was to a storytelling form, [...] and this form of spectacle display did not disappear when narrative film became more dominant", but rather goes underground as a component of narrative films.(Orr 89)This increasing mobility that reached its apex with the invention of cinema rendered the temporal and spatial mastery over the world enjoyed by the spectator, who has been paradoxically immobilized in front of the screen. Such imaginary mastery of the world as picture should be thought in relation to the real colonial expeditions that is enabled and fueled by (also, without any contradiction, enables and fuels) this scopophilia. As Jean-Louis Comolli argues, "if the social machine manufactures representations, it also manufactures *itself* from representations." (Comolli 121).

Comolli also speaks of a frenzy of the visible beginning with late nineteenth century, one of whose effects is "of something of a geographical extension of the field of the visible and the representable: by journies, explorations, colonisations, the whole world

becomes visible at the same time it becomes appropriatable.” (123) Comolli argues that the technological innovations such as sound, deep focus and color were not mere technological innovations per se, but the very renewal and transformation of what formerly renaissance perspectives and humanist ocularcentrism alone managed to grasp: the analogical representation, the perfection of a structurally deficient verisimilitude, “*the perfectionment and redefinition of the impression of reality.*” (132) Such perfection of impression of reality, which indeed required the replacement of codes of reality already inscribed within image, aims “to reduce the gap which the “yes-I-know/but-all-the-same” has to fill.” (133) However, such gap is irreducible and always requires a certain degree of disavowal from the spectator, an inevitable “process of repression of which the otherness of film to the real is the object” from the spectator. (Comolli 135).

Comolli argues:

The most analogical representation of the world is still not, is never, its reduplication. Analogical representation is a false repetition, staggered, disphased, deferred and different; but it produces effects of repetition analogy which imply the disavowal (or the repression) of these differences and which thus make of the desire for identity, identification, recognition, of the desire for the same, one of the principal driving forces of analogical figuration.(Comolli, 138)

Comolli’s remark is of great value since he goes right through the heart of cinematic apparatus and exposes its intrinsic relation with the ideological without reducing neither the cinematic medium to its mere content nor the notion of ideology to the antonym of truth. Rather he points to the cinematic unthought which limits and enables its working towards the simultaneity and immediateness of the category of realism. What Richon argues for specular realism in Orientalist academic painting holds value for cinema as well: “The ideological message is by no means educed to the ‘content’ of

the image, but is the effect of the means of representation and signification at work.”

(Richon 246)

Cinema, more than any other visual medium preceding it, blurs, yet in such blur conserves the distinction between the real and its impression. “The whole edifice of cinematic representation finds itself affected with a fundamental lack: the negative index, the restriction the disavowal of which is the symptom and which it tries to fill while at the same time displaying it. [...] It is what resists cinematic representation, limiting it on all sides and from within, which constitutes equally its force; what makes it falter what makes it go.” (Comolli 141) This structuring disillusion, this present index of an absence, of the lack of another image, as Comolli calls it, is, at the same time, the strength of cinema to work against the completing, reassuring representations of ideology and this strength of disillusion is needed if “cinematic representation is to do something other than pile visible over visible, if it is, in certain rare flashes, to produce in our sight the very blindness which is at the heart of this visible.” (141). If cinema is allowed to reveal its own limit, if it is allowed to point to its blind spot that constitutes the very illusion of its verisimilitude to immediacy, then it would launch the most effective and perhaps the only critique of its own. For that critique to be possible, it must be vigilant and persistent, most of the times situational and strategic, even counterfeit to undo cinema from within.

Perhaps it was this persuasive claim to transparency of cinema based on the strength of visuality has provided the perfect locus for Orientalist discourse to adjust and reform accordingly to the coming century. What Mary Ann Doane argues for the construction

of blackness in late nineteenth century West seems to hold truth for Orientalism as well: “whether in the colonial discourse of photography, [...], or the aesthetic languages of the nineteenth century, the hyperbolic sexualization of blackness is presented within a visual framework; it is a function of ‘seeing’ as an epistemological guarantee- Nana’s blackness emerges to the surface so that it can be seen and verified. It is not surprising, therefore, that the cinema as an institution would embrace the colonialist project and reinscribe its terms within its uniquely optical narrative logic.” (450) If difference is already embedded within Western understanding of visibility as perceiving distinct form, then the ontological /epistemological difference of Oriental could be articulated best in visual terms and cinema would be a perfect medium to perform it.

By prosthetically extending human perception, the apparatus grants the spectator the illusory ubiquity of the “all-perceiving subject” enjoying an exhilarating sense of visual power. From the Diorama, the Panorama, and the Cosmorama up through NatureMax, the cinema has amplified and mobilized the virtual gaze of photography, bringing past into present, distant to near, [...] affirming the European spectator’s sense of power while turning the colonies into spectacle for the metropole’s voyeuristic gaze. (Shohat 103-104)

Cinema, whose birth coincided with heyday of imperialism and basic conventions were settled by the leading colonizing nations of West, inevitably descended and mobilized the imperial ideals and desires that were already absorbed by the majority thanks to popular fictions, tales of expeditions, government sponsored patriotism together with myths of promised lands in the colonies attracting the urban poor. Cinema takes over the novels and newspapers’ function to re-adjust coordinates of time and space and to suture a meaningful narrative out of history to be fulfilled for the reader. “The cinema, as the world’s storyteller par excellence, was ideally suited to relay the projected

narratives of nations and empires.” (Shohat 101) Other than this well-known function of creating national identity through narrative, cinematic image also served for ethnography and anthropology to bring home undisputable records that served evidence for their scientific claims.

As the product of both science and mass culture, cinema combined traveling knowledge with traveling spectacles, conveying a view of the “world itself as an exhibition.” The study of hypersexualized “other” in scientific discourse was paralleled by the cinema’s scopophilic display of aliens as spectacle. (Shohat 108)

Cinema, informed with the long traditions of art such as architecture, literature, painting and theater to fuse and utilize their effects in its singular way, has created the greatest spectacle ever with the most persuasive approximation to reality. Considering this advantageous position with the singular capacity of photographic reproduction of time and space, it becomes no surprise that cinema invoked much enthusiasm for the imperial states and later totalitarian regimes such Nazi Germany to cement unified national identity and doctrine. Syberberg, even argues that cinema is the perfect match for the total work of art (*Gesamtkuntswerk*) which was primarily a political-aesthetic project whose lineage could be traced back to the Greek “dream of the City as work of art” if we follow Lacoue-Labarthe on that matter.(*Art and Politics* 64) The total work of art is the unified and absolute art form that “should be a celebration of the national community, it should be the religion.” Precisely at this point, Syberberg argues that Hitler’s enthusiasm with film medium was more than instrumental; his whole project was essentially cinematic which makes him the “greatest film-maker of all time” (qtd. in Lacoue-Labarthe, *Art and Politics* 64-66) since he initiated the most extravagant

spectacle that has been witnessed ever with carnivalesque mobilization of masses and the most theatrical stage of industrialized genocide. Early cinema reveals a close affinity with emerging war technologies like aerials, exhibitionism of world fairs, desire to make visible of science and medicals for what remained hitherto invisible and fascination with accelerating mobility that has been primarily fueled by imperial expansion. (Virilio 11-29) In close relation and even collaboration with those other fields, cinema, right from its beginnings, was a spatio-temporal rearticulation of the world in preeminently visual terms. This visual mastery meant at the same time spatio-temporal mastery and immense mobility across time and space which has paradoxically required immobilization and fixation of spectator. "Cinema thus became the epistemological mediator between the cultural space of the Western spectator and that of the cultures represented on the screen, linking separate spaces and figurally separate temporalities in a single moment of exposure." (Shohat 93)

As we have seen, cinema and Orientalism share the ocularcentric common ground that introduces difference always in terms of same. For cinema, it operates, first of all, on the level of filmic experience that disavows the difference of repetition or representation to substitute it with an immediate reciprocity to reality. Secondly, in its historically Western dominant form, cinema was always fascinated with the exhibition and representation of Oriental figure to a principally Western audience this time with a hyper difference from the Western norm. Such figuration of radical difference is naturalized and made transparent by the disavowal of re-presentational nature of the spectacle. Visuality served the perfect means to engender such proximity to reality thanks to the Western metaphysics that conceives presence and thought through a specular-

speculative logic which engenders and stabilizes the position of sovereign Subject and his clear-cut identity.

On the other hand, this self-engenderment and stabilization of Subject via dialectics of mirroring cannot be guaranteed at once, since the success of operation depends on the disavowal of anteriority, instability and repetition that in fact constitutes the very identity and stability. Representation is the only means to present oneself thus it cannot be simply effaced. It persists as the remainder of primary repetition and hence preserves the risk of loss of Subject, that is why representation has to be constantly mastered and disciplined by such repressive logic.

Thus, repetition and citation is the last common characteristics that have been shared by both. Orientalism has piled a massive archive of representations that each disciple/enthusiast may first refer, then re-adjust and contribute to. This discursive signification process that circulates by repetition and adoption, before everything else, points to the primary repetitive frame from which Orientalist knowledge and art establishes its object. At the same time, it refers to a hidden anxiety to sustain the intelligibility and predictability of the form of its subject matter that simultaneously grants stability and authority to the investigating subject. Repetition is necessary to relieve anxiety and to sustain the representational configuration that assigns sovereignty and mastery to Western Subject vis-à-vis the Oriental object. Yet, at the same time, repetition, by definition, carries the risk of opening these representational schemata to destabilization and alteration especially when it is carried to its limit and exposed as such.

Likewise, cinema has inherited and adopted much of its techniques from older arts, for instance narrative styles and themes from novel and theater, inspiration for light, color and composition from painting and such inspirations came along with already circulating models for representing race and geography. Besides this exchange, circulation and adaptation between cinema and other forms of art, cinema also articulated a vast amount of reference of its own. Genre film perfectly illustrates cinema's reliance on citation and repetition. Genre's success depends on the reiterability of certain visual narrative elements and the ability to reproduce and enhance the pleasure attached to these elements. Keeping in mind the common characteristics of repetition and citationality that film medium and phallogocentrism as in its specific instance of Orientalism share, it comes no surprise that the most persistent and influencing film genres were prominently about mastering the Other that invoked ambivalent feelings of fascination and fear for the Western Subject. While Westerns and Oriental staged travel adventures (from *Lawrence of Arabia* and *the Raiders of the Lost Ark* to the upcoming *Hidalgo*) reflect explicit expressions of Western hostility and oversimplification of other cultures, in genres like science fiction and horror, the fascination and fear of Western Subject with his other(s) becomes encrypted, displaced and amplified in encounters with imaginary creatures. A vast literature has been devoted to the manifestations of White male anxiety against the sexual and racial difference and how such anxiety signs and grants the perversive pleasures found in these films. For instance, studies on King Kong films reveals that fear of hypersexualized black male and possibility of miscegenation together with projections of rapist fantasy were the primary sources of attraction. (Shoat & Stam 90-1,106)

To sum up, where cinema and Orientalism intersects, we witness a visual narrative that depends primarily on the epistemological and ontological distinction set between East and West and such distinction has been inaugurated principally in visual terms. In most films taken place in Orient, even if we leave aside the attribution of movement and progression singularly to Western protagonists and the centralization of film's concern solely around Western-oriented issues and desires such as self-actualization based on individual performance, sexual maturation and entrepreneurial abilities, the visual regime and the handling of camera posits the spectator to be identified with protagonist's point of view that depicts the Orient as a tableau.

Moreover, the filmic representation of Orient is indebted to prior Orientalist conventions and they demonstrate a persistent and repetitious employment of these conventions throughout the history of cinema.

3.4 *Hamam* and *Harem Suare*: The Delayed pleasures of Seeing the Other

If we have a closer look at *Hamam* and *Harem Suare*, we may detect certain significant continuities with Orientalist tradition of representation. However, we must note that both films, at the same time, carry out considerable disruptions that transgress the given borders of conventional Orientalist framework. Yet, whether such transgressive refigurations of Orient do succeed to seriously question and destabilize the established

configuration that install Orient primarily as an anachronistic site of fantasy vis-à-vis the Western Subject deserves more thoughtful discussion. As we will see later, the promise of sexual transgression and a reevaluation of Orient on the basis of its aesthetic and moral virtues may not suffice to break away with the binary structure of Orientalism whose initial violence starts with an ontological distinction that posits Orient as the site and object of Western desires to know, penetrate and master the other.

As mentioned earlier, both films employ a stylistic aesthetization of Orient with employment of diffuse lightning, sensual colors and carefully chosen settings that will suit to the portrayal of Orient in its difference to West. In *Hamam*, cross-cutting scenes back to Italy are visually distinguished with more focused sight, with more luminosity contrary to the dim and soft quality of light sustained by low key lightning that dominates the film's Oriental atmosphere. While camera is posited conventionally to depict Francesco's house in Italy largely on a perpendicular axis that gives an easy orientation to the spectator, both indoor and outdoor scenes in Istanbul are disorienting. Camera movements support the disorienting and intimately interconnected architecture of the house that has been consisted of many doors and interconnections to its outside like the communicative front window, like the secret passage way to the bathhouse. Spectator lost himself and his private sphere together with Francesco in this warm and intimately connected house and neighborhood. Likewise, both Francesco's and his wife, Martha's wandering through the city of Istanbul was dazzling since Istanbul was depicted as consist of narrow streets and passageways that lead to desecrated buildings with apparently open doors still preserving the most personal items of the former resident and tangled streets get Francesco to mysterious Turkish Bathhouses.

Likewise, the neighborhood that Francesco dwells with Turkish family seems to have no clear distinction between public and private domains. The street place becomes the locus for the circumcision feast and the carnivalesque contribution of people with dances and abundant food. Istanbul seems to offer to the traveler a fairy place where there remains no actual distinction between inside and outside, between public and private, and between past and present where all difference is melted into an extensive domesticity and an ever-present that claims the secrets of past. While, another Istanbul with busy streets and huge modern buildings is hinted with a panoramic view from the office of the mysterious and powerful businesswomen, this (already-happened) version of Istanbul has been strongly denied access to vision with an implicit criticism of the corporate capitalism, which has been conveyed within the narrative via neighborhood's resistance to evacuation (which, surprisingly inaugurated by an Italian not a native resident). Questioning the authenticity of this portrayal of Istanbul will be inevitably misled, as it is an enormously complex city that inhabits innumerable different architectural facades and ways of living like any other big city in the world. However, why specifically "this" Istanbul is chosen to be portrayed as "the" Istanbul and is put into opposition with a high-urban and corporate Istanbul is worth questioning. Why specifically this aesthetization is found more suitable to narrate the story of an Italian man who discovers himself in Orient? Why this staging is necessary? The bitter mark of Francesco's wife could be useful to partially illustrate this issue: "No, don't tell me you care for these people and this place. I know you very well, you only care for yourself.[...] You have come here because you could never dare doing the things you found the chance to do here back in Rome." (*Hamam*) The core of the story, which is Francesco's sexual awakening, required "another" kind of place where he would find the

chance to temporarily forget his former and partially castrated (by the powerful femininity figure of his wife) identity to re-discover his authentic being. This highly stylized visual representation of Istanbul was strictly necessary for the narrative to move and persuade the spectator. So, like Francesco, spectator may playfully venture through the mysteries of Orient and unveil its hidden treasures that promise themselves to the Western protagonist. Hence, the alleged resistance of Orient to proper Western vision that has been carried out by soft focus, melting colors, bewildering setting and veiling themes such as steam helps heightening the delayed pleasure of seeing. The climax scene where Martha peeps at her husband and his lover's kisses and the choice of poster image of the couple through the blurring steam exposes the success of such strategy.

Likewise, in *Harem Suare*, we are allowed to enter one of the most enigmatic and fantasmatic Oriental spaces, the harem. This time, the story takes place at the early twentieth century Istanbul, mostly within the walls of Yıldız Palace. Harem, again contrary to the cold and metallic colors of the train station scenes in Italy, is depicted with rich and melting colors in amber and gold tones. The interior is again disorienting with numerous doors, blinds, screens, and passageways to secret rooms that will open to well-calculated picturesque mise-en-scenes of beautiful concubines with rich costumes. Camera again invites the spectator to steal a glance of the naked bodies of concubines in bathhouse, the joyous nights with food and music, terrible secrets and most intimate moments between lovers while it was arching through numerous obstacles like blinds, veils, texture and obscure light. *Harem Suare*, even more gloriously than *Hamam*, depicts Orient as a mysterious, masquerading site that promotes both excessive joys of

life and danger, tragedy and death. Both films construct a visually appealing, sensual and mysterious Orient for the spectator and protagonist to be unveiled.

Another significant point is that *Harem Suare* employs pictorial and narrative references from Orientalist tradition. One might clearly see the influence of Orientalist painting on mise-en-scenes of bathhouse and collective compositions of concubines in harem.

Indeed, Özpetek, in an interview, mentions how he had made an extensive research on harem before shooting the film, and it is plausible to argue that a considerable amount of his references were no doubt famous Orientalist paintings, fictitious biographies of sultans and favorites together with more contemporary studies on the social life of harem. This extensive research might also have inspired the director of his progressive and reformist moments for depicting harem as a complex socio-economic institution where women are actively contesting political power instead of depicted as passive pleasure slaves of Sultan. Though less significant, *Hamam* do share narrative and visual themes with the Orientalist tradition. The traveler who has dissatisfactions and problems in his homeland and discovers the sensualities of Orient with transgressive sexual encounters is a known theme in travel literature. In short, both films cite and recycle some visual narrative elements that they borrow from the extensive Orientalist oeuvre when dealing with the Orient.

Both films call yearning for an authentic orient that is on the brink of getting lost. In *Hamam*, an Istanbul as the lively reserve of traditional social affiliations and locales such as bathhouses, and neighborhood “*kahve*”s is favored and presented as the authentic Istanbul opposed to the emerging post-industrial giant metropolis. Likewise, in

Harem Suare, the absolution of harem by Turkish revolutionaries is depicted as tragically traumatic. Safiye and Nadir gets lost under the dense fog when they finally leave harem and take a walk in Istanbul. Although, both instances can be taken equally as sound critiques of the hidden patriarchy and cruelty of modernization, the naïve affirmation of the past carried out by romantic aesthetization vis-à-vis the upcoming wave of modernity is suspicious. It is suspicious because it attributes an essence and authenticity to Orient that should not be violated by change, as if these same structures belong to past are not themselves productions of a complex historical political articulation. Behind such yearning is the desire to grant an essence and identity to Orient in its difference from the West. And when the roles are distributed accordingly, Orient becomes confined to being a stage for the Western subject to move and change.

In both films, camera identifies with and primarily tells the story of Western protagonists who seek social success, power and sexual fulfillment in Orient (Both protagonists are Italians; Safiye is indeed an Italian who had been sold by her parents to slave traders. Besides both roles are played by Europeans, a fact which remains peripheral to the filmic reality itself but has been surely noticed and articulated by the spectator). Hence, the essentializing and aesthetization of Orient as principally belonging to some other time and place is not without interest. Yearning for the loss of an essential orient is indeed a yearning for the loss of subject who has gained his own essence and identity in this very difference. In both films, the actual dissolution of Orient or its mere threat accompanies the partial or complete dissolution of identity of protagonists. In *Hamam*, Francesco is violently killed by hired gangsters for his leading role in the collective resistance to evacuation. Though, such evacuation have not taken

place, since his wife takes over the guardian role of bathhouse and the neighborhood, it still plausible to argue that Francesco's death is due to the threat of Orient becoming westernized and hence losing its essential traits. Again, in *Harem Suare*, both Safiye, the concubine and Nadir, the eunuch is going through tragic times following the first important wake of modernization in Ottoman Empire. Orient, that sustained the very movement and change for the protagonists by being a static background, leads them into void by gaining movement itself. Both locales, chosen for the film setting, provide the timeless atmosphere where layers of time are echoing each other and connecting protagonists to their predecessors. Both places are represented as a receptacle of distant memories of older generations whose stories and tragedies echoing the protagonists. As the peripheral stories are revealed by parallel editing and voice-over, the spectator may easily perceive the thematic resemblances between the main plot and the subplot of past characters. The doubling of stories implies a kind of eternal repetition that can be attributed to both locales. In sum, both films invoke nostalgia for an authentic Orient that is on the brink of death and represents the Orient as essentially belonging to past, as somewhere that should stand eternally as it is. Such nostalgia that operates through the exaltation of Orient as a mysterious and sensual locale that should be discovered petrifies it in front of the mirror of spectacle for the viewer to contemplate its mummified beauty.

Then again, Orient becomes a tableau, a pure spectacle that has been raised for the spectator and protagonist to reflect and enjoy what has been hitherto restricted from themselves. Besides, this sacred eternity of Orient, which should not be violated, soothes the subject and relieves the anxiety of death. Richon argues for academic

Orientalist paintings: “The petrified bodies of academic painting and the visibility achieved by specular realism consolidate the belief against an anguish of destruction which would amount to the annihilation of specular representation: the decomposition of the body in death.” Yet, a paradox emerges, as Richon says, “in this sense the obsession of specular realism to make things “true to life” can be taken as a negation: in order to look live according to the canon of verisimilitude, bodies are erected into petrified poses and are made to resemble marble-like figures, marble being the metaphor for a timeless, that is lifeless substance.” (Richon 247-8). The aesthetization of an eternally same Orient where different layers of time reverberate helps the subject to soothe and relieve the feelings associated with death. Francesco’s wife, at the final scenes, mentions an Istanbul breeze that takes away her sadness and melancholia with the cigarette-holder that belongs to Anita, Francesco’s deceased aunt, in her hands. Istanbul becomes a place where the deceased may inhabit without disquieting the living. Francesco’s wife inherits Francesco and his aunt’s mission to keep the bathhouse and their fascination with Orient. A child is given Francesco’s name, his place is substituted with his wife and bathhouse keeps its existence, everything repeats and hence stays the same.

The marble statue at the center of bathhouse, that camera exposes for several times, is swallowed by a shadow following Francesco’s murder. The stillness of the figure is disturbed by the violence of death and merges into darkness. The change, even the most radical one that is death is denied in/to Orient. Such negation is possible only by fixing the Orient eternally, by denying it the change. That which cannot die cannot be alive either, thus it is not altogether incongruous to argue that Orient is itself figured as a dead place. Following the groundbreaking terminology of Abraham and Torok , we can argue

that Orient/al is encrypted within Western Subject and raises as an “exquisite corpse” that neither truly alive nor dead, with which the subject can disavow death and may sustain the rigid boundaries of his identity. (Abraham and Torok 107-138)

Such fixation is closely related to the attribution of origin to the Orient. Francesco’s trip to Istanbul is initially a recovery of his own past via his aunt’s hitherto remained unknown life and her reasons to move to Istanbul. There, he discovers via his aunt’s letters about his own history and he inspires from her the idea to run the bathhouse. Similarly, the old Italian lady in *Harem Suare*, being a former concubine of the last harem of Ottoman Empire, revisits her glorious past in Orient and shares it with the young lady in the train station. In both films, Orient is constructed as an origin, which is itself out of time and should remain so, from where the subject is engendered. That gives another explanation why the Orient is petrified and invokes nostalgia for its loss. In both films, the protagonist should actually venture through this site of origin as in *Hamam*, or as in *Hamam Suare* to recall it out of distant memories of past in order to be able to narrate him/herself. But for the narration to be possible, Orient itself must be muted, or effaced in a certain way to provide the monumental and picturesque setting required for the narrative to gain its dramatic strength.

Keeping in mind these visual narrative themes and forms that the two films share with Orientalism, would that be enough to claim those films are emancipated from the phallogocentric ideology by simply calling the director’s indigenous identity? First of all, one must be attentive to the complex process of filmmaking where the director/scriptwriter has to negotiate with institutions and cultural expectations that

insert varying degrees of influence on filmmaker's choices. Ferzan Özpetek's aforesaid films are the end product of a complex process where producers, art directors, distributors and many more contribute to the overall form. As films are not productions solely of directors/authors, they are open to different discursive formations that are already operating within the society. Since directors are again members of society that they are living in, they are again subject to hegemonic discourses that write themselves under the sign and authority of Subject.

Subject is, indeed the effect of the discourses inscribing him down, not the cause of them. Certainly, we deal here with the authorial signature not the person who has been called as "Ferzan Özpetek", since his signature bears the mark of cross-cutting and intersecting discourses that precede him. Since the subject is born into language that both precede him and that will subsist long after he perishes, all actions that we attribute to him are indeed the subject-effects of diverse discursive formations.

To consider the representation of Orient in those films as truth-speaking on the basis of director's ethnicity is a common symptom of (primarily) Western audience. As many audience responses do reveal, those films also operate as a touristic invitation to Istanbul. Although Özpetek's stylized visual regime and non-linear narrative techniques dismiss documentaristic realism and emphasizes the fictional qualities, it does not suffice to break the audience's tendency to substitute fiction with transparency and immediacy of truth especially when there is already a tradition to depict Orient as a fantasmatic and anachronistic space. As we have mentioned earlier, brute realism and

romantic aesthetization are the two seemingly opposing manifestations of the same ambivalence of anxiety and desire.

Although there are important moments of transgression and implicit criticism within both films directed to the common Western imaginary that equates Oriental with the grotesque, the revaluation of Orient via fancy aesthetization on the merits of mysteriousness, sensuality and as site of ancient origin unfortunately repeats and consolidates the Orientalist frame, that primarily foregrounds Orient as the object and static background of/for the Western subject. To sum up, we can argue that both films fit into the Orientalist scheme and reproduce its basic assumptions in an admittedly more flexible way. Their aesthetic and narrative power comes from their ability to meet the Western desires and fantasies that are already in play within Orientalist representations. Both films are prominently based on more or less classical narrative structures that demand transparency and an unquestioned commitment to the filmic reality from the spectator. This adherence to story telling function of film strengthens the transparency and immediateness of representation that is an almost inevitable quality of film image as Comolli's arguments on the disavowal of spectator reveals. Nevertheless, different from cinematic apparatus theory's claim that spectator takes the filmic events for real ones and cinema being an ideological illusion of truth, an argument which depends on a clear distinction between film fiction and reality; it is plausible to argue with Tom Gunning that: "whether we watch *The Wizard of Oz* or *Salt of the Earth*, we experience a similar absorption in the world of the fiction, an involvement with the events enacted and the characters portrayed. Although the use of stylized sets and unusual color schemes and star performances in the one film contrasts with the location shooting and use of many

non-professional performers on the other, the cutting, composition, and creation of a dramatic continuity in both films solicits our emotional and imaginary investment in the story as it unfolds on the screen.” (Gunning 52)

Hence, a cinema that does not think upon itself, that does not attempt to disrupt the totalizing effect of its own power by pointing towards the discontinuities and blind spots that are generated by its representative frame, results in the total immersion of image to its object. It is not surprising that audience, although very well aware of the fictional/ representational quality of films, disavows such inevitable gap between the represented and representation and substitutes Istanbul with its image on both films. Such desire for immediateness of representation of Orient is also fortified by the ethnic identity of the director. For the reason that he is himself an Oriental, his portrayal of Orient gains double naturalization and transparency, since his cinema gains the power to represent a non-Western culture on its behalf. We can see how an unproblematic submission to essentialist thought and identity politics is closely related to the interested claim of immediacy of truth. By attributing to the native informant (who is already subject to the dominant Western discourse by appropriating its means of representation and whose enunciation is not free from its effects) the alleged right to represent himself, Western discourse validates itself as truth. Since the Orient proper comes into being by being refracted and reflected on the mirror of Western representation and such marking requires and just as enables the position for the Western subject, all the visual narrative conventions are already there before even the director/ scriptwriter starts scribbling his first ideas. Özpetek is truly a talented and creative director who has succeeded to develop a distinct filmic style of his own with a

subtle camerawork and visuality both lucid and mysterious. He must be also respectably given credit for his deliberate representative politics that grants sympathetic access to marginalized identities such as homosexuals, immigrants and taboo issues such as miscegenation between different races. Nonetheless, his attempt to reverse the binary couple of East and West by re-valuing and replacing the former with the latter operates essentially within an Orientalist frame whose structure cannot be shattered by simple turnarounds. Both films give us an insight into how the Western discursive formations stamp and mark from within even the radical and indigenous attempts of representing the Orient via letting the native informant speak. By letting him/her speak, the violent operation of inscribing the Orient as an eternal figuration, as being the other site persists. Such operation is a perfect instance of how Orient is “Orientalized” as Said subtly formulates. (*Orientalism* 49-73)

These films also enable a striking critique of Said’s reliance on the model/figure of critical intellectual whose condition is characterized as the homelessness as home, as the wanderer who is forcefully situated at the borders between different cultures from where he can have the privileged critical insight on both cultures. As Özpetek’s oeuvre signifies, such ambiguous cultural identity of intellectual does not essentially guarantee an ever-ready vigilance to discursive inscriptions at play in cultural productions. If different cultures compete for representation and gain circularity on the basis of their asymmetrical forces, then the very frame through which intellectual renders his/her critique will be structured on unequal basis of forces that will grant indisputable advantage to the hegemonic cultural formations. Before rushing to celebrate the transgressive moments that the films promote and certainly do have, one

must constantly turn around the question what economy enables their enunciation and primarily for whom.

In the next chapter, I will go through what I have left out so far. Sound-speech is the essential part of film as it is actually an audiovisual medium and it also constitutes one of the founding pillars of “self-presence” that Western metaphysics foregrounds. A discussion around the function of sound as speech and voice-over in two films will be initiated to relate its significance to the question whether the Other “can speak”, or to put it more adequately: Who speaks to whom?

4 THE VOICE OF THE OTHER

Both *Harem Suare* and *Hamam* uses frequent voice-over and musical score to connect interdependent and thematically analogous events of plot that are scattered between past and present, between East and West. Such transition is supported with the juxtaposition of scenes disguised with smooth camera tracking in horizontal or vertical axis between different filmic spatio-temporalities such as the long establishing shot following the metallic blue panel up through to reach the golden-amber opera balcony of Yıldız Palace at the beginning of *Harem Suare*. But mostly, voice over is employed to actualize spatio-temporal transitions and to create a resonance between past events and filmic present. In *Hamam*, we observe the voice-over takes up the mission to communicate Francesco's aunt's story (that are actually written on her letters) as an underlying guide for us, firstly, to get information about the past events and secondly, to understand the protagonist's emotional condition in the actual time. The voice-over of the deceased aunt primarily informs us about the filmic present by creating a totalizing analogy between two independent events, more specifically between Francesco and the deceased aunt's experience of Orient. The subject of voiceover changes hands at the resolution of the movie to emphasize the reallocation of the guardian role from Francesco to his wife Martha. Following Abraham and Torok's analysis on the psychic processes of

incorporation/introjection, we may also argue that such alternation of subjects of voiceover also signify the incorporation of the deceased beloveds, Francesco and Anita, by Martha, one of which manifestation is the cigarette holder that appears in her hands.. (Abraham & Torok 107-138)

In *Harem Suare*, we have again two different subjects that perform the voice over, one is the old woman who is actually Safiye, and other is Gülfidan (Serra Yılmaz). The main voice-over belongs to Gülfidan, whose voice enables the transition between overlapping stories that actually take place in different layers of time and space. Citing the narrative conventions of Oriental fable, Gülfidan tells a story that resonates with different women's forbidden passions and love affairs but mainly figures the sad story of Safiye. Her voice, different from Anita, Martha or Safiye, functions as the anonymous narrating voice that actually tells the stories of other women, who were beautiful and powerful concubines unlike Gülfidan who was a mere steward or servant lacking the feminine charms. It must be noted that, with the single exception of Gülfidan, all the subjects of voice-over are Western protagonists. For instance, we hear nothing of the other, essentially Oriental characters in both films, which is especially striking in *Hamam*'s exclusive privileging of Western voice. The film suffices to view and hear them from an external objective position to venture through their emotions. (Safiye should be considered as being Western before everything else since she *is* actually and also, in film, she is denoted to be an Italian in a brief notice, which is expressed incessantly in all synopses e.g. "Safiye, actually an Italian, [...] (Cannes 2004))

The voice-over belonging to Gülfidan is of crucial importance for the following discussion. Since her voice actually sutures the whole narrative by enabling the transitions and shifts between multiple series of events and actually leads our selection and processing of what we should see and experience from the not-totally- controllable visual information brought by the film, her voice-speech is a structurally necessary narrative element that bind the whole fiction together.

As one of the ex-favorites feels too depressed to tell another fable/story to the concubines gathered around her as usual, Gülfidan breaks into the gathering saloon and is suddenly offered to tell that night's story. Camera tracks in to have her puzzled face in close-up, she exclaims: "Me? But, I cannot tell a story, I have never told one." After hearing excessive demands from the girls, she agrees rather in an involuntary fashion and says "all right ... I will." Through her narrating, the main plot unfolds and gains the proliferation and synchronization of multiple sub-plots. Yet, the story she tells is primarily of an encounter between an old and young concubine that spirals by other stories inside the other, echoing primarily Safiye's, also resonating with other concubines' and the encounter between two women in the train station. Through all the dissimulation of voices for she gives her own voice to be engendered, one cannot find any proximity whatsoever to hers or Kara Nergis, the mute black servant, whose character we will discuss later on. Her story and all the romance and sensuality it emanates functions on the basis of the effacement of her own, which is disguised under the promise of speaking. By the action of speaking, Gülfidan gains access to presence, to be a character rather than a walk-on, however this accidentally emerging opportunity to speak and narrate both reveals and hides the irrecoverable silence of the others including

her own. They are muted either with the horrible bodily mutilation or with the assigned role of telling a story that through speaking of others keeps the negative mark of the story-teller's own silence. We may formulate Gülfidan's voiceover as a speech-act that bears the mark of this silence or gap, which it partially succeeds to efface.

Her silence-within-speech is not recovered and is never totally recoverable even though it was her own story because of the irreducible and necessary gap/delay of representation. But, what is crucial here is that this silence constitutes the very possibility for the emergence of the S/subject of narrative, who was, not surprisingly, Western. By letting Gülfidan speak, her immediate presence is granted, she gains her identity proper which could, only then after, reduced to be the origin from where the subject of narrative could flourish with the high cost of robbing Gülfidan even of her silence. As the true silence would alarmingly signal a certain resistance, she is allowed speech that will enable to disavow such blind point/silent zone. Indeed, following Spivak, we can ask if Gülfidan can speak.

But, through which sleight of hand, her being is taken for granted and, at the same time, violently effaced? Such gesture of privileging speech as the guarantee of self-presence and imposing positivity and immediacy by effacing the quasi-negativity of the deferment of representation does share the same interests with the specular/speculative thought that privileges vision. To understand the relation better, we may refer to the deconstructive critique that has been articulated by thinkers such as Derrida.

4.1 “Hearing-Oneself Speak”

Such conception of speech sound has two interdependent effects; one is seemingly the immediacy of its perception that strengthens the illusion of an unmediated presence opens itself up to thought of the listener. Second one, which derives from the former, is the constitution of the subject through the immediacy of speech. Derrida has diagnosed such appropriation has been shared by the major philosophers such as Hegel and also by the more recent structuralism through the works of Levi-Strauss and Saussure.

As already noted, Derrida criticized the effect of hearing one’s own voice as the justification for speech’s alleged preeminence over writing. It was on the basis of this experience that Hegel could claim that hearing was even more ideal, more dialectically effective than sight. For whereas the latter always acknowledged the existence of the object prior to and after the event of seeing, the former identified sound entirely with its being heard. It could thus serve as the model of perfect sublation, preserving both objectivity and interiority. (Jay 512)

Although Hegel seems to subject vision to sound, it is more like reaching a hyper-vision through sound which is itself conceptualized according to the same logic of form that informs philosophical vision. “For the moment, it is clear that the same metaphysical tradition which has delivered us vision as the vision of form- a vision “filled and satisfied by presence”- has delivered sight over to sound, vision to the disponibility of the speaking voice. But this subjection of vision to voice is not one-sided, because in it vision is subjected to a sound which fulfills its own visionary imperative. [...] Hence, we have here a bilevel hierarchy in which vision, to the partial assimilation of known to knower, is completed by their full identification in voice.” (McCumber 238) By privileging speech-sound, the circle closes on itself via bringing forth the subject as the

knower of himself “through hearing himself speak”. Derrida argues that hearing oneself speak constitutes the absolute spatial-temporal proximity of self to itself, hence voice becomes the ideality of the object for which “the subject does not have to pass forth beyond himself to be immediately affected by his expressive activity” and remain in his pure interiority. Thus voice gains an apparent transcendence by effacing its very phenomenological body at the moment it comes out, the signifier (the real sound) is turned into phoneme and becomes the “very form of the immediate presence of the signified”.

(Derrida Reader 21)

Requiring the intervention of no determinate surface in the world, *being produced in the world a pure auto,-affection*, it is a signifying substance absolutely at our disposition. [...] This auto-affection is no doubt the possibility for what is called *subjectivity* or the *for-itself*, but, without it, no world *as such* would appear. For at its core it supposes the unity of sound (which is in the world) and phone (in the phenomenological sense). *(Derrida Reader 23)*

But exactly at this point, Derrida shows that for such operation of voice, “auto-affection supposed that a pure difference comes to divide self-presence.” and this pure difference, “which constitutes the self-presence of the living present, introduces into self-presence from the beginning all the impurity putatively excluded from it” (Derrida 26) Thus, speech becomes an originary *supplement*, whose “addition comes to make up for a deficiency, it comes to compensate for an originary nonself-presence.”

And if indication – for example, writing in the everyday sense- must necessarily be “added” to speech to complete the constitution of the ideal object, if speech must be “added” to the thought identity of the object, it is because the “presence” of sense and speech had already from the start fallen short of itself. *(Derrida Reader 28)*

Likewise, in *Of Grammatology*, Derrida initiates a thorough reading of Levi-Strauss's encounter with the primitive people, the Nambikwara in light of Levi-Strauss' theoretical indebtedness to Rousseau. Derrida detects in both thinkers a search for an originary human culture which was not contaminated with representative practices such as writing and the following evils of civilization that are violence, deceit and hierarchization. The Nambikwara is formalized as essentially good and innocent people, whose presence was much closer to an originary authenticity where they live in the immediacy of an absolute self-presence. According to Derrida, Levi-Strauss' formulation that represents the other culture as essentially good and innocent primarily depends on his belief that language as speech lies strictly outside of writing, *grapheme*, whose nature implies a primary violence and distinction that tears apart the presumed immediacy of the signifier from the signified, in other words that exposes the very representational quality of presence. Saved by the anthropologist from the evils associated with writing, the Nambikwara culture is reduced to an originary immediate self-presence enjoyed by the hegemony of speech and hence has been posited as the originary condition from which by pure accident, for instance a foreign intrusion, writing and associated representative practices have been produced. The implication of such theorization is the clandestine ethnocentrism that reduced writing to its Western phonetic form. "A fatal accident which is nothing but history itself." (*Grammatology* 135)

Non-European peoples were not only studied as the index to a hidden good Nature, as native soil recovered, of a "zero degree" with reference to which one could outline the structure, the growth, and above all the degradation of our society and our culture. As always, this archaeology is also a teleology and an eschatology; the dream of a full and immediate presence closing history, the transparency and indivision of a parousia, the suppression of contradiction and difference. (115)

4.2 Gülfidan: Can She Speak?

The implications of such critique for our discussion is almost clear, voice of Gülfidan signals multiple concerns. To begin with, with granting her the voice that encompasses and sutures the narrative, she has been posited as the originary point, or the contentless center from where the story could spring forth, the plot could develop in multiple directions in order to be united by the repetition and convergence of different layers of subplots. Through Gülfidan's voice here and there, year 1903 and year 1960, Yıldız Palace and Italy, different generations of women and their most secret passions could resonate each other. Through her self-effacing and self-constituting speech, the film could attain the spatio-temporal totality and unity it requires. By this structure, the film brings forward a meaningful narrative together with a historical scheme in which heterogeneity of different lives gain an intelligible form. Such intelligible form is sustained by the repetition, the same unfolding of events for different generations but through a false dialectical movement that forecloses the narrative in the order of the same. It is highly symptomatic to inaugurate the voice of the other to give the otherwise heterogeneous course of events an intelligible and recognizable scheme. Gülfidan's voice operates as the "zero degree" of the film's narrative, a centre of origin, which has itself of no value, other than holding the narrative on its back, supplying it the very ground so that it could state upright. Posited as the centering and suturing point of origin, she could be left outside this scheme, figured and frozen in her own voice. This double gesture veils the fact that Gülfidan's voice operates as the "supplement" of the

narrative by positing her outside of the main course of events. The sequences gain their own independent signifying value as soon as her voice fades out and hence the effect of objective record of events takes over. It is plausible to argue that the possibility of watching the film starts at this moment of repression. If we cannot leave the voice-over and the fact that she is actually fictioning a story for the concubines, we cannot immerse into the filmic event. Although her voice is actually the source of suturing the filmic event into a unified whole of narrative, the subject, the proprietor of voice has to be left outside and must be effaced for the experience of film to be possible. She becomes the anonymity, the nameless that has been left outside of (hi)story for the reason that she enables such historicity. Then after, she must be relocated within the economy of the same, by having the proper name that makes her a “mere” woman lacking the charm and talents that would enable her to become the subject of some story. She is the mere woman that tells the story of other women who deserved narrating. She is just Gülfidan, who accidentally enter the room when a story was in demand and the usual story teller was not in her moods. Actually, the particular choice of the story teller is a necessary move for the film’s narration to be steady and persuasive. By making Gülfidan present with her voice, the actual non-presence of her story could be covered at once. We know nothing of her desire, nothing of her story; her subjective history is forced into the silence from which the whole filmic discourse could thrive and command the heterogeneity across time and space. Her minimal contribution to the course of events sustains the belief that what she tells is from a rather objective point of view. She does not participate in the pursuit of love and power like the concubines she tells the stories of, she is just there to see, observe and, later tell the story. In this double move, she is given the role of a transparent medium by granting the role of the story teller, she is

made present without any doubt, and by the same token, she is driven to the outskirts, to the margins of the narrative. The track-in that brings Gülfidan from the long-medium shot to a close-up and the following words “me? But, I cannot tell I’ve never told one...” seems to be emphasized as an implicit political gesture that would enable Gülfidan speak. Nonetheless, one should be careful about the unthought of such gesture that has been veiled by its emphasis on the immediacy and intimacy of speech. Such gesture first of all represses the irreducible difference between the concubines and the other harem workers in terms of their status and share within the politics of harem. Even if they share the same locale, obviously, servants such as Gülfidan and Kara Nergis do experience a totally other, certainly more depressing relation to the power structures. They are at the bottom of the hierarchal order, whose labor does not have a slightest chance of appropriating the phallic power unlike the competing concubines. To take Gülfidan’s act of story telling as an act of speaking herself is to efface this difference that would result in representing Harem as a site of egalitarian and hence utopian sisterhood. If Gülfidan had a story that would reverberate her own experiences, it would not fit into this lavish and sensual setting that demand stories about the pompous love, ambition and fears of concubines, or more appropriately to the already inscribed expectations of the audience. The only way for her to make herself heard is to efface herself from the story. The language she inhabits is not formed to tell stories of such as herself, since her story does not promise the charm that Safiye could evoke. For that very reason, the subject of voice-over has to dissimulate herself, having herself no proper narrative to be told, she has to masquerade endlessly, to become the perfect mimetician or the echo of the subject. Gülfidan’s own story cannot be recovered, nevertheless she resists in that very place she has been violently posited as the

indifferent origin of narrative. Gülfidan is not the subject who speaks and she does not present herself in the immediacy of her speaking and it would not be so even if she was telling the story of her own. From the margin she has been expelled, her performance most explicitly reveals that the subject, even in the seeming immediacy of speaking, is already fictioned and is fictioning herself. And the form of this fictioning is already inscribed and embedded within the matrix of power.

Besides, the undertaking of voice-over within the film strengthens the anachronism that has been attributed to the Orient. Contrary to the usual employment of voice-over in most films, Gülfidan's voice-over enters the narrative not right in the beginning but, just before the time shifts from the year 1908 to 1903 which will a bit later leap onto year 1963 Italy with her voice going off-screen and gains the form of usual voice-over. Although the actual time of the story-telling takes place in 1908, her voice informs us about the encounter between the old Safiye and Anita in an Italian train station and pursue the whole story of Safiye long after the harem is dissolved. We return to the scene where Gülfidan is on-screen narrating the story after old Safiye and Anita's brief encounter in the station café is over. Hence, by implication, the scene where we have seen the concubines gathered around Gülfidan to listen to her story about a story that has been told by an old favorite to the newcomer, does transgress the linearity of time and the distance between Orient and West. The ambiguous temporal location of Gülfidan's storytelling contributes to the common Western textual attitude that mystifies Orient by pushing it out of time and space. Thus, Orient becomes the eternal scene where even the time goes astray and freezes.

To sum up, lending voice to Gülfidan is a double gesture that constitutes her identity and self-proximity with the persuasive apparent immediateness of sound-speech through constituting such immediate self-proximity of voice it succeeds to ruse the underlying violence that effaces and reduces her difference and alterity. First of all, by the ruse of constituting her as a subject immediate to herself, the film represses the antedating inscription of her subjectivity that exiles her to the margins of her own fictioning, since history did not develop a taste for stories such as hers so far. The only role that suits to the Oriental narrative schema for women such as Gülfidan is to be a loyal and obedient servant of Harem ladies and the only stories she could tell are the stories of their masters. The mastery that seems to be enjoyed by the proprietor is indeed the ruse that covers up her exclusion from time and space, out of movement and change. The scene where Gülfidan speaks seems to be located outside of history, frozen in the picturesque composition of beautiful concubines gathered around the servant, who took her chance to accommodate the throne of the usual story-teller. The apparent omnipresence and mastery of the voice-over presents Gülfidan as the loyal transmitter of the great spectacle/narrative, a place within which she could accommodate her presence without disquieting the fetishization of the Orient. If she cannot be turned into the eroticized spectacle, then she could be utilized as the de-sexualized voice stripped out of her body. She has been muted by her own voice; she has been effaced to invisibility by being rendered immediately present here and there, past and future. She goes unheard while mobilizing and suturing the whole narrative. Yet, there is a remainder which could not be entirely abolished: if it is through her fictioning we could participate in the story and could get a chance to leap from one layer to another, if it is only through her voice we could make sense of the story narrated by the film, then there the whole regime of filmic

reality is indeed structurally indebted to her enunciation and her enunciation is an endless mimetic masquerading, voice giving voice to other voices, endlessly deferring her own.

Yet she leaves a disturbing mark of suspicion about her presence. “The young concubine asks: ‘why you have told me your life instead of giving advice? The old woman replies without hesitation: ‘I’ve told you my life; because I know that we can only validate and make sense of our lives through telling it to ourselves and others. Is there any way to make sense to all the grief and pain that we go through other than narrating?’” How does one resist this logic that decently reveals the dependency of presence to representation? Yet, by implication, is not there a secret irony, an almost unconscious yet powerful critique that short-circuits the whole regime employed by the film? If that is so, could we ever speak of a life, a presence that can be attributable to Gülfidan? She brings about the most striking critique by echoing the words of an other; she reveals the hidden violence that erases her by the unnoticed dismissal of her life.

The critical studies on voice-over narration in film usually demonstrate a hostility for the method on the basis of its being a literary device that does not add up any innovation to the filmic medium. Such attitude reveals how film has been conceived prominently as a visual medium that should communicate primarily through the image. Then, the verbal-speech is understood as an imposition inserted upon the image, which is otherwise free of charge that the word brings. Such hostility or suspicion is linked to the image’s supposed superiority over words to convey ideology-free and objective meaning and the film’s long mimetic rivalry with theater. Fundamentally, the undervaluation of voice-

over narration in film is linked to the attempt to ascribe an essence to film, which singularly depends on visuality. (Kozloff 8-22) However, such positioning forgets that vision itself is an inscription that already comes with its own socio-cultural charges and it is always already a distortion not a presentation that operate within the realm of language. Sound, as an added value that lends itself to the image, strengthens, dramatizes, temporally mobilizes and sometimes disrupts the image to convey meaning. (Chion 3-25)

According to Kozloff again, in fiction films (such as *Harem Suare*), the employment of third-person narrators, do occur very rarely and when such technique is employed, one of the possible reasons for that is “to impart a great deal of expositional information or unify a story that ranges widely in time and space.[...] Furthermore, precisely because it is oral, voice-over can remind viewers of traditional storytellers, and so evoke the proper atmosphere for the legendary or pseudo-legendary subject-matter.” (Kozloff 73). For the third-person narrator, she argues that “heterodiegetic narrators [...] remain unseen, unearthly, throughout the text” and though not very occasionally, the third-person narrators could be located not only as frame narrators but could go on screen. “Whenever a character launches into a story in which he or she does not participate, that character, like Scheherazade, is an embedded heterodiegetic narrator.” Kozloff argues that the participation here means less of telling a story of oneself but on “whether he or she exists in the same fictive world as the characters, whether he or she could possibly know them and they know him or her.” However, such strict categorizations that have been attempted throughout her study seems to fall short to be able to categorize the voice-over narration in *Harem Suare*, since voice-over in this film is neither telling a

story of herself nor her minimal appearance within what she tells could be counted as a participation. Since the voice-over is in the form of a fable that works by analogy to the characters and events depicted on one level and directly illustrates the events on another. Her dubious position cannot be entirely categorized to schemes of voice-over in use. Following Kozloff's inquiry on characteristics of third-person narrators in film, the voice-over in *Harem Suare* shows a certain omnipresence, that "enable film-maker to traverse continents or decades without fear of leaving the viewer behind. The overt presence of the narrator, who speaks from a privileged vantage point and knits together all those loose threads, allows for any number of shifts of focalization without strain." (80). Though such omnipresence, and its technical importance for films to connect different time periods without causing conflict could be easily detected in *Harem Suare*, such omnipresence does not always mean an omniscience as Kozloff seems to infer rather quickly. As it is the case in *Harem Suare*, this omnipresence also means a clandestine non-presence, an impotency, a weakening marginality that cast out the narrator from the story narrated, turning the proprietor of the voice into a passive transmitter of the events. It strengthens the belief in a subject position that can situate itself out of the representation, that is itself not inscribed but being the immediate manifestation of herself, veiling the calculated pre-inscription of the narrator embedded at the margin of the text before she begins to speak.

Feminist scholars such as Mary Ann Doane and Kaja Silverman focuses on the relation between female voice and the narrative as a synchronization of female voice with her image that confines woman's enunciation within the narrative. "Silverman shows how women's voices are narratively taken away from them, held within the diegesis and out

of their control.” (Lawrence 180) Similarly Mary Ann Doane argues that the synchronization of image and voice conveys “the ideal of a coherent, unified text which mirrors the fantasy of a coherent, unified spectator:

The aural illusion of position constructed by the approximation of sound perspective and by techniques which spatialize the voice and endow it with “presence guarantees the singularity and stability of a point of audition, thus holding at bay the potential trauma of dispersal, dismemberment, difference. (Doane qtd in Lawrence 179)

Then, the synchronization of female voice and image in classical film is understood as a sleight of hand that covers the material heterogeneity “not only in order to guarantee the cohesiveness of any subject but specifically to shore up male subjectivity”. (Lawrence 179)

However, if we remember Kozloff’s study of voice-over narration, which is typically conceived as an asynchronization between image and sound, it also serves the purposes of unification through knitting different spatio-temporalities. Moreover, Kozloff argues that the “voice-over serves to naturalize the strangeness of cinematic narration; an odd impersonal agency is thus humanized and tamed.” (Kozloff 128). Apart from this naturalization of the cinematic medium’s underlying machinism:

It also creates a special relationship with the viewer. [...] Thus the narrator implicitly acknowledges the spectator’s own existence and personhood; such an acknowledgment is a pleasant form of flattery. Moreover, because the cinematic body is now being consciously, deliberately displayed to the spectator, the spectator is placed less as a voyeur and more as an invited confidante. (Kozloff 129)

Amy Lawrence draws our attention to the rather easy submission of feminist theory to the binary of good asynchronization and bad synchronization. (Lawrence 181) On this basis of conception, Silverman advocates a certain disembodiment of voice from the body to escape from the confinement of female voice to her body that in turn signifies lack. “[Female voice] never assumes the privileged and transcendental qualities of a traditional voice-over, or even the much more limited powers of a traditional voice-off” (qtd in Lawrence 181) Such advocating of disembodiment is in line with the more general intellectual impulse, as Chion diagnoses with the easy celebration of audiovisual counterpoint. Chion points that:

Audiovisual counterpoint, which film aestheticians seem perennially to advocate, plead for and, and insist upon, occurs on television every day, though no one seems to notice.[...] there exists hundreds of possible ways to add sound to any given image. Some are wholly conventional. Others, without formally contradicting or “negating” the image, carry the perception of the image to another level. And audiovisual dissonance is merely the inverse of convention, and thus pays homage to it, imprisoning us in a binary logic that has only remotely to do with how cinema works. (Chion 37-38)

However, as Chion exposes in a different but related context, such easy submission to binary categorizations that valorizes the divorce of sound from image is not a guarantee of progressive film-making. “Strangely, the disjunctive and autonomist impulse that predominates in intellectual discourse on the question (“wouldn’t it be better if sound and image were independent?”) arises entirely from the unitary illusion we have described: the false unity this thinking denounces in the current cinema implicitly suggests a true unity existing elsewhere.” (Chion 98)

Michel Chion distinguishes the voice-over as textual speech to differ it from the diegetic voice that turn out to be theatrical speech in his productive terminology and he argues that the voice-over “acts upon the images. Textual speech has the power to make visible the images that it evokes through sound - that is, to change the setting, to call up a thing, moment, place, or characters at will.” (Chion172)

Thus, the voice-over narration does not automatically bring emancipation or a chance of free enunciation for any oppressed identity such as women, Orientals or both. The very investment and belief in enunciation operating above narrative to transcend the diegetic universe is to ignore the forces and power structures that pre-inscribes such enunciation. Transcending the narrative does not automatically mean a privilege and freedom; on the contrary, the strengthened illusion of transcending the narrative may lead to grave misconceptions that posit the proprietor of the voice as the immediate source of narration. Such attitude exposes the reliance on speech-voice as the evidence and possibility of presence and identity undisturbed by what lies external to it. Even if we accept that the synchronized voice, that accompanies the image, in principle, puts forward a granted presence, voice-over where the sound and image diverts from each other and implies the disembodiment aims no less a guaranteed presence and mastery of the subject over the image and herself. The exceptional employment of voice-over narration in *Harem Suare* demonstrates that lending an outwardly commanding voice to the other does not necessarily mean a radical departure from the metaphysics of subject and the consequent ideological formations that are constantly at work in bringing about the subject of enunciation. Unreservedly celebrating the voice-over narration would be to ignore the underlying onto-ideological assumption that privileges voice as the

effective and instantaneous signifier of a unified presence and essence. As long as voice is conceptually understood by formal principles that also authorize the vision, we have to be skeptically engaged with what it silences as well as what it makes heard.

Besides, as mentioned with the citation from Sarah Kozloff, the voice-over narrator could veil and ease the principally voyeuristic relation of spectator with the sound-image and replace it with the comforting feeling of participation. Such function obviously consolidates and conforms the spectator's position rather than problematizing it.

Moreover, the voice assigned to Gülfidan leaves no place for the differences between women depicted within the movie including the irreducibly radical position of herself and Kara Nergis and inevitably leads to a monolithic figuration of Oriental female identity. Such figuration fits very well to the dominant Western feminism and similar progressive tendencies that conceive other cultures and other women as a undifferentiated unity vis-à-vis the Western subject no matter the gender difference.

Mohanty describes how the speech of the stereotypical Third-World Woman has been privileged in Western feminist works as that of the "truth-teller". In this conception women transcend history as well as cultural indoctrination and consequently possess "a privileged access to the 'real,' [and] the 'truth'" (Lawrence 184)

Although *Harem Suare* is a highly stylized, almost fable-like visual and narrative formation, the truth-telling function of the narrator is still there though in a complicated and disguised form. As we have mentioned Gülfidan actually tells a fable-like story when we see her on-screen. However, when she leaves the frame, the sequences solely

take over the narration to convey the story. The voice-over, no matter what she tells is an overt form of fiction, is a vehicle that guide the spectator to attain the overall meaning and truth of the story. Chion argues that:

The textual speech of a voice-over narrator engenders images with its own logic (i.e., not that of continuity editing) just long enough to establish the film's narrative framework and setting. Then it disappears, allowing us to enter the diegetic universe. We might not be reminded of the narrator's presence for the next quarter of an hour into the film, even an hour. Of then the story in between has become completely autonomous from the textual speech, in creating its own dramatic time, in creating its own dramatic time , and in showing us scenes that the voice-over narrator could not possibly have seen." (Chion 173)

Mary Ann Doane, similarly argues that " if the ideology of the visible demands that the spectator understand the image as a truthful representation of reality,, the ideology of the audible demands that there exist simultaneously a different truth and another order of reality for the subject to grasp. [...] Sound and image, 'married' together, propose a drama of the individual, of psychological realism. "Knowledge" of the interior." (Doane, *Sound* 49&55)

Further, by evoking intimacy and implicit acknowledgment of the presence of the spectator through appellation of voice, the narrator helps the spectator to immerse into the film setting and the characters' most intimate thoughts without any doubt, fear or reflexive criticism. Both films aim to appeal initially to the Western spectator by offering him to get access to the most mysterious and sensuous locales of Orient that have been the object of intense interest long before the invention of cinema. Both films are celebratory aesthetizations of Orient, that attempt to persuade the spectator of an Orient with unbounded passions and eroticism on one hand, with authentic and non-

alienating social relations on the other. The employment of voice-over narration echoing the tales of Arabian nights is an explicit strategy to appeal to the Western spectator by offering a sense of being-there-ness, which veils simultaneously the principally voyeuristic character of spectatorship. The distance between the spectator and the diegetic universe is covered successfully and the entry to the privacy of a different universe is made less traumatic. By the same token, the spectator is soothed by the narrator's (Serra Yilmaz) phonogenic voice implicitly calling his name or simply identified with Francesco (respectively, her aunt and finally with Martha), could enter to the private lives of Orientals with the invitation seemingly coming out of their own mouths. Such invitation masks the very condition of the spectatorship and the asymmetrical power relations embedded within such desire of the Western protagonist/spectator to come in and grasp the Orient. Thus, the voice-over operates in both films as complementary rather than disruptive to the visual regime that brings forward an essentially picturesque, anachronistic and fantasmatic Orient. Sound in both films, which cannot be confined to the speech, works as an added value, whose phenomenon, according to Chion, "is at work in the case of sound/image synchronism, via the principle of *synchresis*, the forging of an immediate and necessary relationship between something one sees and something one hears." (Chion 5) By *synchresis*, which combines *synchronism* and *synthesis*, Chion means "the spontaneous and irresistible weld produced between a particular auditory phenomenon and visual phenomenon when they occur at the same time." (Chion 63) Such *synchresis* is not solely the outcome of the apparent synchronization of sound and image as in sound film, but also exposes the underlying rhetoric under the voice-over narration that does not challenge, subvert or distort the meaning conveyed by the image. However, one must be careful not to

conclude that the voice-over or conventional sound-image synchronization are automatically oppressive means of ideology. As Chion demonstrates persuasively, there is no essentially “good” method in handling sound to guarantee the critical demystification of the audiovisual medium or the rigorous challenge to the models of film-making and viewing, which radical films pursue.

4.3 The overall sound regime

If the analysis of sound employment in both films is extended beyond sound-speech to cover soundtrack, background noise and etc., one finds further convincing evidence of Orientalism. Both films are strategically interested in building up an Oriental setting, that is dream-like, chiaroscuro and ephemeral; a place where past and present, dead and alive could be in touch eternally and where the most hidden desires and transgressive sexual fantasies could be projected and experienced without the possible burden it would bear on the protagonist back in fatherland. The timeless composition of Orient fits well to the aesthetics of nostalgia that constitute the imprint of director’s style which is observable in his other films *La Finestra di Fronte* and *Le Fate Ignoranti* as well.

By the help of Michel Chion’s terminology, it can be inferred that both films evoke an audio-visual setting that contribute to the sensual and fantasmatic atmosphere that Orientalist frame requires. Besides the theatrical speech (film dialogue) and textual speech (voice-over) that has been examined so far, the specific employment of soundtrack and environmental sound should be briefly mentioned to demonstrate how

they contribute to the total aesthetic effect achieved by both films. First of all, both films, even if in an economical way especially to express intense emotions, do heavily depend on sound-speech and almost totally ignore the background noise. Such hegemony of speech is a characteristic of feature films, as Chion argues: “cinema is primarily vococentric, I mean that it almost always privileges the voice, highlighting and setting the latter off from other sounds[...] Sound in film is voco- and verbocentric, above all, because human beings in their habitual behavior as well.” (Chion 5) Comolli, similarly, makes a complementary point: “In fact, the intelligibility of the dialogue allows these words and voices to be heard as though one were with them; there is a direct interpellation of the spectator who is set the stage on which the dialogue takes place.” (*Discussion* 57). Speech as the dominating sound in film contributes heavily to the intelligibility of the film, adds its value upon the image to communicate the web of meaning better and to veil the distance between the spectator and the spectacle. Both *Harem Suare* and *Hamam* do not challenge, do not even discomfort this hegemony, unlike, for instance, films of David Lynch or Jacques Tati.

When we look at the film music, we see that music is extensively used to enable transitions that are actually huge leaps in time and place. As Chion demonstrates, “the most widespread function of film sound consists of unifying or binding the flow of images. First, in temporal terms, it unifies by bridging the visual breaks through sound overlaps. Second, it brings unity by establishing atmosphere as a framework that seems to contain the image, a “heard” space in which the “seen” bathes. (Chion 47). Both *screen music*, whose source is located within the frame, that could be exemplified by Abdülhamid’s piano playing *Harem Suare* (this scene is also an example of back

voice) and the circumcision fest music in *Hamam*; and the *pit music*, “that accompanies the image from a nondiegetic position, outside the space and time of the action” (Chion 80) are working primarily to intensify the ambiance of the Oriental setting. The energetic drums that accompany the public scenes, where Francesco and Mehmet were playing backgammon in a smoky café and the sad and moving theme that reaches its climax when Francesco is murdered following the cut to the marble statue that slowly merged into shadow do demonstrate how pit music is used to intensify the dramatic quality of images. In *Harem Suare*, we hear pieces of opera, which seem to be contradictory to the conventional image of Orient at first, but this hints at the modernization pulse that slowly takes over the empire and lead the harem to its sad end.

To sum up, music, as in the way it is used in both films, totally obeys, complements and intensifies the dramatic logic of the narrative whether it is pit or on-screen music. They let the spectator to immerse into the dramatic unfolding of plot rather, *empathetic* music. This is in Chion’s words, “from the word empathy, the ability to feel the feelings of others and that can directly express its participation in the feeling of the scene, by taking on the scene’s rhythm, tone and phrasing; obviously such music participates in cultural codes for things like sadness, happiness, and movement. (Chion 8) Such effect is very different from the *anemphatetic* music, which remains indifferent to what actually happens within the scene or intensify and amplify it with creating a contrast. According to Chion, anemphatetic music essentially unveils the indifferent and automatic unwinding of projection, that is part of each film and which should hide itself and be forgotten by conjuring up the mechanical texture of this tapestry of the emotions and sense. (9)

Moreover, music in both films function as the spatiotemporal turntable if we refer to Chion's productive terminology.

Music enjoys the status of being a little freer of barriers of time and space than the other sound and visual elements.[...] music can swing over from pit to screen at a moment's notice, without in the least throwing into question the integrity of diegesis, as a voiceover intervening in the action would. Out of time and out of space, music communicates with all times and all spaces of a film, even as it leaves them to their separate and distinct existences.”
(Chion 81)

We can witness the peak expression of this function in both films of Özpetek, since both narrative universes aim at a circular structure, where past, present and future should overlap at some point to attain the unification of different generations under the same destiny. Hence, the soundtrack music abide to such narrative structure and indeed contribute greatly to attain it by uniting different layers of spatio- temporalities in advance of the cinematic image. Indeed, we can go so far to say that both films' real challenge is to bring about such unity over the narrative and they solve this challenge by heavily relying on empathetic music and voice-over. Such excessive utilization of this function of music points to an anxiety of difference, discontinuity and dissonance. Both films, more or less successively controls and represses any element that disturb the unity and continuity that plots demand. Both films owe their praised ambiance that brings about a fantasmatic and mythical Orient greatly with the help of such sound design. Both films also reveal almost a total absence of *materializing sound indices*, (M.S.I.) a term again forged by Chion to define “the sound’ that cause us to “feel” the material conditions of the sound source, and refer to the concrete process of the sound's

production”. (114) Their absence or “sparsity can lead to a perception of the characters and story as ethereal, abstract and fluid” and this is exactly what has been required to create a soft, tender and sensual Oriental setting that could take away and embrace the protagonists as well as spectators with promises of intimacy and eroticism.(114)

But such seemingly flattering aesthetization and valuation of Orient is not a new scheme for representing the Orient, rather it has a long and persisting duration in Western representative tradition. Özpetek’s films do not bring about a radical disruption to the Western Orientalist representation, nor do they seem to have an interest in doing so. Rather, it could be argued that both films exploit these conventions and the unconscious literacy of the film spectator of these conventions to produce the successful artistic setting and framework that their story requires. There is no doubt that both films are triumphant in attaining the right aesthetic formula to produce the desired effects by the film-maker. Nonetheless, such aesthetization carries the burden of being complicit with the Orientalist figuration that operates by exclusion, repression and trivialization of what is discontinuous, incongruent and different from what the Western frame wishes the Orient to be. And the ones that pay the price are always the most disadvantageous in terms of gender, race and class.

Neither Safiye, the Western woman masquerading as the Oriental concubine, nor Gülfidan who superficially enjoys enunciation in order to tell the story of her masters are subject to the same scope and degree of representative violence as Kara Nergis, the mute black servant. She is not only robbed of her voice and left outside of language (in order to be safely incorporated back to it by being taught writing so that she can inform

her “lady” about the news of Nadir, the eunuch) where she can be pure spectacle, but at the same time she has been forcefully inserted within a fantasy of reciprocal desire. The bathhouse scene where Safiye gives Nergis an erotic massage in turn of her usual services of washing and messaging is indeed a secret message by analogy for Nadir who peeps Safiye through the veils and principally works by creating the impression of a reciprocal desire on the part of Nergis. She is not the actual desired person by Safiye but is merely exploited as a spectacular message for her real beloved, Nadir. We are given almost no chance to even question whether Nergis wants such ambiguously erotic encounter with Safiye. Inferring from the camera work and the point of view shots, we are situated either with Safiye or Nadir who watches the scene behind the blinds. She is not only excluded from the realms of speech, but also from the possibility to have a visual perspective. Nergis is located (a)historically to her usual place without slightest concern of thought, where she has been left mute and blind. What we are able to perceive of her is what the medium enables and although it seems at first a kindhearted and benevolent gesture that depicts her almost positively (loyal, capable of learning “writing” which is the mark of high civilization and worthy of her lady’s caressing), it is the same benevolent gesture that hides the vested interests of the Western subject. Meanwhile, what she wants and what she makes of with the gift of writing other than informing her former master goes without a single bit of curiosity from the spectator. What she wants has been taken for granted to be congruent with what Safiye wants. She is there to hint at Safiye’s benevolence and kindness which return to her as lifetime respect and loyalty. If Gülfidan is the voice that could cling to the textual universe by effacing her difference and by masquerading with an unstable mimesis, Nergis is the total absence of voice where she has been posited as the spectacle submissive to

whatever is demanded from herself. It must be clear that the old duality of image versus word, that made the film aesthetics busy for quite along time, is indeed a misconception that ignore how both could be employed separately or in complicity to set forth a politics of representation that stabilize the self and other essentially for the advantage of former. Or else, both could work together or against each other to bring destabilization and ambiguity to what the classical film narrative takes for granted.

In the next chapter, I will read both films in the light of sexual difference and gender roles within the framework of Orientalist schema. Though both films provide an almost infinite source for discussion, due to the limit and scope of the study, only few would be mentioned basically around the Oriental locale of harem in particular and the Oriental setting in general for what enables the experience of transgressive desires and what it may imply for the general economy of Western subject vis-à-vis his Oriental other. One of the main issues will be the role of women in both films.

5 ORIENT ORIENTALIZED: A DARK STAGE FOR WHITE FANTASIES

In the previous chapters, I have discussed the persisting quest for distinct “form” in both visual and aural terms within the tradition of Western metaphysics and its intrinsic relation with the Orientalist discourse in two films of Özpetek. This discussion led me to the conclusion that both films are still said to be operating basically in favor of the Western subject position, even though they bring transgressive moments to the conventional Orientalist schema. The Western subject appropriates and consolidates itself by means of a game of de-appropriation and re-appropriation that essentially ought to take place in an Orient whose difference is culturally and geographically marked. Such marking necessitates a series of representational strategies that, in our case, to make present the Orient as the site of mythical origin and the locus of the most appealing desires of the subject /proprietor to cast them on Orient. The strategies of representation should be under a high degree of control with excessive stylization of both visual and aural elements, since these two constitute the dominant means for the endeavor to give form; hence a static essence, presence and identity both to the subject and the other(s). In order to establish this game of difference to attain the same, this time the Orient has been staged as an appealing and inviting place for the western subject to discover himself.

This endeavor to give an essential, unified and distinct form to the Orient, performed primarily via sound and vision, helps to appropriate and secure the sovereignty of the Western subject upon his other. Hence, Orient should be necessarily different from what has been attributed to the West in order to sustain the nursing and restitution of mastery to the Western subject. This play of difference is not an acclaim of difference on its behalf but determined according to the Western standards of sameness and identity. If all the effort to give Orient a static figure is actually about to sustain the identity of the Western subject, then we must consider the issue of sexual difference as one of the constitutive instances of such endeavor. Since the quest for this subject is initiated and greatly shaped by the hegemonic forces within Western culture, it comes to say that this quest for self-actualization and appropriation is primarily of a male subject considering the phallogentric ground

5.1 Feminism With and Against Orientalism

It might be argued that there is actually no single Western subject, instead numerous opposing, intersecting and overlapping interests determined by nation, gender and class that renders necessarily unstable, shifting and sometimes contradictory subject-positions. Yet, what is meant by the Western subject is the suppression of this difference, multiplicity and contradiction in favor of a unified and stabilized self-presence. Orientalist discourse is structurally necessary to engender such Western subject; it transforms otherwise heterogeneous and ambivalent subject positions into the

full-fledged unity of being Western by constructing the truth and image of Orient. We can say that Orientalist practice before everything else aims to occidentalize the occident by means of orientalizing the Oriental. Yeğenoğlu effectively formulates such operation as:

The peculiarity of a colonial discourse such as such a Orientalism may be said to reside precisely in the westernizing (as well as Orientalizing) operation itself. This is a process by which members are instituted as Western subjects. The operation I call is “Westernizing” consists in the fashioning of a historically specific fantasy whereby members imagine themselves as Western. This engendering and fashioning of the Western subject thus has a fictive character. But the fictive character of this position does not mean that it is not real; on the contrary, it produces material effects by constituting the very bodies of the subjects that it subjects. It refers to the historical inscription of a particular identity. To put it in different terms, the process of “becoming” a Western subject refers to its members becoming ontologized. (Yeğenoğlu 4)

This ontologized subject gains the self-mastery and sovereignty only through consolidating his subjectivity by means of attaining mastery over others. One can easily notice the similarities between the positioning of women and Orientals vis-à-vis the sovereign Western subject, whose determination is shaped greatly by White male individual and this constitution, is made up of *his* fantasies, desires and fears. Such masculine conception of Western subject is historically and culturally tied to the phallogentric structuring of Western cultures and it is engraved not only in cultural representations and the core of social organizing but also in the ostensibly indifferent and/or bias-free meta-narratives such as philosophy, science and history. Indeed as the major fictioning machines of subject, such meta-narratives are the true engine that sign cultural representations and artistic productions. The metaphysics of Western subject

is always already marked by sexual difference and is built upon the general logic of binarism that valorizes and centralizes the socio-culturally hegemonic term. The second term is conceptualized negatively with reference to the former on the basis of what it lacks and/or excesses, in other words how it deviates from the standard set by the attributes of the former term. When this binary logic is exposed, the intrinsic relation between under-valued positioning of women and Oriental/non-Western people becomes clearer. And it comes no surprise that like the long-seated analogical attribution of nature to femininity, the conventional pattern of feminization of the Oriental, the hypersexualization of Oriental setting and the erotic compulsion/attraction generated by Orient reveals the analogy between sexual and racial difference built and articulated through the discursive practices. To understand the dynamic of such relation, it is useful to remember the distinction between two types of Orientalism introduced by Said. He distinguishes “an almost unconscious (and certainly untouchable) positivity” that he calls latent Orientalism from “the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology, and so forth” that he calls as manifest Orientalism. (*Orientalism* 206) Furthermore, he adds that “latent Orientalism encouraged a peculiarly (not to say invidiously) male conception of the world” and remarks how the scholarly Orientalism as a branch of academic art and knowledge was an exclusively male province; like so many professional guilds during the modern period, it viewed itself and its subject matter with sexist blinders.” (207) Said also keenly remarks on how this exclusively male conception dominating Orientalist discourse, “tends to be static, frozen, fixed eternally.” (208) Although he launches a close reading of some Orientalist texts to reveal the sexual connotations of widely-adopted words such as penetration, conquering the wild and virgin lands etc. , he does not theoretically pursue the

overlapping interests of sexual and colonial mastery by means of a psychoanalytical approach.

Said assigned an important role to exoticism in the discursive representation of the Orient. Because exoticism is relevant not only in the representation of the Oriental, but in the representation of alterity in general, the usefulness of his theory goes much beyond the Orient and it may be applied to postcolonial representations almost anywhere. According to Said, Western discourse created a particular Orient in order to justify its economic, intellectual and moral superiority over its territory and its subjects. In Orientalist discourse colonial and postcolonial, particularly female subjects tend to be represented by an ambivalence of desire and disdain. They are mysterious yet untrust-worthy, sexually arousing yet not quite clean, intriguing and yet uninteresting. Although Said's work is fundamental in postcolonial studies, it has its limitations in demonstrating how sexual difference operates in the production of Orientalist discourse. Meyda Yegenoglu's *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (1998) comes to mind that fills this void. (Nagy-Zekmi, 172)

Yeğenoğlu's study is crucial not only for exposing how the Oriental female was the locus of desire of Western subject to penetrate through knowledge, whether disguising under the name of knowledge and science or explicitly seeking to conquer the sexual mysteries of the oriental women, but more importantly how the issue of sexuality is intrinsically related to the heart of Orientalism. "Thus, in referring to the scene of the sexual and the site of unconscious, I do not simply mean the ways in which the figure of the Oriental woman or Oriental sexuality is represented. I am rather referring to the ways in which representations of the Orient are interwoven by sexual imageries, unconscious fantasies, desires, fears, and dreams. In other words, the question of sexuality is cannot be treated as a regional one; it governs and structures the subject's every relation with the other. Understanding this (double) articulation in Orientalist discourse therefore requires an exploration of the articulation of the historical with fantasy, the cultural with the sexual, and desire with power." (Yeğenoğlu 26)

Her study is not a survey of stereotypes and specific representative strategies of Orientalism articulated this time from the point of view of feminist agenda, but an effective maneuver, that has been neglected by Said, to expose how the question of sexuality is a constitutive instance of Orientalist misrecognition. She uses Said's definition of latent Orientalism as a lever to reach an enabling conception of unconscious of the discourse underline the intersection of sexual difference and Orientalism. According to her, psychoanalysis might be helpful in reaching this goal of unfolding sexual difference and thus avoiding a "psychologization" of colonial logic. Facilitating a reading with and against Homi Bhabha's articulation of sexuality into colonial discourse, she presents an analysis of the Orientalist construction of Orient that "needs to be understood as being structured by the fantasy framework in the Lacanian sense, which provides the coordinates of the subject's desire for the other."

Bhabha brings question of racial stereotype in line with Freudian notion of fetish as the signifier and the remedy of lack, while soothing the male subject it is also the constant remainder of lack that fuels castration anxiety.

The scene of fetishism functions similarly as , at once, a reactivation of the material of original fantasy- the anxiety of castration and sexual difference- as well as a normalization of that difference and disturbance in terms of the fetish object as the substitute for the mother's penis. Within the apparatus of colonial power, the discourses of sexuality and race relate in a process of functional overdetermination." (Bhabha 398)

Yeğenoğlu criticizes Bhabha on the rather obscure translation of the psychoanalytical treatment of fetish into the issue of racial/cultural difference. "Given that castration

anxiety and hence the threat it constitutes is key in theory of fetishism, it is not clear how the perceived lack (all man do not have the same skin/race/culture) of the cultural other constitutes a threat for the colonizer. Moreover, it is not clear how a specific color is translated into lack ” and also “ the question of a gendered colonial subject is not worked out in detail, but simply regarded as a metaphor of colonial ambivalence in Bhabha’s analysis.” (Yeğenoğlu 29) Being itself a culturally specific theory that aims a certain universality and the status of science especially in Freudian instance and a more elaborated, yet persisting metaphysics of truth and identity in Lacanian schema, psychoanalysis is a theoretical tool that should be utilized with an attentive critical attitude that constantly disrupt its otherwise potentially thwarting tendency to foreclose its subject-matter. Satisfying this ongoing alertness, it would provide a very powerful instrument “to pose the question of the itinerary of man’s desire in an attempt to deconstruct the imperial European subjectivity.” (Yeğenoğlu 55)

At this essential injunction of sexual and racial difference, a new productive disruption is needed for post-colonial and feminist theories to articulate different sometimes contradictory interests. Spivak convincingly argues for the ongoing debate between feminisms, particularly exposing how French feminism could be complicit with her notorious Anglo- American sister when the issue comes to locate the colonial woman within feminist discourse.

However unfeasible and inefficient it may sound, I see no way to avoid insisting that there has to be a simultaneous other focus: not merely who am I? But who is the other woman? How am I naming her? How does she name me? Is this part of the problematic I discuss? Indeed, it is the absence of such infeasible but crucial questions that makes the “colonized woman” as “subject” see the investigators as sweet and sympathetic creatures from another planet who are free to come and go; or, depending on her own socialization in the colonizing cultures, see “feminism” as having a vanguardist class fix, the liberties it fights for as luxuries, finally identifiable with “free sex” of one kind or another. Wrong, of course. My point has been that there is something equally wrong in our most sophisticated research, our most benevolent impulses. (Spivak, IOW 150)

Mohanty, in her influential essay, argues that Western feminism’s endeavor to theoretically deal with the third-world woman carries crucial symptoms that could give us how Western feminism constitutes its subject-matter (Western “women”) in her difference from a monolithically conceived third-world “woman”:

Universal images of ‘the third-world woman’ (the veiled woman, chaste virgin, etc.), images constructed from adding the ‘the third-world difference’ to ‘sexual difference’, are predicated on assumptions about Western women as secular and liberated and have control over their lives. I am referring to a discursive self-representation, not necessarily to material reality. If this were a material reality there would be no need for feminist political struggle in the West. Without the ‘third world woman’, the particular self-representation of Western women mentioned above would be problematical. I am suggesting in effect, that the one enables and sustains the other. (Mohanty 214)

These cautionary remarks that expose the attempt of Western theoretical representation to bring about a monolithic colonial subject, however- should not obscure the persistence of the critique of colonial discourse on the basis of each culture’s unique experience of it. As Meyda Yeğenoğlu effectively points to this subtle point: “In insisting on retaining the general category of colonial discourse or colonialism, I am in

no way suggesting we see its unity as a simple harmonious totality. Rather, what I am suggesting is that we see *the complexity within such a unity*. [...] It is the citational nature of Orientalism that maintains its constancy, unity, and hegemony. [...] The colonial episteme is maintained by a reiteration or citation of certain statements and representations. It is this citational nature of colonial discourse that guarantees its “factual” status, its “naturalness”, while simultaneously concealing the conventions upon which it is based. [...] But if it is citationality that is essential in the sustenance of colonial discourse, it at the same time constitutes the possibility of its subversion and displacement.” (Yeğenoğlu 38)

5.2 Discussion of films

Both *Harem Square* and *Hamam* provide a prosperous ground to discuss how sexual difference is articulated to and embedded within representations of Orient. The discussion below will be held around two themes. Firstly, the basic strategies of films to represent women will be investigated with some crucial questions in mind. One of the main concerns will be how the different positioning of Western and Oriental women is uttered and the possible consequences and reasons behind such difference. Second, the crucial role of Oriental women in Orientalist discourse will be discussed around the theme of Harem as the over-determined site of desire and how this frame is related to

the films. The role of Western women becomes crucial here to understand how the liberal feminist impulse could be articulated to Orientalism without a critical alertness.

Second theme that will be pursued is the general economy of Western homoeroticism and its fascination with the Oriental within the context of *Hamam*. It would enable to disrupt the hasty celebration of (homo)sexual liberation (the right to expose and represent what has been hitherto repressed and excluded) and re-locate it within the rather uneasy ground of history, culture and politics of colonization. How the Oriental male is positioned with reference to the Western female and male will be questioned by means of the figures of eunuch and the Oriental male who has been feminized or hyper-sexualized.

5.2.1 The question of woman

In *Hamam*, which actually concerns with the homoerotic awakening of the Western protagonist in Orient, we witness a double and surprisingly phallogocentric standard employed to figure Western and Oriental women. With Francesco, who lands on Istanbul and meets with a Turkish family that lives for years with his aunt, we find access to the Turkish domestic site. The camerawork and the narration mostly follow the point of view of Francesco at the first two-third of the movie and we gather our first impressions of Orient with and through him. The Turkish family he met in his aunt's estate welcome Francesco with great enthusiasm and hospitality. They open their house to this total stranger and accommodate him with full service as if they have waited all

their life to meet with the grandson of Madam, whom she had mentioned all the time to the family though she actually had never seen or met with Francesco. After the long walks of Francesco that leads to the dizzying and promising experiences of Oriental public space, the narrow streets take him one time to an old church at another to an ancient bath house where there are naked Oriental men with incessant eyes on him, he finds shelter in the comforting house where Aunt Anita and the family lived. After the unease of the initial encounter is over and Francesco accepts the dinner offer of Perran (the mother), Francesco quits his hotel room and starts to live with the family. He occupies the prime seat at the dinner table and the upper room Anita used to live. When first Zozo, the estate agent and Francesco knocks the door, Füsün, the young and beautiful daughter opens the door. Right from the start, camera enjoys the spectacle she offers and stays on her a bit longer hinting at Francesco's desiring look upon her. The camera each time lingering on Füsün's face also helps to amplify the shock of the climax scene where we witness Francesco and Mehmet caressing each other by means of Martha's sneaking to the bathhouse since the camera hints frequently how Francesco likes watching Füsün with enduring and intense close-ups. However, her face in intense close-up is a hint and invitation for the spectator to contemplate her beauty along with Francesco.

Perran is depicted as a hard-working house woman and an ideal traditional mother figure that runs around to look after everyone. Both women of the family are shot mostly within the walls of the house or within the borders of the neighborhood. Though, respectively Francesco and Martha becomes the central figures of movement and action, both Turkish women are shot in confined and repetitious movements, they are mostly

fixed to a domestic locus. Throughout the movie, both Turkish women laboriously help the main figures of action by supplying food and psychological encouragement. The almost redundant scenes where both women are coming to the door and calling Francesco (“the tea/breakfast/dinner is ready!”) explicitly renders an Oriental women who has a natural softness and talent in serving and soothing the phallic power of men. Though, the character of Perran is given some window-to-window action with which she could exchange information and organize neighborhood resistance for the upcoming threat of evacuation, her role within the main course of events is a minimal rather than a contributive one, like the rest of the Oriental characters within the plot. Both women are positively represented in their virtue of empathy, motherly care and enthusiastic support for Francesco’s renovation project of Anita’s *hamam* (which means metaphorically a self-reconstruction at the same time). While Füsün is made available for the pleasure of returning the gaze of protagonist (but not the camera, since it would make apparent the mechanic presence of the camera and ruin the transparency of the story) by exposing her distinguished beauty, the bathing women in *hamam* are turned into an anonymous spectacle of eroticism and enable the first intimate touch between Francesco and Mehmet for now they share the guilt and joy of secretly peeping through the hole forbidden scene of naked Oriental women in *hamam*. The exclusively domestic and submissive portrayal of Oriental women becomes almost a celebration of authentic womanhood when we compare their tenderness and care with the cruel, selfish and ambitious illustration of Martha who does not seem to care for the needs of her husband but only her career. Martha is a strong, ambitious, and almost an over-whelming figure of femininity who is sexually and socially active. She enjoys the power to mock and sexually recline her husband and thus she leaves Francesco impotent. Her castrating

figure is put to sheer contrast with the soothing femininity of Turkish women when Martha comes to Istanbul to visit her husband. When Francesco asks Martha how she found the Turkish family, she answers: “Well, they are very nice and friendly people. And Füsün is a very smart and beautiful girl” though her gestures hints at something not avowed. It is obvious that she finds such naïve hospitality and servitude a bit overwhelming and annoying indeed.

As the subjective point of view of the unsteady camerawork slowly leaves the airport and comes out to the blinding daylight, Martha slowly emerges to be the new dominant subject that camera identifies with, following the events after her arrival in Istanbul . This substitution of Francesco with Martha will be completed at the final scene where she speaks over the panoramic view of Istanbul off-screen. As Martha becomes the main figure that the camera identifies with, she starts to go over a transition like his husband that will eventually lead to choose to stay in Istanbul as Francesco and Anita did. She becomes the new guardian of the bath house together with the old neighborhood, which obviously stood for everything about the good old Istanbul that should be preserved at all costs. When she completes the transition, she becomes milder, more compassionate, more “feminine”, finally leaving her cold and selfish identity behind. As she yields more and more to the proper roles assigned for an ideal woman such as desiring and understanding her husband, the more rhetoric of camera turns in her favor. It is only after Martha gives away her self-confidence and her decision to break up with Francesco, she could fill the subject position that her husband occupied. Only after such compromise she could deserve empathetic representation and claim the role of the pilgrim who watches over her dear Orientals and enjoy the freedom

and power hiding behind such benevolence. Such exchange of power from the Western male to Western female is actually a temporal stabilization of the phallic order and it is a very symptomatic characteristic of the Western woman's dubious positioning with reference to the hegemonic Western male subject before the inferior Oriental man and woman. What Maria Heung argues in the context of her analysis of *Indochine* (1992) is also valid to interpret how the phallic power passes to Martha in *Hamam*: "While the film seems to posit a reciprocal exchange of cultural valences, between women, these differences are valued hierarchically, so that European protagonist is placed in apposition of narrative authority, whereas the "other" woman occupies the role of the visually subordinated and the silenced." (172)

Likewise Ella Shohat argues for this transference of phallic power: "Although the imperial narrative is ultimately masculinist, the ambiguous role of European female characters complicates the analysis. [...] here the intersection of colonial and gender discourses generate a shifting, contradictory positioning. [...] In many films, colonial women become the instrument of the White male vision, and are granted a gaze more powerful than that of non-Western women and men.[...] In sum, the colonialist discourse on gender has Western women occupy a relatively powerful position on the surface of the text, but only as the bearers of a gaze more colonial than sexual." (Shohat 166)

5.2.2 Harem: The Locus of Desire

We can find a similar gesture of such relative empowerment of Western woman vis-à-vis the Oriental men and women in *Harem Suare* as well. Harem is perhaps the most attractive Oriental site for the Western imagination and fantasy. Shohat makes a sharp distinction between two types of attitudes to represent harem. In its wide-spread Eurocentric form, “authorizing a voyeuristic entrance into an inaccessible private space, the harem dream reflects a masculinist utopia of sexual omnipotence. [...] Whereas Eurocentric discourse has defined the harem as simply a male-dominated space, a sign of “Oriental despotism”, other accounts have emphasized the harem as a privileged site of female interaction and even of Sapphic fantasy. “ (Shohat 161-163) If we attempt to locate *Harem Suare* to this two-fold schema, certainly we will face with an ambiguity that will render such categorization difficult. Since *Harem Suare* differs from the stereotypical Western handling of harem that could be best illustrated with eighteenth century Orientalist paintings, Hollywood productions and pornographic/erotic films in its narrative handling, though the visual strategies do certainly resemble the conventions that has been set up by these earlier forms. However, if we focus more on the narration and script, the film certainly fits into the second category through which the harem is depicted as a complex institution where women do contribute, challenge and share the power and politics. The harem of *Harem Suare* has a completely different story than the classical composition of the despot surrounded by the concubines. If the first, one which is obviously coded as the regressive category, is characterized by the significant emphasis on the omnipresence and infinite sexual power of the despot, *Harem Suare* extraordinarily departs from it. Since the Oriental despot/sultan, who is played by Haluk Bilginer as Sultan Abdulhamid, has been posited marginally on the border of the text. There are very few scenes where the spectator could see the Sultan himself and most of

them are visually impeded circumstances where the camera captures his image only partially or with a constraint that bans the spectator to see him completely (for instance the shot where we see him playing piano from his back, or the quick and partial glances of camera that does not capture him at full front). It is as if the sultan, though it has been hinted that he has a vast authority and evokes grandiose and confusing emotions such as fear, respect and adoration, is a kind of a distant and marginal figure in his own private domain, which could be counted as a more historically accurate version of the relation between the Ottoman sultans and the institution of harem. Although the character remains marginal or only adjacent to the main plot, his almost invisible and inaudible impact and influence authorizes the unfolding of the protagonists' faiths from this off-screen position. Such subtle audiovisual strategy portrays his presence as a sort of infrastructural and abstract law that governs the destinies of women and the rest of the palace servants. In this harem, women are not dumb sexual slaves but active and sometimes incredibly strong political figures that shape the future of the empire with their fierce competition to give birth to the next sultan.

Moreover, the sexual life in harem is portrayed in various different forms where we witness homosexual relation between girls, between a soldier and eunuch (Sümbül) and heterosexual yet transgressive ones such as between Safiye and Nadir. However, such departures from the classical schema do not help the film to be entirely freed from the Orientalist structures. On the contrary, the basic Orientalist assumptions subsist within the re-formulation. "To suggest that Orientalism establishes its systematic character through its citationary nature does not mean that every single text is nothing but a simple repetition of another. [...] In other words, we should not simply look for the re-statement

of Orientalist topos in the act of simple repetition of earlier ideas and images, but also in displacements, divergences, and even in the dissemination of dissenting ideas.”

(Yeğenoğlu 71) *Harem Suare* enables one of the most hideous and mysterious sites of Orient to be exposed and revealed in front of the eyes of the spectator. To render such story possible, convincing and appealing to the Western audience, there is only way and it is to utilize the Western female protagonist who may access to and inhabit within the exclusively female site of harem. Different from the Western female travelers who retrieve such information, the protagonist of the film is an insider and outsider at the same time, an Italian aristocrat who has been enslaved and given to Sultan to become one of his concubines. We understand that she has been brought up in harem according to both Eastern and Western values due to the increasing Western impact taking over the Ottoman Empire and that steadily infuses even the most traditional and private domains of palace structure. However, one must remember how she could last her favorite position for Sultan, since her greatest advantage was her excellent education in Western manners and high-culture such as opera which would enable her to get closer to Sultan as it has been planned and foreseen by Nadir, her partner and lover. If her exclusive advantage is her affinity with Western high culture and language, it is again her Western traits of individuality and self-confidence that makes her an almost natural leader of the concubines during the times of crisis and dissolution. It is again only Safiye who could stand up and challenge the soldiers who break through the sacred doors of harem to announce the so-called emancipation of concubines. Safiye's apparent identification with the Oriental inhabitants of harem, her ability to speak their language and know their manners is in the final instance to emphasize her distinguishing characteristics that make her the protagonist of the story. Yeğenoğlu, in her attempt to

re-locate Western women within the context of Orientalist writing by means of reading *Lady Montague's Letters*, argues that “the imperialist gesture of subject constitution is always predicated upon the recognition of the other through assimilation, through the logic of the same. [...] Within the apparatus of colonial power, difference is always understood through the logic of the same, through the self, and as such is nothing but an inverted mirror-image of the same. [...] In the very act of identification she establishes with Turkish women, Montaguee does perform the violent transformation implied in the act of translation of cultural difference in to the self/same.” (85)

Although our case is a much more complicated one, since unlike Lady Montaguee, Safiye is a fictive character whose cultural identity is depicted as a kind of complex hybrid. However, such complications do not change the fact that she is primarily inscribed as a Western protagonist around which the whole narration is organized. Although her identification with Turkish women (indeed, the national identities of other concubines are not implied within the movie and we know from the historical facts that harem was made up from non-Turkish, mostly European ethnicities who were culturally assimilated for the obvious political concern of not mixing the authentic Ottoman blood with other Turkish lineages) goes far beyond Lady Montague's empathetic remarks to an almost confusing degree regarding her cultural identity, it is still certain which portion of cultural and ethnic heritage dominates and determines her portrayal.

If we remember the bath house scene where Safiye caresses Kara Nergis with incensed oils in return for Nergis' domestic and usual service of washing the concubine for the

upcoming night, we may argue that through the erased and pacified presence of Nergis, Safiye could adopt the masculine gaze and the phallic power that are exclusively reserved for men. This homoerotic scene is followed by her direct confrontation of Nadir who secretly watches them behind the blinds. It is as if the whole encounter was theatrically made-up for Nadir and hence, by implication, the spectator. The power of this particular scene emanates from Safiye's adoption of masculine desire and gaze upon the body of the Oriental feminine.

This borrowed and incorporated phallic power is the source of nostalgia and yearning for the originary scene of Oriental, the harem, which have been destroyed by the rising modernization that grabs and shakes the whole empire. It comes no surprise that through Safiye the film evokes the feelings of melancholia and nostalgia for the loss of harem and the authentic Orient, just like *Hamam*'s nostalgia for the golden days of Turkish bath houses; for the good old times when Istanbul was still Istanbul when it was promising sensualities and erotic adventures. What Yeğenoğlu argues for Lady Montague seems to shed some light on Safiye as well:

Therefore, to have the kind of appropriative and intrusive relation she has with the Orient, she attaches a phallus to herself so that she can enter into the domain of the other, to the origin of all civilizations, to the "mother-nature-Orient," and thereby be. Thus she finds the life-enhancing origin, which has been denied to her (in the West) within the phallogentric economy, in the Orient, in the space of its women. It is by entering into the harem/Orient/womb that she can reproduce herself and constitute her identity. She thus becomes the One/Self in relation to the Orient and Oriental woman. (93)

The dissolution of harem by *Ittihat ve Terakki* nationalist activists , contrary to the soldiers' claims that they bring freedom and salvation to the concubines, has been depicted as a traumatic event that ruin the concubines' lives. The concubines have been left in the middle of the turmoil that will eventually pace up by the end of the empire. Most could not start over a new life and go under more modern versions of oppression like prostitution and semi-erotic freak shows like Safiye had to. Rest of the harem workers, including eunuchs who once enjoyed significant powers, and minor servants like Nergis were returned to their countries where poverty and exclusion awaits. The film departs radically from the classical conviction, "that the harem is an inherently oppressive institution [which] functions as an a priori assumption" in most of the Western feminist and native nationalist discourses. (Zonana 155)

Zonana rightly points out that by this major premise "the lives of women in England or France or the United States can be compared to the lives of women in "Arabia," then the Western feminist's desire to change the status quo can be represented not as a radical attempt to restructure the West but as a conservative effort to make the West more like itself." (154-155) We must admit that film's rhetoric radically departs from this scheme, nonetheless, it perfectly fits to the nostalgic regression that Orient should remain as Orient eternally , since if it goes under historical changes like every other geography does, it would not provide the fantasmatic site for the Western subject to realize him/herself through masquerading, mastery and conquest. The same logic governs *Hamam*'s rhetoric as well disguising under a romantic criticism of high capitalism. Although both films could be read as progressive criticism of modernity in this regard, I insist that such reading would prevent us from thinking upon in what ways such naïve

criticism would profit the Western subject, since s/he constitutes the center of both films' concerns.

Harem, in spite of all the historical corrections and “positive” representation (which is indeed nothing more than a mere reversal of the classical Orientalist scheme) that the film seems to aim, is still rendered as the great spectacle where material abundance and ornamental female nudity and the harmonious composition of concubines (alluring to the polygamous fantasies of the spectator) has been displayed without problematizing the voyeuristic position of the spectator. Such exposing gesture is similar in its effects with what Malek Alloula argues for the colonial postcards from Algiers: “Better yet, to be the witness of such intimacy is to partake in it. And so, magically, the photographer enters through the main door into this holy of holies. He is no longer the surreptitious and sneaky visitor who steals away with a few meager scraps when a favorable occasion arises. Quite the contrary, having lifted the curtain, he roams openly throughout the harem, undisturbed, observing at leisure the life that is hidden from indiscreet eyes.” (Alloula 69) Such exposition is further fueled by the labyrinthine and disorienting design of interior settings that are partially disrupted with blinds, curtains and veils which will be overcome by the camera in the following moments; hence heightening the pleasure to see what lies in there.

Apart from the picturesque exhibition of harem as the fantasmatic site of passions, *Harem Suare* also brings a two-fold strategy to narrate the transgressive love affair between Safiye and Nadir. Such love affair is transgressive at least on two levels. One is the miscegenation between a white woman and a black man, which is one of the biggest

anxieties of the Western phallic imaginary. It is useful to remember how even the possibility of such encounter has become the target of immense censorship by Hollywood Production Code and how it is still one of the most avoided themes in mainstream melodrama although it provides an excessive supply of fantasy and fear and a frequent theme in porno and horror genres. The second aspect that renders the love affair so transgressive is maybe even more atypical, since Nadir is a eunuch, which means that he is castrated. These two transgressive aspects could be either considered as doubling the shocking effect or, on a second level, lessening the unease of one another. To understand such neutralization effect, one should better think of other two alternatives: If Nadir was not castrated; the alleged monstrosity of such miscegenous encounter could be amplified due to the alleged hypersexuality of black man. Then, such love affair would evoke the rapist fantasies that occupy the Western phallic imaginary stamping the cinema history right from its very beginnings with Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*. Alternatively, if the castrated lover was a white European male, the castration anxiety would surely be more heavily felt by the male spectator. Although it is not certain which way such combination may work, the alternative that castration of the black male relieves the fear of miscegenation should not be totally ignored.

In the scheme provided by Richon, eunuch emerges as the founding absence upon which the representation is based: (256)

What to think of a woman who desires one of them and what to think of men if eunuchs are desired by women? The eunuch would be a saint respected by all and a pervert desired by all. At this point, the role of the eunuch may be displaced. He would not only be the invisible spectator of the harem but the

one upon whom all places depend: he is a semblance, a seducer, a simulacrum. (Richon 256-257)

Since the eunuch is made visible and even made central in a love affair, his position is no longer the founding absence that Richon speaks of with reference to academic Orientalist paintings. Within the context of *Harem Suare*, there is a complex operation that first posits and exhibits the radical alterity of Nadir regarding his skin color and castration which would later be disavowed and normalized with a certain rhetoric. His racial alterity is compensated by the specific choice of a native French actor, whose perfect French speech would help to get him closer to the Western identity despite its apparent simulacral condition. Language could play a significant role to relatively incorporate and ignore the racial difference when it is tactically required. Secondly, the radical alterity and the implicit threat residing in the condition of castration is relieved by a subtle normalization. Although Nadir is physically castrated, he seems to take a considerable share from the phallic power since he is a politically influential figure who could indirectly determine the successor of the empire. But, the most effective means of normalization is carried out by repressing the apparent oddity of the relationship between Safiye and Nadir. Although, they love passionately each other, Nadir has to and wills to sexually share his beloved with Sultan so that Safiye could bear a child to be the next sultan. Such scheme, which is intolerable for the Western norms of romance, is successfully repressed by converting them into a Western type of couple. Such strategy becomes most apparent when the camera captures Safiye and Nadir and the baby as an ideal copy of the proper Western family. Further, the scene that exposes Nadir making love to Safiye which ends with her orgasm could be conceived as the restitution of the proper heterosexuality. Malek Alloula mentions a similar gesture in colonial postcards

that composes Western-type nuclear families from Algerians, whose familial structures were not essentially monogamous.

The very ideas of the couple is an imported one which is applied to a society that operates on the basis of formations that are greater than simple twoness, such as the extended family, the clan, or the tribe. *First colonized, then rearranged along the bourgeois criteria, the Algerian family becomes, in the postcard, only the exotic (see the dress) replica of its European counterpart* (Italic author's, Alloula 38-39)

Such universalization and consolidation of the Western couple relieves and hides the otherwise shocking nature of the relationship according to the Western standards of romance.

3.2.3 Adventures in the Orient: Mastery and Dissolution

Lastly, the homoeroticism of *Hamam* should be briefly mentioned within the context of Orientalist practices. Joseph A. Boone rightly asserts that:

Perhaps nowhere else are the sexual politics of colonial narrative so explicitly thematized as in those voyages to the Near East recorded or imagined by Western man.[...] For such men, the geopolitical realities of the Arabic Orient become a psychic screen on which to project fantasies of illicit sexuality and unbridled excess—including, as Malek Alloula has observed, visions of “generalized perversion” (95) and, as Edward Said puts it, “sexual experience unobtainable in Europe,” that is, “a different type of sexuality”(190). (Boone 209)

Although more egalitarian and less oppressive than the trajectories of Western homosexual men, including many literary names such as Gide and Wilde, who pursued the easily accessible sexual encounters provided by the boy prostitutes of Maghreb (Boone 211), Francesco's journey to Istanbul and his homosexual love affair with

Mehmet is not altogether disparate from the oppressive schema of Orientalism. Since the identificatory rhetoric of film works for Francesco rather than Mehmet, we, as spectators, largely occupy his point of view. And from such point of view, Mehmet, like his sister Füsün, is captured as the object of desire and aesthetic contemplation sustained by the camerawork that exposes his naked body and the incessant close-ups to reveal his androgynous beauty. While the actor who plays the role of Francesco is distinguished with his well-built body and masculine facial traits, the actor chosen for playing Mehmet has androgynous almost feminine looks. More important than that, while we pursue Francesco's novel homoerotic awakening, we know entirely nothing about Mehmet's former sexual inclinations, whether he was gay or not before he fell in love with Francesco although his obscene jokes about women hints at his ongoing interest in the opposite sex. His feminization and pacification should not be understood merely in sexual terms, since Mehmet has been rendered passive and submissive in his relation with Francesco like the rest of the family in almost all aspects of everyday life. While Francesco starts to renovate the bath house together along with his own alienated life, Mehmet is readily at hand for helping this ritual of recreation.

Perhaps, the one and the only erotic scene where we see two men caressing and kissing each other illustrates this point more than anything else. The composition is highly stylized, where we see Francesco having the upper hand and dominating the scene. Mehmet lies exposing his body. His image has been blocked by the overwhelming body of Francesco kissing him. Such bodily gesture clearly illustrates the feminization of Mehmet to enable the restoration of Francesco who had been castrated by his al-too-potent wife. It is obvious that the love affair between two men is informed and perhaps

enabled by the asymmetric relations of power and mobility. However, the film totally ignores this crucial issue and naturalizes the whole staging by successfully erasing Mehmet from the site of enunciation by locating him as the object of desire. Therefore, the whole homoerotic encounter becomes the exclusive experience of Francesco that validates and re-adjusts his identity while leaving Mehmet totally out of question. Without the Orientalist discourse that displace and re-adjust itself, the whole economy of this transgressive experience would entirely change, perhaps even could not be possible. The sexual liberation of Francesco comes at the cost of objectifying Mehmet, whose desire for Francesco could not exist without the obvious asymmetrical power relationship between the two.

As a final point, the play of sexual and racial difference that has been accepted and disavowed at once (a common gesture that dominates the whole Orientalist discourse), also determines both films and actually sustain the sexual fantasy of loss and mastery that gives the verve to both stories. No matter how the sexual encounters between the white protagonists and the non-Westerns are depicted “positively”, carrying all the virtues of a properly Western romance, it does not help to resolve the films with “happy endings”. It seems that both films are somehow compelled to end with tragic death, dissolution and loss. While in *Hamam*, Francesco is murdered by a Turkish gangster hired for the reason that Francesco had gone against the emerging capitalist authorities; in *Harem Suare*, Nadir throws himself under a train (which hold allegorical meanings as well) and Safiye awaits her own death alone. It is as if both sexual and racial transgressions should be symbolically punished; as if it is entirely impossible for these people to live their life together at least for some time or to simply go on their lives after

breaking-up. Indeed, by such tragic ending, two things have been sustained at once. The first one is the maintenance and re-appropriation of the phallic order that inserts itself forcefully upon both texts. As Deborah Root argues within the context of the novel and film *Sheltering Sky*, “The notion that cultural difference provided authentic experience functions again and again as a kind of *pharmakon* for the Western colonialist subject, in that this experience is presented as something that can (appear to) cure the Western disease of alienation and ennui, but which can also kill and render insane. [...] Hence the equivalence of “going native” and madness [*which equals to other versions of radical subject dissolutions such as, the illness of melancholia and death in Özpetek’s films*]; in such stories the encounter with difference produces a kind of poison, and in this sense it is possible to say that Kit and Port suffered from difference poisoning.” (Root 85) In Özpetek’s films the difference that has been celebrated as the cure and renewal of the alienated Western subject, is held implicitly responsible for the following tragedies. The same gesture that forecloses both narrations with tragic ends also, paradoxically, sustains a certain criticism against modernization that cannot tolerate deviances from the norms it inserts. Despite the apparent contradiction between these two readings, I believe that it does not weaken the inherent Orientalist schema, on the contrary grant even more vigor and credibility supported with an alleged criticism of Western modernism.

In a dialectical relation with the first schema that resolves both stories in favor of a symbolic punishment for transgression, the tragic dissolution of protagonists could be argued to negate and sublimate the inevitable change and turmoil of modernization, which also enabled to shake the former power relations in favor of the colonized (yet, not without its own problematics as we can clearly observe in nationalist projects). By such

maneuver of denying the lovers the chance to carry on together and also the possibility of movement and change after the loss of one of the parties, film consolidates the colonial power inherent within the texture of their love affair. By the gesture of self-destruction or self-exile, their love is rendered immune to the inevitable law of change and time and becomes a frozen memorable for the good old days of Orient.

5.3 Summary

An ambivalent economy resides in this play of difference and identity that first posits then disavows a difference that could only be understood in terms of the identical and the same. This economy is constitutive for Western subject to found the boundaries of his identity by means of positing and figuring what/who is different from himself. This objectification of the other is historically congruent with the colonial desire of conquest and mastery over other cultures, which has been justified on the basis of a self-claimed superiority of the West. However, the violence actually starts with an antedating inscription of epistemological and ontological difference that incessantly produces a hierarchical subordination of the other by the self. The orchestration of difference is the very means of giving a distinct, transparent and immediate figure/form to the other in order to achieve a holistic and immediate identity of the self. This operation has to

repress repetitiously what precedes itself, that is the essential ambiguity and instability, the actual mimetic condition of self-engenderment. The violence starts with the very gesture that gives an essential and static figuration/form to the other and such inaudible and invisible inscription cannot be noticed by logocentric epistemology that favors an immediate and transparent conception of presence.

That is why a persistent deconstruction of Western subject is needed if we want to disrupt the Orientalist discourse which is one of the constitutive instances of engendering and stabilizing his identity through establishing a binary structure between western and non-Western:

The binary structure is the very structure which produces the desire for sovereign subjectivity, i.e. the economy of the subject. The sovereign subject is based on the fiction of an absolute limit by which he excludes others and recognizes himself a autonomous. A reversal of terms is not sufficient precisely because it maintains the economy by which the same absolute limit is sustained, whereas the whole point deconstruction is to turn that limit into a passage (hence its difference from relativism). If the Hegelian economy works by making the subject recognize himself in the other, Derridean deconstruction makes the subject recognize the other in himself or herself. (Yeğenoğlu, 9)

Ferzan Özpetek's films unfortunately operate on the same Orientalist ground that they aim to overturn by means of staging an Orient that is aesthetically elaborated and enhanced to fit into the sensual and desirable picture; to the exclusive and disabling schema as the film makers want it to be. However, such flattering gesture does not expose and challenge the entrenched asymmetry established between the two parties.

6 CONCLUSION

I have tried to produce a critical discussion that elaborates the intrinsic relation between Orientalist practices of representation and the exclusively Western inclination to know and determine its subject-matter by means of attributing a distinct form/figure that renders it at once stable and immediate for the knowing subject. Such endeavor of forming/figuring the other is closely related to the logic of subject/object dichotomy that governs the Western metaphysics. In order to posit the sovereignty and superiority of the (primordially male) Western subject, an economy of representation that exposes and produces a distinct and static figuration of the other is needed. By this maneuver, the Western subject would be able to posit the limit that distinguishes and elevates himself above other forms of subject formations.

Inspired by such deconstructive moment that reveal the fictitious (yet, such fiction produces “real” and “concrete” effects) character of Western subject formation, I have tried to develop a multi-layered argument that is built on three crucial aspects of this endeavor of figuration of the other, by means of a close reading of two films by Ferzan Özpetek. Firstly, I have tried to explain how an ocularcentric conception of figure and idea informs the Western metaphysics of presence and how such hegemony of vision

manifests itself within the Orientalist representations. Consequently, I have questioned to what extent both *Hamam* and *Harem Suare* complies with this exclusively Western scheme that fixes a picturesque Orient for the Western spectator to contemplate. In order to do this, I have paid special attention to the visual regime employed by both films and revealed that three elements that govern Orientalist representations, which are distinction, citationality and an obsessive anachronistic fixation which govern the visual aesthetics of both films as well.

Subsequently, I have concentrated on the second aspect of this strive for figuration, which is the sound-speech, that enables speech to substitute itself as the immediate and transparent evidence of self-presence of the speaker that would hide its representational essence. Following the deconstructive criticism of logocentric valuation of speech-sound, I have sought how sound had been utilized in both films with a particular emphasis on the voice-over narration that both *Hamam* and *Harem Suare* extensively employed. My conclusions were that voice-over and musical scores, for both films, operated as a suturing tool that bind and unify the otherwise highly expanded and discontinuous layers of spatio-temporalities and hence they help bringing about a unified historical scheme that emphasize continuity, repetition and totality by repressing discontinuity, difference and singularity of what it narrates. With paying a special attention to the voice-over of Gülfidan character in *Harem Suare*, I have argued that in both films, the non-Western characters have been rendered as undifferentiated units of a unified category of Oriental by effectively erasing the heterogeneity and alterity of the characters such as Gülfidan and Kara Nergis. Therefore, I propose that, to sustain the tempting aesthetization of the Orient, both texts trivialize, marginalize and repress

certain identities and elements that would otherwise threaten the homogeneity of the frame

Finally, I have dealt with the third aspect that signs the Western anxiety of figuring the other, that is sexual difference. After briefly mapping the theoretical field that examines the curious articulation and embedding of sexual difference within the racial discourse, an exclusive reading of both films have been initiated with the axiomatic question of sexual difference, desire and anxiety in mind. Such reading, that has been informed by but not totally submitted to the psychoanalytical theory, has facilitated that both films stages the Orient as the locus of desire and sexual emancipation exclusively for the Western protagonists whereas effectively erasing the very conditions that render Orient available for such erotic quest of the Western subject. Both texts are authorized with a fantasy of reciprocal desire and an operation that reduces the Oriental to a mere object of desire who is not capable of resistance and rejection.

In conclusion, I argue that both *Hamam* and *Harem Suare* have been informed by the Orientalist conventions of representation. In their attempt to overturn the negative image of Orient and replace it with an appealing version, they have been caught back within the Orientalist scheme. Since the issue here is not necessarily about the good or bad illustration of Orient, but the preceding ontological distinction that endows the Western subject the very focal point of action and the referential quality to measure and validate the Orient. Both films, in their differing ways, cite the Orientalist conventions, challenge and replace some of them if necessary to re-structure the Oriental picture to render it as the suitable stage for their stories. “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.” (Yeğenoğlu 72) The challenge these two films bring helps to fix the Orient as picture, albeit a pleasant one this time. The Orient stays as the exquisite stage for the Western protagonist to perform himself; it has to remain as the eternally same background for the Western subject to be able to attain movement.

Ferzan Özpetek’s entire oeuvre (including the other two films he directed) seems to be signed with a strong theme of nostalgia that yearns for an originary and authentic elsewhere and a fairy “once-upon-a-time”. His cinema could be characterized with a particular aesthetics of nostalgia and a fantasy of recurrence by means of homogenizing the past and present events through analogy. Concerning this significant drive that sign his style, it is not surprising that his cinema has an intimate almost passionate relationship with Istanbul and Rome, since both are very old cities where vast time layers do coexist side by side. His representation of both cities seems to be determined by his longing for an indeterminate past. In his analysis of exilic, diasporic and postcolonial ethnic filmmakers, Hamid Naficy, observes that exilic filmmakers “memorialize the homeland by fetishizing it in the form cathected sounds, images, and chronotopes that are circulated intertextually in exilic popular culture. [...] The exiles’ primary relationship, in short, is with their countries and cultures of origin and with the sight, sound, taste and feel of an originary experience of an elsewhere at other times.[...]

freed from old and new, they are “deterritorialized,” yet they continue to be in the grip of both the old and the new, the before and the after. Located in such a slipzone, they can be suffused with hybrid excess, or they may feel deprived and divided, even fragmented. [...] As a result, they tend to represent their homelands and people more than themselves.” (Naficy 12) Although, we know that Özpetek is not an exile, his cinema reveals certain characteristics of Naficy’s definition and his cinema more radically differs from postcolonial filmmaking, which Naficy gives Trinh T. Minh-ha’s *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1985) as an example. According to Naficy postcolonial filmmakers “do not recover an existing past or impose an imaginary and often fetishized coherence on their fragmented experiences and histories. Rather, by emphasizing discontinuity and specificity, they demonstrate that they are in the process of becoming.” (Naficy 16) Özpetek’s films perform an apparently contradictory, indeed two complementary gestures at a time. One is the idealization of homeland and nostalgia for a lost time and space, which must partially reflect the personal imaginary of the filmmaker himself, since he left Turkey when he was a young man. The second one is that the subject of enunciation authorizes both films from an exclusively Western position. As have been discussed in the previous chapters, the whole rhetoric of both films is mainly Western and they concentrate basically on Western protagonists, rather than pursuing the itinerary of non-Western characters. No matter how contradictory that this simultaneous gesture seems to be at the first glance, I believe that it illustrates the genuinely mimetic essence of identity construction and it could give us a hint about how the immigrant Turkish intellectual might easily adopt the Western glance towards the Turkish culture and history, which is very similar to the conventional response of the

in-home Turkish intellectual towards the confused, contradictory and complex history and condition of Turkish modernity and culture.

Özpetek's cinema, from the utterly Western position it occupies (not without unease and compromise for sure), is interested primarily with the story-telling function of cinema, not with the very conditions and problems of story-telling itself. As long as narration will be of primary interest, his cinema will respond to the conventional set of artistic problems that principally deals with how to master the audiovisual medium to convey the story in the best way. Özpetek's cinema definitely accomplishes what it seeks and as long as it succeeds, it will certainly not inspire a radical critique of the very position it inhabits and not respond to the postcolonial critique of Orientalism.

My discussion ends here. Yet there are obviously many points that inevitably could not be confined within the limits of this study. One, undoubtedly among many, is the question how the multilingual schema operates within the context of Özpetek's cinema, how it complies with and subverts from the dominant Western subject positioning.

Again, his other two films, *La Finestra di Fronte* and *Le Fate Ignoranti* deserve a discussion regarding how they convey the Turkish and Asian (who constitute the other immigrant typology that Özpetek seems to be interested and includes in his films) immigrant and how they respond to his/her problematic condition within Italian society.

I hope that this study will help to inspire following studies on films of Özpetek for his cinema provides an exceptional possibility to discuss emergent issues such as gender.

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