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Articles (Theme)

ORIENTALIST IMAGERY AND GAZE IN THE FILMS *IL BAGNO TURCO*, *ZENNE DANCER*, AND *AUF DER ANDEREN SEITE*

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Abstract

Orientalism still provides a rich literature to explore the mutually authoring power relations between the West and the East as well as the latent conceptualizations designating the Orientalist imagery. Based on a sexual difference perspective that Meyda Yeğenoğlu brings to Edward Said's theorization of latent Orientalism, this paper examines Orientalist imagery, iconography, and gaze in the films *Il Bagno Turco* aka *Hamam*, *Zenne Dancer* aka *Zenne*, and *Auf Der Anderen Seite* aka *Yaşamın Kıyısında*. As of methodology, semiotic film analysis is implemented deploying Roland Barthes's conceptualizations on first and second-level signification. The final analysis reveals that the visual and narrative structures of the selected films are ornated with Orientalist elements; namely, romanticism of the Oriental at the manifest level and homoeroticism of the Oriental at the latent level.

Keywords: Orientalism, sexual difference, homoeroticism, semiotic film analysis, gaze

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HAMAM, ZENNE, VE YAŞAMIN KIYISINDA FİLMLERİNDE ORYANTALİST İMGELEM VE BAKIŞ

Öz

Oryantalizm, Batı'nın ve Doğu'nun karşılıklı olarak birbirini kuran iktidar ilişkilerini ve oryantalist imgelemi belirleyen örtük kavramsallaştırmaları incelemek için hâlâ zengin bir literatür sunmaktadır. Meyda Yeğenoğlu'nun, Edward Said'in örtük oryantalist kuramsallaştırmasına getirdiği cinsel fark perspektifini temel alan bu makale, *Hamam (Il Bagno Turco)*, *Zenne (Zenne Dancer)* ve *Yaşamın Kıyısında (Auf Der Anderen Seite)* filmlerindeki oryantalist imgelem, ikonografi ve bakışı incelemektedir. Seçilen filmler çalışmada, Roland Barthes'ın birincil ve ikincil düzey anlamlandırma kavramları üzerinden, göstergebilimsel yöntemle analiz edilir. Analiz sonucunda, seçilen filmlerin görsel ve anlatı yapılarının oryantalist öğelerle bezendiği; açık düzeyde Doğulunun romantizmi ve örtük düzeyde Doğulunun homoerotizmi ortaya koyulur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Oryantalizm, cinsel fark, homoerotizm, göstergebilimsel film analizi, bakış

Introduction: Edward Said's Orientalism and Orientalism from the Perspective of Sexual Difference

The Orient exists in minds as a picture engraved with all the ideas and words produced on it on the grounds of East-West power relations. In the colonial era, most of the Orientalist works conceptualized the West as 'the self' while designating the Orient as 'the other.' In *Orientalism*, which holds its importance in terms of laying bare the binary conceptualizations on the Orient and the Occident, Edward Said (Said, 1979, p. 3) defines Orientalism as "a Western style for dominating, reconstructing, and having authority over the Orient." He asserts that "Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient's difference with its weakness" (Said, 1979, p. 204).

The notion of discourse and the discursive formation of the subject as they find their places in Michel Foucault's theorizations provide a ground for Said's explanation on the legitimized civilizing power that the West seizes (Bari and Eaglestone, 2011, p. 756-757) and an assurance on that Orientalism should be considered as a discourse. Post-structuralist theorizations that focus on discursive formation or difference to conceptualize the Other suggest that the West can define itself as modern, developed, and democratic providing that it constructs other civilizations as traditional, other, underdeveloped, or authoritarian (Keyman, 2002, p. 24).

The idea of Orientalism provided a new ground for the perception and comprehension of different constitutions, processes, and concepts, which is the reason it can be applied in different levels, and its character as an episteme is the result of the fact that Said defines Orientalism as an element of hegemony (Kahraman, 2002, p. 154). Deploying Gramsci's ideas on 'hegemony', Said suggests that the accumulation of cultural and political images of the Orient expose a textuality, as well (Güngör, 2011, p. 33). Şerif Mardin argues against the hegemonic character that is attributed to Orientalism by defending that it is patriarchal only within the temporary conjunctures; it is subject to change. He suggests that it is not possible to understand the Orientalist discourse based on a for-against dichotomy (Mardin, 2002, p. 113). Just as Mardin argues, Orientalist discourse might display variations and it is indeed subject to change at the *manifest* level. Mardin is also quite right to criticize viewpoints that focus on analyzing Orientalist discourse over direct oppositions. However, Said's conceptualization of latent Orientalism is not to be disregarded here as it is elemental in explaining the hegemonic character and textuality of Orientalist discourse.

Said's contemplations on the veiled hegemony of Orientalist thought carried him to a taxonomy on *manifest* orientalism and *latent* orientalism, the former referring to "the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology, and so forth" and the latter pointing out to "an almost unconscious (and certainly an untouchable) positivity" (Güngör, 2011, p. 206). While the manifest components reside on the surface and are therefore subject to historical change, the latent elements are timeless, identifying Orientalism as a discourse. As Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998, p. 34) puts it, it is this latency that makes Orientalism doctrinal and taken for granted, free from the transformations of time and space; what is more, it is the alterations in Orientalist articulations that guarantee its discursive unity. At this point, it is of great importance to elaborate on Orientalist gaze to understand how it constructs the Other both at the manifest and latent spheres.

Serpil Kirel (2010, p. 137) puts forward that "When a look turns into an action within which power relations and power patterns can be organized and seeing is used intentionally, what we have is no longer a look but a gaze." With reference to Luce Irigaray, Kirel (2010, p. 138) adds that investing into gaze is disproportionately prioritized along gender lines. In a similar fashion, Laura Mulvey (2009, p. 715) suggests that "in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, ... the determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure who is constructed accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role, women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*." The way of seeing inherent in this type of spectatorship, then, is of masculine orientation and it serves for the pleasure that male ego takes from voyeurism. The female figure in Mulvey's argument can be elaborated to an extent to include or correspond to anybody or anything considered as the Other. So, the gaze inherent in all ways of seeing is a manifestation of power and is organized to objectify and dominate.

What constitutes an elemental part of the quest for the Orientalist gaze in the films analyzed in this study is this sexual difference perspective that Meyda Yeğenoğlu brings to Said's Orientalism. She asserts that the taxonomies of the Orientalist discourse are aligned with the significations of the male-dominant discourse. Yeğenoğlu (1998, p. 37) asserts that the discursive formation of otherness is always sexualized and the subject-positioning that applies to genders is also manifest in colonial discourse. The Orientalist gaze, which refers to the way in which the Orient is envisioned and depicted, is associated with the "male gaze" which constructs the Oriental Other as sensual, feminine, exotic, and inferior. In this context, the Orient is

located as the feminized Other and the empty space of the subject is occupied by the masculine West. However, the positioning of the Western male/female and the Oriental male/female is made vis-à-vis the power relations between and among them, as well. So, there is no essential and fixed position given to any subject; all the subject-positioning takes place within a power/knowledge economy on a foundation of difference.³

It is of importance to understand how Orientalist gaze was constructed in this sexual difference economy. In the 19th century when Orientalism was institutionalized in every field, the European artists were indulged in putting sensational Orientalist iconography on canvas (Germaner ve İnankur, 1989, p.52), which can be considered as the most concrete attempts of sexualizing, and along with this, homoeroticizing the Oriental. Boone ascertains that “no other geographical domain onto which the Anglo-European gaze has fixed its sometimes imperial, sometimes covetous, sometimes simply curious eye has been so associated with the specter of male-male sexuality over the centuries” (Boone, 2014, p. xx). Accordingly, a significant number of European’s paintings were characterized by ‘the eroticized harem, bath (*hamam*), and dance (Bal, 2010, pp.13-23). Examples like *The Snake Charmer*⁴ (1879) by Jean Leon Gerôme carry the connotations of Oriental homoeroticism as both the lookers in the painting and the viewers of the painting are in the position of “voyeurs” indulging themselves in the pleasure of looking at a naked boy, thereby transforming into holders of active male gaze.

To stand as similar examples from Eastern works of art from the 18th century, in *Huban-ı Tellak* (1793) by Enderunlu Fazıl (cited in Boone, 2014, p.79) and the illustration of dancing boys in a *hamam* by Münif Fehim Özerman (cited in Pasin, 2016, p.133), both the young *tellak* and the boys illustrated dancing in *hamam* are the passive objects of active male gaze. These are representations that “are coded with a heteronormative conception of sexuality ... in which the passive male is considered an effeminate homosexual” (Pasin, 2016, p. 133).

As outlined, the practice of homoeroticizing the Oriental male has found a solid ground to itself in the Orientalist discourse and the Orient has been aligned with exotism and perversity as opposed to Western orthodoxy. In peculiar, the men’s *hamam* as a site of potential homoerotic encounters and the attractive dancing boy are leitmotifs of Orientalist narratives and representations serving as the objects of mystery, desire, and voyeur for the Western gaze.

Orientalism is a frequently studied concept in film analysis and many of the works aim to reveal how misleading the depictions of the Orient are.⁵ The significance of our study resides in its stance as we do not focus on discrepancies between the image and the reality but on the noteworthy pattern of manifest and latent Orientalism in three internationally screened and critically acclaimed films from a sexual difference perspective, which elementally complicates ready-made dichotomies by featuring the theme of

³ For a discussion on the shifting positions of subjects in the Orientalist representations: Hasan, M. M. (2005). The Orientalization of gender. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 22 (4), 26-56.

⁴ Gerome, J. L. (1879). *The Snake Charmer* [Painting]. The Clark Art Institute, Massachusetts. <https://www.clarkart.edu/artpiece/detail/snake-charmer>

⁵ Two examples for studies exploring Orientalist tendencies in cinema are [1] Yanık, A. (2016). 18. yüzyıl Batı Felsefesi’yle yaratılan Oryantalist Türk(iye) imajı ve sinemaya yansımaları: IMDB üzerinde bir analiz. *International Journal of Social Science*, 43(1), 361-381. doi: 10.9761/JASSS3228. [2] Türk, M. S. and Şahinoglu, F. (2018). The presentation of Turkey and Turkish image formed in the light of orientalist saying in American Cinema. *The Journal of International Civilization Studies*, 3(1), 463-490.

'self-discovery'. Said points out to the importance of understanding why the Orient seems to suggest sexual promise as it is "something eliciting complex responses, sometimes even a frightening self-discovery, in the Orientalists." (Said, 1979, p. 188).

In the films analyzed here, the Oriental is pictured as an object of desire which is first made passive, but which then turns into a mirror on which the Westerner looks at its reflection and goes through a process of self-discovery. The theme of self-discovery can only be sensed by "being aware of the visible or invisible existence of power and pursuing small details and traces about representation" (Kirel, 2010, p. 154). Therefore, it is almost imperative to call upon Roland Barthes and his semiotic analysis to uncover the hidden, i.e., latent meanings. For this purpose, after examining the Orientalist imagery and gaze in the selected films, the article concludes with a chart overviewing all the elements denoting or connotating an Orientalist standpoint.

Research Design and Methodology

This study looks for an Orientalist ground and potential reproductions of Orientalist imagery from the perspective of sexual difference in the films *Il Bagno Turco* (Özpetek, 1997), *Zenne Dancer* (Alper and Binay, 2012), and *Auf Der Anderen Seite* (Akın, 2007), which stand out with their unorthodox representations on sexual difference. The most important common characteristic is the representations of East and West via inter-cultural non-straight romantic affairs, which makes them suitable for an analysis from the perspective of sexual difference accompanied by a quest for the Orientalist imagery. The criteria in the selection of films are the narration styles, themes, different types of gaze used, representations of the West(ern) and the East(ern), and the overlaps and variations among the story lines.

The commentary largely relies on sociological and cultural analysis utilizing Roland Barthes's conceptualizations on semiotics as a supporting component. Semiotics is a discipline so broad in scope, and the main purpose of this study renders it redundant to provide the reader with a comprehensive literature review on semiotics⁶. Barthes's (1972) analysis of the cover of *Paris-Match*, covering first-level and second-level signification and myth, is taken as a model to analyze the selected films in this study. Barthes maintains that anything in culture can be a sign which can send a particular message and describes some ways to decipher these messages. For Barthes, everything can be a myth as long as it is meaningful, or it conveys a specific message. Signifiers are all the available signs that have a meaning but acquire additional meanings when used as myths (1972, p. 114). For Barthes, the signifier in myth is the form, and the signified is the content. This 'form' uses a fully meaningful sign 'inherited' from culture, which points out to two levels of signification (1972, p. 115). The "first-level" meaning is what we immediately see when we look at a sign. In second-level signification, myth is not deprived of its proper meaning; the first-level meaning is still in place. What myth does is to distort the meaning of the sign to send an intentional message (1972, p. 122).

What makes semiotics highly instrumental in our analysis is that it provides the means to inspect, unearth and study filmic signification patterns. Warren Buckland (2000, p. 6-10) maintains that "film semiotics

⁶ For an extensive reading on semiotics: [1] Akerson, F. E. (2016). Göstergelime giriş. İstanbul: Multilingual Y. [2] Rifat, M. (2014). Göstergelime ABC'si. İstanbul: Say Y. [3] Chandler, D. (2007). Semiotics: The Basics. Routledge.

reflects on the very nature of film's existence, together with the consequences it has on culture and society" and "adopts the two-tier hierarchy between perceptible and non-perceptible levels of reality." Semiotics, then, helps transcend the level where images are simply linked with their referents and paves the way for deciphering possible meanings produced on the non-perceptible level. Such an explanation requires deploying data from sociology, psychology, aesthetics, history, and the like (Büker, 1985, p. 50). Semiotic analysis for hidden meanings on the non-perceptible level of signification is instrumental in the quest for Orientalist codes, and this is the rationale behind relying not only on sociological and cultural analysis but also benefiting from semiotics, which are mutually authoring. Overall, the scenes in the three films are analyzed as a whole, encompassing camera angles, *mise-en-scene*, lighting, music, sound, and narration with the purpose of uncovering hidden meanings.

Panoramas of the Orientalist Imagery and a Quest for Orientalist Gaze in Films *Il Bagno Turco*, *Zenne Dancer*, and *Auf Der Anderen Seite*

Il Bagno Turco

Francesco (Alessandro Gassman) and Marta (Francesca d'Aloja) are a married couple running a small company in Rome. Francesco's aunt Anita, whom he barely knows, dies in Istanbul and leaves him a Turkish bath. With a plan to sell the *hamam* and turn back as soon as possible, Francesco arrives in İstanbul where he is seduced by the appealing Orient and gets attracted to the son of the family running the *hamam*. He decides to stay to renovate the *hamam*.

As the camera follows Francesco from Rome to Istanbul, the Orientalist gaze gets to be perceivable. Madam Anita's voice-over permeating the scenes emphasizes the fact that the story is told from the perspective of the Italian characters. The imagery of warm-hearted people, the family atmosphere, solidarity, feelings of joy, relief and belonging, and bodily pleasures dominating the film offers that the Orient is romanticized rather than being marked with bizarreness, delinquency or menace. Leitmotifs like locked doors, windows, drawers, dark or dim spaces connote Oriental mysticism and shows the Orient as an object of knowledge and desire. Yet, the story ends with the murder of Francesco and the takeover of *hamam* by Marta, which stands as a clear depiction of the destructive nature of the Oriental and a reinforcement of the rescuing, ruling, and civilizing role of the Western.

Variations of the Orientalist gaze can also be tracked on a path in which a distant and detached 'look' turns into curious, and even voyeuristic gaze. The Italian characters travel to the Orient not with an aspiration to learn about the Orient, but as the story develops on the orbit of a ruined *hamam*, they all develop a curious eye. In many scenes where Francesco lingers around the streets of Istanbul, gets in ruined buildings, and develops an interest in the *hamam*, the appeal of the Orient is elevated by a piece of music performed with percussion instruments.

The curious eye can also be found in Madam Anita's indulging in a voyeur of the most private experiences of the Oriental men from a peephole. Transforming from a stranger to a landowner (namely a *hamam*-owner) Madam Anita clearly decorates herself with the power of the revived omnipotent gaze and takes on the role of a protector of the private lives of Oriental men. Illustrative of shifting subject-positioning in Orientalist representation, Madam Anita occupies a masculine position as the holder of the Western gaze, the objects of which are Oriental men in homosexual affairs.

Yeğenoğlu (1998, p. 43) states that she considers "the European's immediate object of attention in the horizon of Muslim culture as his construct: the veiled woman is not simply an obstacle in the field of visibility and control, but her veiled presence also seems to provide the Western subject with a condition which is the inverse of Bentham's omnipotent gaze." To illustrate the omnipotent gaze Yeğenoğlu depicts, in a scene from the film, Mehmet (Mehmet Günsür) and Francesco peep the women bathing in a *hamam* by removing the cover on a window-like hole on its roof (Figures 1 and 2). From this perspective, the covered hole in the roof of the women's *hamam* imitates the veiled woman in Yeğenoğlu's argument and the voyeuristic experience of the two characters represents the desire to know. The male gaze is deprived of its power by the presence of the cover (veil) which, therefore, is something to be evaded. Peeping into what is veiled or forbidden reflects the male desire to know and control.



Figure 1: Mehmet and Francesco peeping the women bathing in a *hamam*



Figure 2: The partly nude female body as the passive object of the male voyeuristic gaze

Girelli (2007, p. 23-24) reads *hamam* as a symbol of Turkey, “a country which throughout the film remains profoundly exotic and archaic ... resting on Western notions of Oriental difference, antiquity, seduction, and alternative lifestyle”, and she asserts that this Orientalist representation “depends on an original distance between the Self and the Oriental Other.” In line with that, in the film, the beholders of the voyeuristic gaze, regardless of their designated gender roles as female or male, correspond to the phallogocentric Western eye, and the Orient signified with a *hamam* is the object of it. The position of the camera or the choice of voice-over facilitate the spectator’s identification with the gaze of the camera; in this case, the male-oriented Western eye.

The film plays around many contrasts to illustrate the numb West against the warm, eccentric and appealing East which underpins an all-too-familiar Orientalist representation, as well. First, on the part of the characters, the Italians “possess whatever belongs to an Orientalist, cold and rational Westerner image” (Diken and Laustsen, 2014, p. 44). “None of them are nice or warm-hearted; they have a stressful, career-based life in which appearance is foregrounded” (Diken and Laustsen, 2014, p. 43). On the other hand, Osman’s (Halil Ergün) family displays warm and welcoming attitudes an indicator of which is the table, always set with various and delicious food reminding of a feast. For Duncan (2005, p. 106),

the representation of the kitchen and the ways in which it was occupied proved a key metaphor for understanding the differences between Italian and Turkish culture, and indeed, the reluctance of the Italian wife to engage on any level in the rituals of food preparation and consumption clearly marked out the neurotic hostility with which she approached the world.

Such a portrayal also foreshadows the differing representations of Eastern and Western women. The Middle- or Far-Eastern female characters are overwhelmingly portrayed serving the men. The only female

character who does not comply with a stereotypical Orientalist depiction is the contractor who is a powerful businesswoman; however, her power is destructive and dangerous as she is the instigator of Francesco's murder. On the other hand, the Western women –Marta and Madam Anita- are portrayed as liberal businesswomen and entrepreneurs, which puts them in a relation of dominance with the Oriental.

As for settings and the whole *mis-en-scene*, the Italian characters' home in Rome is spacious and bright while the characters are most of the time distressed due to their relationship and hectic business lives. Duncan (2005, p. 105) states that "the conviviality of the Turkish home contrasts with the elegant, yet emotionally barren, house in Rome." There is no music in frames from Rome, and the only sound pertaining to Rome is Francesco's cell phone ringing frequently. The scenes from the house in Rome are given in depth-of-field shots which speak more to the audience and attributes almost no eccentricity. On the other hand, Istanbul is depicted as so alive and moving. Colorful and noisy fish bazaar, the food halls, old wooden houses, fishermen, street food, and the people seem to constitute an authentic harmony. We watch Francesco walk around the streets, and the music in these scenes reinforces the feeling of excitement and eccentricity. The interior settings are generally dim and most of the places are timeworn or ruined. There are many doors and windows symbolizing the veil and the hidden. More framing is at work in the scenes from Istanbul, which serves for emphasizing the attributed mystery. Even in depth-of-field shots, the depth of space is disrupted by the presence of doors and gates.

Though not elemental, *pavyon*⁷, belly dancers and the veiled woman Francesco passes by on the street altogether address the idiosyncrasy of the Orient in the beginning of the movie. Other imageries of cultural elements that are overtly Oriental can be listed as the circumcision of a boy and the following feast, coffee reading which is an authentic tradition dating back to the Ottoman, and a bridal procession. Perran's (Şerif Sezer) efforts to embrace Martha and make her feel as part of the family is given with a coffee-reading session between the two. Quite interestingly, what Perran reads in the coffee cup is the exact narration of what is coming up, which is still another depiction of the Oriental in an occultist fashion.

There is also a recurrent emphasis on the hidden, constructing the Orient as a site of phantasm. Locked doors, closed windows, drawers, chests, boxes, and eventually letters in sealed envelopes are the symbols of the hidden treasures of the Orient waiting to be discovered, leading and authorizing the Western to take control of them by unveiling them. Yeğenoğlu (1998, p. 48) suggests that

... the veil is that curtain which simultaneously conceals and reveals; it conceals the Orient's truth and at the same time reveals its mode of existence, its very being, a being which always exists in a disguised and deceptive manner, a being which exists only behind its veil. Therefore, the veil represents simultaneously the truth and the concealment of truth.

In this context, the locked doors, the secret gateway, the drawers, boxes, and the unread letters are all symbols of the veil. The feeling of unattainability brings about a desire to unveil, peep into or attain to the hidden which thereby turns into a site of phantasm. Parallel to this idea, the unopened and unread letters of

⁷ Pavyon is a night club where men listen to music from flamboyant singers, watch belly dancers, drink and eat under red lights in an arabesque atmosphere.

Madam are unveiled and read by Francesco, Marta and the spectator via the voice-over of Madam throughout the movie.

Another theme developed in the film is the Westerner's self-discovery in the Orient through a characterization of the Orient with free sexuality and homoeroticism, the hub of which is *hamam*. Upon learning from Zozo (Zozo Toledo) that Madam's heritage is a ruined *hamam* (*Aynalı Sultan Hamamı*, the "mirror" in the name suggesting a hope for self-discovery). When Francesco goes to see it, the outer door of the *hamam* is locked feeding the mystery and Francesco's desire to get in. The shots and camera angles focusing on the dim, dusty, and ruined hall, colorful decorations, dome-shaped roof, locked doors, gateways, and accompanying drum music in Francesco's scene in the *hamam* reinforce Orientalist exoticism. *Hamam* is where Francesco will discover his true self by immersing himself in its appeal. Francesco also manifests as a representative of the Western desire to 'rescue' because the *hamam*, if not rescued by its savior, will be sold and destructed.

Anderlini-D'Onofrio (2004, p. 172) discusses the film from Johan Huizinga's cultural notion of play and states that "they choose a life of spiritual fulfilment rather than material acquisition. As they give up conventional dreams, they discover how much of the joy was in playing rather than in winning." This spiritual fulfilment is well-illustrated with Francesco's playing backgammon, going to football matches, and starting to smoke a lot. These are also the signs of a transformation that he is going through; he is in a process of drifting away from the West, finding his true self, which brings with it a relief as displayed in the moments when Francesco cuts the telephone conversations with Marta short and when he falls asleep following a feast-like dinner in Osman's house. Said (1979, p. 190) states that "...with regard to the Orient there was a frank acknowledgment that it was a world elsewhere, apart from the ordinary attachments, sentiments and values of our World in the West." In line with that, in the movie, the Orient is portrayed as a hub of entertainment and laziness detached from the hectic and cold business life of the West. The Orient offers a break to the austere state of the Westerner.

As pointed out in the theoretical part of this study, fantasies related to *hamam* and the male dancer are among the primary images of Middle Eastern homoeroticism (Boone, 2014, p. 51). "Queer desire is constructed spatially through setting" since "the *hamam* as the Oriental (and decidedly non-Italian) space where Francesco and Mehmet explore their sexuality and, crucially, marking their queer desire as Other" (Boschi, 2015, p. 249). When Marta sees Francesco and Mehmet intimate in the *hamam*, she mocks him by arguing that 'what he is interested in is just having fun and doing *what he cannot do back in Rome*'. This is an implicit example which characterizes Oriental exoticism with seduction and subversion. The Orient is pictured as a site to satisfy suppressed homosexual desires. In accordance with Said's argument that "the Orient was a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe" (Afary and Anderson, 2005, p. 289), Marta depicts the Orient as a hub of deviance where the orthodox Westerner can experience all his suppressed fantasies.

In one of the final scenes, when Marta goes to see Oscar (Carlo Cecchi), an old friend of Madam Anita, Oscar says, "All this odor of oldness makes me sick, but I am a masochist, I just can't leave this place." Altogether, these scenes suggest that the Orient, as Said acknowledges, is where Francesco finds answers

about his life, thereby discovering and reconstructing himself and where Oscar, Madam Anita, and eventually Marta are inexplicably and happily stuck in.

Zenne Dancer

Inspired by a true story, *Zenne Dancer* is a feature film about a developing kinship among Daniel (Giovanni Arvaneh), a German photojournalist who came to Istanbul to escape his bitter memories, Can (Kerem Can), the draft-dodger *zenne* dancer, and Ahmet (Erkan Avci), the under-cover gay son of a conservative Eastern family.

The Orientalist gaze in the film can be traced first on the fact that Daniel is a Western photographer whom we watch taking photos in Afghanistan and in Istanbul. As Singh and Ladsaria (2017, p. 36) suggest, “the Orientalist photography addresses the convergence and the triangular gazes of distant culture and spaces” and in the photos that Daniel takes “local sitters have been frozen in historical images, which serve as Western phantasms of the oriental world.” The photographs on which Daniel captures moments from and images of the Orient are means by which Daniel seizes the Oriental and keeps it for himself eternally.

What draws Daniel to Istanbul is a catastrophic incidence in Afghanistan in which he causes the death of children. He cannot feel relieved of the guilt for a long time, and he comes to Istanbul to feel “*more protected and safe, far from all that dust and the fire.*” Daniel’s quest for happiness or answers is analogous to Westerner’s turning their gaze to the Other for self-discovery. Although Istanbul is first a safe port for Daniel, as the story develops, it turns out that it is a cage that incarcerates almost all the characters. Daniel, the signifier of the West with his camera, is destined to stay as a watcher of the Orient as his desire to be involved is thwarted by the destructive nature of the Orient. Therefore, the only thing he can do is to imprint and seal the Orient on frames that he can carry with him.

Belly dancers are like a prerequisite to draw an Orientalist imagery, and Can’s body, as a *zenne* dancer, is an immediate object of male gaze in the film. In the dance performance, the *zenne* dancer is the object of the combined gaze of the film spectator and the intra-diegetic audience. During his performances, parts of his body are shown in close-ups. Although there are several non-straight characters in the movie, Can’s is the body that is displayed the most, serving for the Orientalist gaze as an object of desire with the costumes ornate with paillettes, froufrou, and tulles. In this sense, the effeminate dancing body signifies the Orient feminized or homoeroticized by the Western male gaze (Figures 3, 4, and 5).



Figure 3: Daniel watching Car's performance



Figure 4: The dancing zenne



Figure 5: The dancing *zenne*

As other significant indicators of overall Orientalist imagery, Can's and Ahmet's beings (which signify the Orient), both as social subjects and cinematic elements are objectified, suppressed and literally incarcerated. Can's being entrapped is regularly pictured throughout the film in his dance scenes. Dancing in a cage and a rooster that he carries in a cage (See Figures 6 & 7) with himself are the other leitmotifs in the film which reinforce the idea of entrapment and complications of being the Other and a difference to the heteronormativities. Likewise, Ahmet is continually displayed as in danger and in fear. From this perspective, Can and Ahmet signify the Oriental in danger and in need of being rescued. Daniel, signifying the West, is pictured as the potential saviour of Ahmet. The Western rescue phantasy is latently at work on the same axis in both *Il Bagno Turco* and *Zenne Dancer*; however, what is to be rescued is different: a *hamam* in the former, and a homosexual man in the latter.

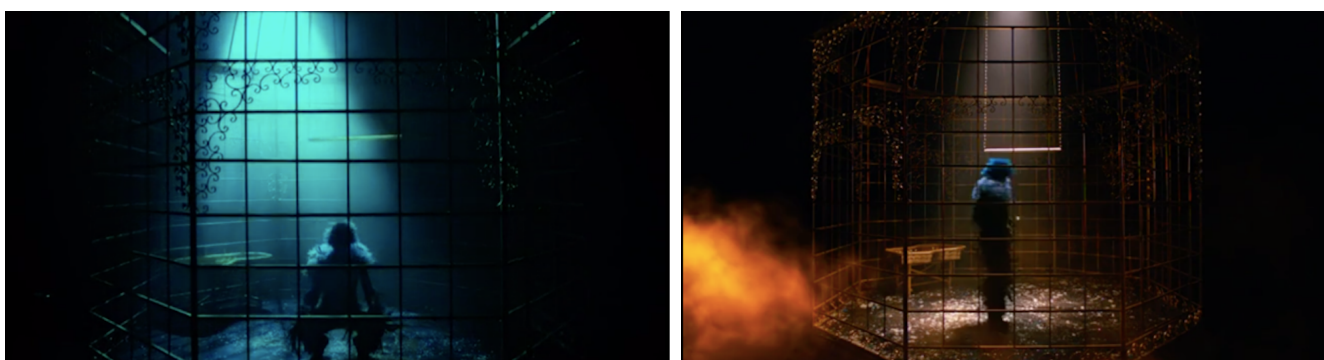


Figure 6: Can dancing in a cage



Figure 7: Can's rooster in a cage

The representation of the Oriental male characters, namely of Can, Ahmet, Ahmet's father Yılmaz (Ünal Silver), and the men Ahmet meets on the streets defies normative masculinity. On the other hand, Daniel, as the only Western male character, is portrayed going through a transformation in the Orient. And the evidence of his transformation is given with his growing a moustache on Ahmet's demand, indulging in delicious food and the beauties of Istanbul signifying the Oriental self-indulgence and jouissance, trying to speak Turkish, and the telephone conversations with Germany getting shorter. Gradually he is blended in the culture, and he starts to feel content with the person he has turned into.

The Oriental female characters of the film are framed by abidance, being entrapped, and being in pain. The only Western female character is Daniel's friend in Germany whose imagery is drawn upon mobility and independence; she is also the only employed female character in the film. On the other hand, despite presenting the differences in their lifestyles, the film objectifies and limits options for the Oriental women. Can's aunt Şükran (Jale Arıkan) is an "in-between" character who complicates a stereotypical Western(ised) or Oriental imagery. As a woman who lived and worked in Germany for years, now she is a remigrant who defies Eastern traditions with her lifestyle. Her affair with her partner is based on sexual intercourse on her demand; she doesn't want to live together with him nor take his money as a typical Oriental woman would do. However, Şükran's story develops quite stereotypically as she gives birth to a child, becomes a "mother" and reconciles with the idea of having her partner in her life. Ahmet's sister Hatice (Esme Madra) lives in Istanbul to take care of her brother; she cleans the house, serves the family, and assists her brother on whom her life turns around. Her femininity literally turns her into nobody. Can's mother Sevgi (Tilbe Saran) lives with her elder son who has mental problems, half-incarcerated in her house. Once again, cage is the leitmotif here. In several scenes (Figure 8) displaying Can's mother at home, the camera is positioned behind the bars on her house's windows.



Figure 8: Can's mother behind bars on windows

Ahmet's mother Kezban (Rüçhan Çalışkur) is a woman who seems to have devoted her life to her son as she is sick of her husband's submissiveness and impotence. Her imagery is characterized by religiousness, conventionality, and conservativeness. She demands male domination and the lack of a masculine power in her house leads her to be the masculine power itself. Her devotion to her son is apparently to annihilate his difference. She cuts Ahmet's colorful T-shirts off whenever she visits their house in Istanbul. The white T-shirts of Ahmet are the symbols of heterosexuality and cleanliness while the colorful ones are of homosexuality, deviance, and dirt. Foucault (1995, p. 170) suggests that "the success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments; hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination." Among all the others, Ahmet's mother is most specifically portrayed as both the object and the instrument of dominating gaze. She acts as the instrument of hierarchical observation, examination and there is no doubt that she tries to normalize and make her son a *man*. Although she seems to be a dominant female character as opposed to stereotypical female imagery, she does not speak for herself, but the power signified by custom speaks for her, which locates her as both the object and instrument of dominating gaze.

Overall, although non-stereotypical female representations sporadically woven into the film seem to complicate textbook Orientalism on the manifest plane, as the story develops and eventually comes to an end, the predominance of Orientalism can be easily traced in the film upon cultural and political images pertaining to the Orient.

Auf Der Anderen Seite

The Turkish immigrant father and son, Ali (Tuncel Kurtiz) and Nejat (Baki Davrak), live in Germany where Nejat works as a professor. Yeter (Nursel Köse) is a prostitute who accepts to live with Ali in return for an amount of money to be able to send money to her daughter Ayten (Nurgül Yeşilçay). Upon Yeter's being

unintentionally killed by Ali, Nejat decides to go to Turkey and find Ayten who is a member of an illegal armed political group and who, following a police raid, flees to Germany to find her mother where she meets Lotte (Patrycia Ziolkowska) and falls in love with her.

Auf Der Anderen Seite elaborates on 'being on the other side' from a perspective of East-West opposition. Moreover, the film captures "cross-cultural and intergenerational dilemmas" (Özselçuk, 2014, p. 174) as well. "Although the German title of Akin's movie, meaning 'on the other side', establishes separation and otherness, the film itself frequently links difference and commonality" (Burns, 2009, p. 18). The difference and commonality can be seen in political settings, familial relations, and a quest for new forms of identity. The Orient(al) is signified by İstanbul, and the characters Ali, Ayten, and Yeter. The West is signified by Germany and on the part of the characters, the Western imagery is given via Lotte, Susanne (Hanna Schygulla) and Nejat.

Lotte and Susanne represent two extremes of Orientalism. Susanne explicitly shows a classic Orientalist approach as she believes that the Orient, by definition, is a hub of conflict and may be tamed by the West. Lotte, on the other hand, is a romantic Orientalist looking for a meaning for her life in the Orient. Still another character, Nejat feels more like a Westerner than an Easterner and does not dream of turning back to his homeland. In that sense, Nejat does not fit in the "imagined Turk" or "the image of a homogeneous Turkish community inhabiting a unitary Turkish cultural space" (Aksoy and Robins, 2000, p. 344) in Germany. Rather, he signifies the West(ernised); born and raised in Germany, modernized and more 'European'; gentleman, sophisticated, wise, and respectful towards women. He represents an Orientalist illustrated with his critical attitudes towards his father's typical Turkish macho conduct and the negligence of Turkish people about protecting their values. Nejat is also the signifier of the civilizing role the West attributes to itself. He comes to Turkey with the intention of finding and helping Ayten. Nejat is portrayed as the representative of all the supreme values that the West holds vis-a-vis the ignorant Orient. On the part of the Eastern characters, Nejat's father Ali signifies the Orient with his stereotypically Oriental male imagery; rude, swearing, turning into a monster when drunk, jealous, thinking of women as men's property and inflicting violence on them.

The Oriental female is signified by Yeter, Ayten and Ayten's fellows. Beside their imagery as the Other just for being a woman, the Oriental female characters are portrayed as Others for prostituting, involving in political activities considered illegal or being in a non-straight relationship. Yeter is a woman who prostitutes to be able to send money to her daughter, Ayten. Yeter is represented as an object to satisfy (and eventually turns into the victim of) phallogocentric male ego. Ayten's otherness as a female is coupled by her being Kurdish, lesbian, and a political extremist. Despite her displayed strength and rebellion, her fragility manifests when she is turned down by her fellows. Yeter is represented as "ripe for government, needing leadership and guidance, described always in terms of lack" and Ayten as "outside society, dangerous, emotional, inconstant, wild, threatening, sexually aberrant, and unpredictable" (Carr, 1985 cited in Loomba, 2015, p. 160). These two characters are the embodiment of multiple othernesses. Overall, in the film, there is a different imagery of the Oriental women than the stereotypical housewife serving men. However, the tones of Orientalism manifest in different forms, particularly in how the story ends for the Oriental women. Yeter is killed and as the holder of the most self-contained personage, Ayten's marginality ends in imprisonment, then being rescued, and figuratively adopted by a Western woman.

Illustrative of the Orientalist gaze, Ayten is the object of Lotte's gaze as we watch Lotte interrogate Ayten a little while after they meet. Their conversation is given in a shot/reverse shot in which Lotte asks and Ayten replies. Each shot of Ayten's answers isolates her and traps her in her situation illustrating being *looked-at-ness* (Figure 9). The Oriental, signified with Ayten and her mysterious state, is the object of knowledge and desire for the Western. Ayten is also the character by whom the Oriental is homoerotized as she is the object of Lotte's gay desire. Lotte's being obsessed with helping Ayten as an aspect which gives meaning to her life explicitly demonstrates both the Western rescue phantasy and will to know for a potential self-discovery in the Orient(al). From the perspective of Lotte's and Susanne's will to help her, Ayten is "the woman to be rescued" by the romantic Orientalists from the dangers of the Orient. And in the end, Ayten is scraped off her marginality and she turns into a "Western mother's" daughter; so to speak, the Oriental is rescued and cared for by the West.

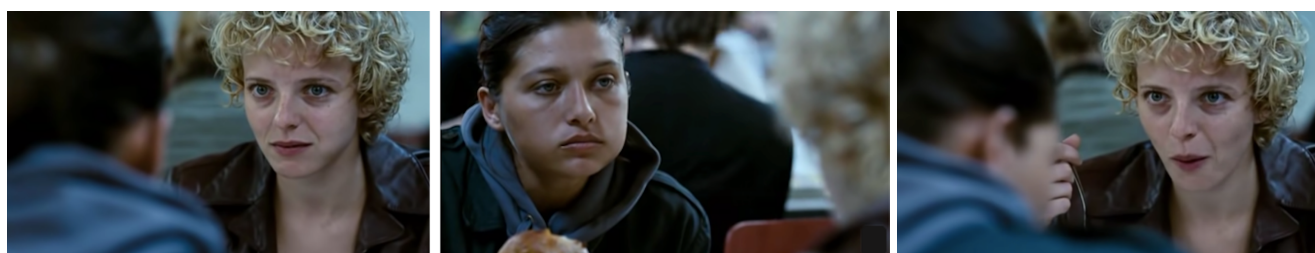


Figure 9: The mysterious Oriental as the object of knowledge and desire for the Western

Hints of Orientalism are also given with scenes of May Day demonstrations from Germany and Turkey. In Germany, it is pictured as just another day, people and bands march with banners and slogans; no police force is ready, passers-by watch the demonstrators, and there is no chaotic atmosphere. Germany is the signifier of the Western common sense. On the other hand, May Day demonstrations in Istanbul are characterized by a dominance of political extremism and conflict signifying the chaotic Orient (Figure 10).



Figure 10: May Day demonstrations from Germany and Turkey

Overall, the socio-political imagery in *Auf Der Anderen Seite* is drawn upon straight, mighty, all-correct, lawful, and savior West against chaotic, unlawful, and despotic Orient. The political structure pertaining to the Orient is characterized by obscurity on the part of the treatment of political extremists, slipperiness, indifference or lack of true mercy and intimacy while the political structure of the West is ornate with respect towards people's dignity and human rights, and lawfulness.

Conclusion

The main occupation of this study is not to unearth the overarching or diverging peculiarities between the image of the Orient and reality. It is more about discerning how latent Orientalism and its textual attitude assures its discursive integrity in singular occasions. What is thought to be hidden within the multiple layers of the signification system in fact finds outlets to itself in the multi-meaningful realm of the text and the image, and this is exactly what is at work in the films *Il Bagno Turco*, *Zenne Dancer*, and *Auf Der Anderen Seite*. Our analysis demonstrates that they exhibit the ineffaceable footprints of the Orientalist discourse at the latent plane despite several ruptures in the manifest plane of the picture.

From a semiotic perspective, the films exhibit six main signs (or myths) examined in a two-phase signification: (1) civilization (Western and Eastern), (2) country/city, (3) bloodshed, (4) detachment and reattachment, (5) pleasure, and (6) women. Table 1: Semiotic Analysis of *Il Bagno Turco*, *Zenne Dancer*, and *Auf Der Anderen Seite* outlines the signs/myths, the referents at the first-level of signification, and their connotations, that is, the latent meanings conveyed at the second level of signification.

In all the three films, the West and the East are signified by the characters and the *hamam* in *Il Bagno Turco*. The Oriental is characterized by the unknown and the mysterious, and therefore the Orient connotes a site of phantasm, a veil to be uncovered, and an appealing territory of danger. All the films play around many contrasts drawn particularly through the depiction of Eastern and Western countries/cities to lay bare the openness, clarity, modernity, and staidness of the West against the closedness, eeriness, vibrancy, and the chaotic atmosphere of the East.

Regarding the socio-political structure, the Orient is pictured as destructive and backward, and bloodshed is like a *sine qua non* in the representation of the Orient. In addition, in each film, a Westerner travels to the Orient and gets stuck in it although they witness, experience, or feel the eeriness. To illustrate, Francesco, Daniel and Lotte are all informed about the dangers they might face, yet they persevere in their pursuit of rescuing the Orient(al). The Westerners' being fascinated by the Orient(al) and persistence to stay there despite the dangers are moments that are quite analogous with the ambivalent characteristic of romantic Orientalism.

What complicates the picture and accordingly what makes these films stand as differences is that in each of them a non-straight relationship between a Westerner and an Easterner is depicted. The Oriental is feminized and/or homoeroticized by the Western gaze within a mutually authoring economy. The Western characters come to the Orient with the intention of turning back as soon as possible, but they end up being mesmerized and stuck in the eccentric and seducing Orient which transforms them. The Oriental is pictured as an object of desire which is first made passive, but which then turns into a mirror on which the Westerner looks at its reflection and goes through a process of self-discovery. The Oriental is both what is sexually desired and what transforms the Western bearer of the gaze and desire.

Table 1: Semiotic Analysis of *Il Bagno Turco*, *Zenne Dancer*, and *Auf Der Anderen Seite*

Film	Sign/Myth	Signifier	First-level signification	Connotations/Latent Meanings		
Il Bagno Turco	Civilization	Western	Francesco	a modern, strong Western man, in an endeavour to resurrect an oriental hamam	The West is the savior of the Oriental people, places and values that are in danger	
			Madam Anita	the first Western female owner of the hamam		
			Martha	the successor of Madam Anita and Francesco to run the hamam		The West is the subject and holder of gaze and power
Zenne Dancer				Daniel	a Western male photographer pursuing relief and meaning in the Orient; falling in love with an Oriental man	The West occupies an active and masculine position
Auf der Anderen Seite				Lotte	a young Western female with a resolution to help and rescue her Oriental girlfriend	The West has a civilizing role
				Nejat	a very well-Westernized Oriental man trying to find and help Ayten	The West is modern, sovereign, and superior
				Susanne	a middle-aged Western with an Orientalist perspective eventually turning into the stand-in mother of an Oriental young woman	
Il Bagno Turco			Eastern	Hamam	a historical and iconic piece of Oriental culture owned and restored by Westerners	The Orient(al) is the one to be rescued, loved, and accepted
				Mehmet	a young beautiful man turning into the object of desire for a Western man	The Oriental is the object of gaze, knowledge and desire (also of homosexual desire)
Zenne Dancer	Ahmet	a young homosexual man under surveillance of his mother and in danger of being a victim of honor-killing, turning into the object of desire for a Western man		The Oriental occupies a passive and feminine position		
	Zenne Dancer	a young homosexual belly dancer leading a fugitive life as he is a draft-dodger, object of male gaze when on stage		The Orient is a site of phantasm		
Auf der Anderen Seite		Ayten		a young beautiful woman, a member of an illegal political group, in danger of being held in prison, turning into the object of desire for a Western woman		
All	Country/City	Turkey/Istanbul & Urfa Afghanistan		Locked doors Blinds on Back streets Veil Sealed/unsent/ unread letters Dim/dark places Cage War/conflict Drums (music)	closedness, eeriness, vibrance, chaos	The Orient is exotic, mystic, exciting, and amazing The Orient curtails people's freedom
		Italy/Rome		Open doors No curtains No music		
Zenne Dancer & Auf der Anderen Seite	Germany	Lights on /bright spaces Non-chaotic atmosphere		openness, clarity, modernity, staidness	The Occident is enlightened, free, straight, modern, and non-exotic	

Film	Sign/Myth	Signifier	First-level signification	Connotations/Latent Meanings
Il Bagno Turco	Bloodshed	Knife	Death, violence (Francesco, Ahmet, Lotte, and Yeter are murdered, Ahmet's father commits suicide)	The Orient is barbaric and backward
Zenne Dancer		Gun		Death is spontaneous in the Orient
Auf der Anderen Seite		Gun		Human life is worthless in the Orient
All	Detachment and reattachment	Telephone	Shortening telephone conversations with the West	The Western gradually detaches from the West and is drawn to the Orient The Western goes through a transformation in the Orient
All	Pleasure	Turkish cuisine	Tables set with an abundance of delicious food	The Orient is lazy and seducing, and the Western finds relief in this
Il Bagno Turco	Women	Perran	a housewife generally pictured doing housework or serving men	Oriental women are servants; they are submissive Oriental women do not work or study; they are generally housewives Oriental women are deprived of rights their Western counterparts have Oriental women are spoken subjects If not submissive, then Oriental women are dangerous (in the contractor's and Ayten's case)
Zenne Dancer		Füsun	a young woman, neither working nor studying, generally pictured serving men	
		The contractor	a businesswoman, in an endeavor to buy and destroy the hamam, accessory before Francesco's murder	
		Ahmet's sister	a young woman studying, but always pictured serving men or cleaning the house	
Zenne Dancer		Ahmet's mother	a conservative and threatening housewife representative of custom, accessory before her son's death	
		Can's mother	a grieving housewife deprived of her desires and life to take care of her mentally ill elder son	
Auf der Anderen Seite		Can's aunt	a unemployed woman stuck in-between the West and the East, ending up in a mother and wife	
		Ayten	a member of an illegal political group, indulging in homosexual affair	
Auf der Anderen Seite		Yeter	a woman living on prostitution, getting married to an elderly man, being subject to violence and eventually murdered	
		Il Bagno Turco	Martha	
Zenne Dancer	Madam Anita	a refugee, turning into the first Western female owner of the hamam, peeping men bathing in the hamam		
Auf der Anderen Seite	Daniel's friend and manager from	an independent businesswoman		
	Susanne	a mother with an Orientalist perspective eventually turning into the mother of an Oriental young woman		
	Lotte	a university student with free-will		

The transformation of the Western characters is given more or less the same way through detachment from the West and attachment to the East. The Western characters gradually take their disguise off, develop a curious eye, fantasize about the hidden, and eventually meet their true selves while looking at the Other.

While in the pursuit of discovering what is hidden behind the veil and giving meaning and a shape to it, they themselves are reshaped and reconstructed by the Oriental, and given a new meaning. The characters' gradual detachment from the West is given with the shortening telephone conversations with their acquaintances back at home. Besides, they are increasingly attracted to the Orient which seduces them with the jouissance it offers. According to Sambuco (2016, p. 178), in *Il Bagno Turco* "the family meals mark the outsider's entrance into the community and his or her consequent attempts to understand new aspects of his or her own life and identity." Accordingly, in all the movies, Turkish cuisine, signified by tables set with an abundance of delicious food, carries the connotations of the pleasures the Orient offers, and the Western characters' indulgence in this extravagancy results in a bizarre relief that floods through them.

The Orientalist discourse also surfaces in the imagery of Oriental women as they are either "described in terms of lack" or "outside society and dangerous" (Loomba, 2015, p. 160). They do not work or earn money, if they happen to work, it would be a job which undignifies them. They suffer for various reasons, they live in their own little worlds, they neither have a vision, nor the potency to make changes in their lives, they are the victims of their destiny, waiting to be saved by the benevolent or by fortune. On the part of the Western, the females in all these movies are portrayed as independent, self-sufficient, and able to govern.

To conclude, our analysis on these films from a sexual difference perspective reveals that they are cultural products in which latent Orientalism can be traced on the non-perceptible plane, the exploration of which is facilitated by semiotic film analysis. In all the films, the Orient is constructed as a site of phantasm and the Oriental is pictured as an object of homoerotic desire with whom the "veiled fantasies" can be uncovered. Besides, the moments where the power subsides can be easily traced as each one embodies a type of Orientalist gaze and examples of shifting subject-positioning in colonial discourse, and at times depicts the Orient(al) as chronically and even by definition destructive. The Orient is also romanticized within the humanistic narratives of these films. The Orientalist visual elements and codes are enveloped by humanism and romanticism that manifest as the story of each develops. Overall, the generation of similar representations in each film is an illustration of the textual attitude of Orientalism.

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