

Narratives of resistance: national identity and ambivalence in the Turkish melodrama between 1965 and 1975

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National cinema and an identity in crisis

One of the first Turkish feature films, *Murebbiye/The Tutor* (Ahmet Fehim, 1919)¹ was banned by the allied forces which had occupied Istanbul just after World War I. It was adapted from Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar's novel of the same title, published in 1898. *Murebbiye* tells the story of a French woman who seduces the members of a snobbish family she works for. Apparently the text was meant to give a comical illustration of the upper classes' infatuation with French culture. But the film was released in the context of the occupation of Istanbul by the allied forces, and by then the focus was on the corrupt French tutor who, more or less, represented western woman. Domestic film circles read *Murebbiye* as Turkish cinema's 'silent resistance' to occupation.² What is more interesting is that the censor for the allied forces banned the film on the same grounds.

Woman as the site of production of meaning is one of the issues that I will discuss in this essay. For now, I would like to point out that the expression 'silent resistance' is somewhat problematic here. To the Turkish eye, the cinema was a western form of entertainment right from the start. Sigmund Weinberg, a Polish Jew of Romanian nationality, launched the first regular public screenings in Istanbul in

¹ The large majority of the films cited in this essay were not released in English-speaking countries. I am however adding my own English translation of the original titles to give an idea of their content.

² Nijat Özön, *Fuat Uzkınay* (Istanbul: TSD, 1970) cited in Giovanni Scognamiglio, *Türk Sinema Tarihi 1896–1986* (Istanbul: Metis, 1987) p. 28.

1896. These were Lumière shorts, *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de la Ciotat* (1895) among them. Weinberg also made some documentaries and was reputed to be an 'expert' in cinematography. Soon, companies such as Lumière, Pathé, Gaumont and Ciné Théâtrale d'Orient began to distribute French, American, German and Danish films. In the beginning, the audience of these films consisted mostly of the non-Muslim minorities who lived in Pera (now Beyoğlu), a district of Istanbul marked by a western life style. D. Henri screened films in a pub named 'Sponeck'; Matalon, another Jew, in the 'Luksemburg Buildings'; and Camdon, probably a Lumière man, in 'Varyete Theatre' – all places with western names. In addition, publicity was printed in French, German, Armenian and Greek but not in Turkish. Pera was posed as an object of desire for the Muslim upper class and, partly, for the intelligentsia at a time of modernization fuelled by western-oriented policies, and the cinema seems to have served as the latest desiring machine – the films that were shown presented glamorous scenes from various European centres, and filmgoing itself had the charm of being a western-style ritual.³

Murebbiye is not the only example of a national cinema that produces a discourse of resistance while a general perception of cinema itself was already constructed entirely in western terms. And it is not surprising that, as far as national cinemas are concerned, any formulation of resistance is overshadowed by images of mimicry. Turkish popular cinema, Yeşilçam, whose death was announced in the early 1980s, had been frequently criticized for imitating other cinemas, and repeating other films.⁴ Back in 1968, the film magazine *Yeni Sinema* (*New Cinema*) noted that more than half of the 250 films made that year were adaptations – plagiarisms, to be more precise – of foreign box-office successes.⁵ Given this fact, one can easily deduce an identity crisis, but what are we to make of an identity which is in permanent crisis? And what kind of national identity can be formed from a cinema renowned for its failures rather than its successes, or for its endless efforts to mimic others rather than to produce films that are 'Turkish to the core'?

In this essay I will examine the dynamics by which Turkish popular cinema describes a national identity, and I will attempt to demonstrate how the specificity of this identity can be seen in the very way it mimics and resists others. Cinema, as a desiring machine, produces a discourse which operates on a social level, involving psychical processes with subject effects. I will argue that these psychical processes are characterized by ambivalence (for example, mimicry and resistance) which provides a ground for the 'identity in crisis' I refer to above. In this respect, I will make use of postcolonial theory, particularly its formulation of the ambivalent nature of colonial discourse and the way it operates on the social unconscious. However, I am not going to offer an analysis of

3 Nilgün Abisel gives a detailed account of how intellectuals debated the tension between foreign films and cultural identity in her work *Türk Sineması Üzerine Yazılar* (Ankara: İmge, 1994).

4 Yeşilçam is a street in Istanbul where film production companies gathered until a decade ago. It also denotes a specific system of production–distribution–exhibition that dominated the Turkish cinema between the late 1950s and mid 1980s.

5 İkilem yanlış konunca: *Yeni Sinema* nos 19/20 (June/July 1968) p. 3.

colonial discourse as such, rather I will focus on 'the discourse of the national identity as derivative of colonial discourse' as articulated by Yeşilçam.⁶ Indeed, Turkish popular cinema is one popular site where such an 'identity in crisis' has been experienced for decades.

My study covers the period when commercial cinema enjoyed its heyday – that is, between the mid 1960s and mid 1970s – producing an average of two hundred films per year. *Konfeksiyon* films, as they were called, were made in a rush to meet a continuously increasing demand.⁷ Not only did they entertain the domestic audience, they also became very popular in other Middle Eastern countries, such as Iran, Iraq and Egypt. Production declined dramatically after the 1980s, and today only about ten Turkish films reach the movie theatres each year. This is primarily due to the US film distribution companies that now control exhibition mechanisms in Turkey, and secondly to the gap between the audience and the inaccessible discourse of current Turkish films, many of which follow the conventions of European art cinema. The new Turkish cinema has lost its audience to television channels which repeatedly show old popular films – the frequency of commercial breaks suggests that these films still appeal to a mass audience, still contribute to popular imagery.

Turkish popular cinema: a field of tensions

The first three decades of Turkish cinema were marked by the domination of a single man, Muhsin Ertuğrul, who was, and is still, widely criticized for transferring the stylistic devices of theatre to cinema. This period came to an end in 1953, when a number of filmmakers initiated a somewhat different practice. Ayşe Şasa, a veteran scriptwriter, calls this the period of the 'illiterates', in that they were neither aware of, nor interested in, the artistic possibilities of the cinema. Craftsmen of rural and lumpen origin now ruled Yeşilçam. They did not hide their commercial interest in the films from which they made big profits. Şasa maintains that the period of the 'illiterates' in Turkish cinema was undervalued because of its low-quality films: its potential of growing a genuine cinematic 'seed' was underestimated, as was 'the poetry that was hidden in this artless authenticity'.⁸

The mid 1960s witnessed the beginning of a debate about national identity in Turkish cinema. A group of writers from various branches of literature gathered around the film magazine *Yeni Sinema*, and founded the Turkish cinematheque (with some help from Henri Langlois). They argued that a national cinema with international concerns was impossible within Yeşilçam, which was associated with worn-out formulas, plagiarism, escapism and exploitation. While *Yeni Sinema* published interviews with film directors such as Godard,

6 I borrow this expression from the title of a book by Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and Colonial World: a Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

7 Daytime women only screenings were part of a strategy developed by the movie theatres to regulate this demand.

8 Ayşe Şasa, *Yeşilçam Günüğü* (Istanbul: Dergah, 1993) p. 30.

Renoir and Antonioni, and translations from theoretical works examining cinema in relation to other arts, screenings organized by the cinemathèque gave a particular audience access to canons of European art cinema. When one looks back at this scene, one can see a programme aiming at an art cinema. If, in Europe, art cinema developed as a resistance to the increasing domination of Hollywood, in Turkey, Yeşilçam appeared as the first obstacle to be tackled; alternative modes of production were sought, and festivals and competitions held to promote short films.⁹

When the Asiatic mode of production championed by the novelist Kemal Tahir became a popular issue in the late 1960s, a close friend of his, the then film critic and promising film director Halit Refiğ, elaborated a concept of national cinema. films are made by money coming *from* the people, so they must be made *for* the people, one way or another. Since it is impossible to reach the people of Turkey via western forms, a cinema which considers the people's characteristics and needs must be developed within Yeşilçam, which already has formed its audience. Refiğ insisted that Yeşilçam relied less on a capitalist mode of production than on a labour-intensive one, and urged film writers and producers not to turn their backs on it. He used ironic language when he criticized the elitist approach of the cinemathèque group:

To sum up, cinema [according to the group of cinemathèque] is a universal art. The criteria for the evaluation of this art are provided by the West. To be able to make a good film, one must do whatever a western filmmaker would do. There is no point in taking an interest in Turkish films as they do not subscribe to western criteria . . . and one must fight to have the Turkish audience develop a sympathy for and to love films coming from the West.¹⁰

In 1967 the major film directors of the time refused to respond to a questionnaire on the role of criticism prepared by *Yeni Sinema*, and that was the end of relations between filmmakers and the cinemathèque.¹¹ Here is a list of keywords which represent the two cinemas (one of which was only a programme then)

New Cinema

western
art cinema
model: European art cinema
to create
auteur policy
alternative modes of production
festivals, competitions

Yeşilçam

domestic
popular cinema
model: Hollywood
to produce
star system
capitalist mode of production
production–distribution–exhibition

Inevitably, the sharp conflict in this set of oppositions was occasionally resolved by some directors. Yılmaz Güney, for instance,

9 Ece Ayhan, a famous poet evaluated the contributors to a short film competition 'This Young Generation of honour has chosen to work away from Yeşilçam in order not to fall prey to it' *Simurg Yeni Sinema* nos 19/20 (June/July 1968), p 10

10 Halit Refiğ, *Ulusal Sinema Kavgası* (Istanbul: Hareket, 1971), p 47

11 'We refuse to collaborate with the Turkish cinemathèque and its publication *Yeni Sinema* for their hostility to the Turkish cinema in general and Turkish filmmakers in particular' Memduh Ün, Atıf Yılmaz, Metin Erksan, Lütfi Akad, Duygu Savaş, Alp Zeki Heper, Osman Seden, Halit Refiğ, *Yeni Sinema* no 4 (July 1967) p 34

produced popular, commercially successful films which were also hailed by the cinemathèque group. At the beginning of the 1980s, New Cinema began to introduce its first films to the domestic audience (and to international film circles), but it could not get out of the domain of Yeşilçam entirely. At first *Yeni Sinema* attempted to win over some established directors, Lutfi Akad and Yılmaz Güney among them. Then came a generation of young filmmakers who tried hard to differentiate their films from those of popular cinema, although they made these films in Yeşilçam, they sought recognition from international art cinema institutions. In Yeşilçam, stars were used to brand the film product, the New Cinema directors also worked with stars but, following auteur policy, the director was inscribed as the 'creator' of the film. Audiences began to read authorial credits, such as 'an Ali Özgenterk film', 'an Ömer Kavur film'. In addition, the New Cinema assumed the point of view of European art cinema (which includes the European audience) in that it produced representations of Turkey either as an 'impenetrable other' (*Hazal, Bedrana, Kumal/The Concubine*) or as a fantasmatic western country (*Piano Piano Bacaksız/Piano Piano My Little Boy, Seni Seviyorum Rosa/I Love You Rosa, Yengeç Sepeti/The Crab Basket, Gizli Yüz/The Secret Face*). It is interesting to note that a British film critic, reporting from an Istanbul Film Festival in 1992, describes the latter films as 'pretentious allegories drawing on influences from Buñuel to Bergman'.¹²

The mid 1970s witnessed television and sociopolitical catastrophe pushing Yeşilçam into another crisis, while New Cinema continued to seek its audience by way of international festivals and other such events. Thomas Elsaesser makes a similar observation about German cinema in the early 1980s:

the Germans are beginning to love their own cinema because it has been endorsed, confirmed and benevolently looked at by someone else: for the German cinema to exist, it first had to be seen by non-Germans. It enacts, as a national cinema now in explicitly economic and cultural terms, yet another form of self-estranged exhibitionism.¹³

To echo Elsaesser in a slightly different context, for Turkish art cinema to exist, it had to be 'endorsed, confirmed and benevolently looked at' by some one else. But unlike German cinema, with a few exceptions it never enjoyed such recognition. What was expected from German cinema was, for instance, the sophisticated, self-reflexive films of Fassbinder. This has not been the case for Turkish cinema. *Susuz Yaz/The Dry Summer* (Metin Erksan) and *Yol* (Yılmaz Güney), which won prizes at major festivals, both illustrate the harsh circumstances of rural life stricken with poverty, absurd moral values, oppressed individuals, and so on. Roy Armes's comment on

¹² John Gillet, *Sight and Sound* vol. 2 no. 4 (1992), p. 5.

¹³ Thomas Elsaesser, 'Primary identification and the historical subject: Fassbinder and Germany', *Cine-Tracts* vol. 3 no. 3 (1982), p. 52.

the relationship between the Third-World cinema and intelligentsia is relevant here.

But the processes of their education and the advent of national independence will have made them very aware that they cannot become western filmmakers. Hence they will tend to prove their identity by plunging deeply into local tradition, myth and folklore. The result is all too often an ambiguous cinema which is too complex in form for local audiences and too esoteric in substance for western spectators.¹⁴

14 Roy Armes 'Twelve propositions on the inaccessibility of third world cinema' in Christine Woodhead (ed.) *Turkish Cinema an Introduction* (London: Turkish Area Study Group Publications 1989) p. 7

That 'they cannot become western filmmakers' needs further elaboration. I want to demonstrate that fetishism and, relatedly, fantasy complicate things further. Indeed, Turkish film directors are very well aware that they cannot become western filmmakers, but the fetishistic disavowal of difference keeps them moving in the same direction (to adapt the famous 'I know very well but nevertheless', 'I am very well aware that I cannot become a western film maker, but nevertheless...') The problem is not in knowing but in doing, as Slavoj Žižek maintains:

They know very well how things really are, but still they are doing it as if they did not know. The illusion is therefore double: it consists in overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real, effective relationship to reality. And this overlooked, unconscious illusion is what may be called the ideological fantasy.¹⁵

15 Slavoj Žižek *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York and London: Verso 1989) pp. 32–3

Turkish art cinema deserves a more detailed analysis, but I want now to return to Yeşilçam and to demonstrate that the dissemination of colonial discourse is not exclusive to New Cinema. I will concentrate upon melodrama as a popular genre which plays on desire, providing us with invaluable insight into the ambivalent nature of national identity.

The identities of melodrama

As Thomas Elsaesser observes, family melodrama,

dealing largely with the same Oedipal themes of emotional and moral identity, more often records the failure of the protagonist to act in a way that could shape the events and influence the emotional environment, let alone change the stifling social milieu. The world is closed, and the characters are acted upon, and each other's sole referent, there is no world outside to be acted on, no reality that could be defined or assumed unambiguously.¹⁶

16 Thomas Elsaesser 'Tales of sound and fury: observations on the family melodrama' in Bill Nichols (ed.) *Movies and Methods* Volume II (London: University of California Press 1985) p. 177

17 Steve Neale 'Melodrama and tears' *Screen* vol. 27 no. 6 (1986) p. 6

Steve Neale notes that 'melodramas are marked by chance happenings, coincidences, missed meetings, sudden conversions, last minute rescues and revelations, *deus ex machina* endings'.¹⁷

18 Elsaesser, 'Tales of sound and fury' p. 168

Melodrama, in short, is perfectly suited to Yeşilçam, which sticks to narrative traditions inspired by legends, fairy tales and epopees (rather than by, say, tragedy, which emphasizes the inner conflicts and transformations of its characters). While, in its beginnings, western melodrama recorded the 'struggle of a morally and emotionally emancipated bourgeois consciousness against the remnants of feudalism',¹⁸ Yeşilçam exploits melodrama in articulating the desires aroused not only by class conflict but also by rural/urban and eastern/western oppositions. Immigration from rural areas to big cities is still a social phenomenon with significant economic and cultural consequences. The possibilities of crossing from one class to another and from village to big city provide the ground upon which melodrama plays and activates its machinery of desire. Hence the formulation lower class/rural = East/local culture vs upper class/urban = West/foreign culture.

The Yeşilçam melodrama repeatedly returns to the 'boy meets girl' plot: they unite, they split, they reunite. In one particular variation, the boy from the urban upper class and the girl from the lower class have an affair and then the boy leaves the girl. The girl finds him again, but learns that he no longer wants her. She comes back in disguise (urban, rich, sophisticated) and the boy, having failed to recognize her, falls in love. This time the girl takes her revenge and leaves him. In the end, her identity is revealed and the boy learns his lesson. The upper class, which is fixed as the object of desire here, is encoded with its western attributes.¹⁹ Luxurious American cars, blondes wearing revealing dresses, crazy parties and whisky all connote moral corruption, and construct an iconography of the West.²⁰ This is in sharp contrast with the virtues (simplicity, loyalty, correctness and chastity) of the woman from the rural area/lower class. In a recurrent plot, the heroine is raped/seduced and immediately deserted by a man whom she already loves. She has a baby and brings it up under reduced circumstances, and then somehow becomes rich. Towards the finale, having come to appreciate the heroine's virtues, the long-lost lover, now father, returns, but the heroine's pride delays the reunion (*Sana Donmeyeceğim/I Will Never Return To You*, *Ayşem/Ayşe Mine*, *Kınalı Yapıncak/Golden Red Grape*). In *Dağdan İnmel/Came Down From The Mountains* the male hero is struck by the appearance of an extremely attractive woman he meets at a party. She is actually a villager, desperately in love with him. *Taşra Kızı/The Girl From The Province* tells the story of a girl who comes to Istanbul from a small town. She moves into the house of an old family friend, who turns out to be her father. This film, like many others, exemplifies how melodrama resolves conflict using the Father figure (as father, police chief, judge, boss) as its agent.²¹ In many instances the authoritarian Father plays the benefactor, and sides with the girl against the spoiled son. There are, of course, some contradictory variations (for

19 At this point Yeşilçam gets closer to Indian melodrama. Ravi Vasudevan gives an instance of a female character who was sentenced to death for murdering a man but thinks she is already guilty of having adopted customs alien to their land (*Andaz/A Sense of Proportion* [Mehboob Khan 1949]). The melodramatic mode and the commercial Hindi cinema: notes on film history narrative and performance in the 1950s. *Screen* vol. 30, no. 3 (1989) pp. 41–4.

20 Mehmet Açar notes that the innocent girl is always offered a western drink (often whisky) when she is to be seduced. *Felakete çeyrek kala Sinema* (February 1996) p. 88.

21 I thank Mahmut Mutman for drawing my attention to this issue.

example, the rich father making friends with two young men who turn out to be his daughters' boyfriends). Variations, however, do not negate the argument that the Father regulates the economy of desire and power. The message, which is of course addressed to the lower-class/rural subject, is that the upper class will be able to survive only if the lower class helps. Possibilities of identification in these films are a matter of justifying the audience's (especially female audience's) desire for, and wish to be desired by, the upper class. Yeşilçam melodramas thus offered a sense of legitimacy to the squatters who had migrated from rural areas.

Plagiarism, of which Yeşilçam has often been accused, is by no means a simple issue. The technical and stylistic devices of Yeşilçam differ radically from those of Hollywood and European cinema. Lighting, colour, dubbing, dialogue, shooting practices, point-of-view shots and editing create a very specific cinematic discourse in even the most faithful of adaptations. In trying to meet a demand for two hundred films a year, production practices had to run at great speed and thus by default a visual tradition of shadowplays, miniatures, and so on was revived. To save time and money, shot/reverse-shot and other point-of-view shots were avoided as much as possible. This meant the domination of front shots: characters mostly performed facing the camera and did not turn their backs to it. This made full identification impossible and gave way to empathy instead. When a Hollywood film shows a box, it says 'This is a box'. Yeşilçam, on the other hand, attempted to achieve the same statement but could not help saying 'This is supposed to be a box, but actually it is only an image which represents a box'. Yeşilçam was a hybrid cinema: it produced a cinematic discourse blending Hollywood-style realism with an unintentional Brechtian alienation effect.

Characters who were never depicted as individuals, and who could not act but were 'acted upon', reinforced the melodramatic effect. Given such circumstances, it is not difficult to see why split identities have always been convincing for, and appealing to, the audience. The Yeşilçam character can trick her lover into believing that she is someone else, taking on various successive identities. What was once a poor, uneducated girl with a strong accent can instantly become an attractive, sophisticated lady of manners. A girl from the lower class can adapt herself to the rules of the high society she has just joined without any trouble. These are, of course, narrative reproductions of Pygmalion and Cinderella. If we can hazard that splittings are mobilized by presenting the upper class/West to the lower class/East as an object of desire and identification, then splitting is a symptom which betrays Yeşilçam's own conception of national identity. Ambivalence (narcissism/aggression), identification and fantasy are the basic terms of the logic of this conception. Splitting, as a matter of fact, provides the ground for ambivalent psychical positionings of the subject in relation to its

object of desire, and transition from one identity to another takes place in the realm of fantasy after the poor young girl is discovered by the owner of a night club, she quickly becomes a rich and famous singer. The huge efforts required to achieve success (private education from a non-Muslim instructor, music lessons, training, rehearsals) are either shown in a rapid succession of scenes or ignored entirely.

Apollo, molotov cocktail and 'The Favourite of Maharajah'

Now I want to examine a film which, I believe, focuses the problem of national identity as derivative of colonial discourse. *Karagozlum/My Dark Eyed One* (Atif Yılmaz, 1970) is not a typical or normal melodrama; even its plot is different from the ones I have so far described. Rather it is a limit-text, which stands at the margins of the logic of melodrama, and this is why I think it is capable of representing Yeşilçam melodrama perfectly.

Azize (Turkan Şoray) is a fisherman's daughter who enjoys singing while she works in the fish market. She happens to meet Kenan (Kadir Inanır), an idealist composer who disdains all kinds of music but western classical. Teasing him for his pretentious cultural preference she names him 'Chopin'. As in the case of many melodramas, Azize is then discovered by the owner of a music-hall, and becomes a famous singer, finding herself in an entirely different network of sociocultural and economic relations. Kenan, having failed to find a decent job, begins work as a waiter at the same place. They eventually fall in love. Kenan drops classical music in favour of composing popular songs for Azize ('I retire from Chopinhood'). He mails his work anonymously to her, never revealing his identity. Two Hollywood producers who happen to hear her singing one night offer to co-star Azize with Rock Hudson in a film ('The Favourite of Maharajah') on the condition that she will bring her 'unknown composer' along with her to Hollywood. She is delighted with the idea that she will enjoy world-wide fame, but her mysterious, hitherto unknown composer (Kenan disguised as an old man) shows up, and not only declines the offer but also accuses her of 'being adrift in a Hollywood dream'. He deserts Azize and gets engaged to Semra, the daughter of a rich family. Azize, having discovered that 'one who wants to have everything, loses what she already has', quits her job and goes back to selling fish. But, in the end, Kenan reappears and they are reunited.

The film is very quick to establish the opposition of East/popular culture and West/elite culture. In the scene following the opening, Kenan's close friend, Orhan, advises him to drop 'this *kefere* [infidel's] music which is a pain in the neck' and perform his art for a larger audience in order to make a fortune from his talent. Once



Fig. 1. *Karagözüm/My Dark Eyed One* (Atıl Yılmaz, 1970).



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.

22 Mahmut Mutman, 'Pictures from afar: shooting the middle east', *Inscriptions*, no. 6 (1992), p. 15

Azize starts working at the music-hall she cannot enjoy the new life she is expected to lead. When the vacuum cleaner goes dead in a power cut, she and her assistant happily use brooms. They are almost embarrassed to use mechanical appliances for any kind of housework that can be done manually. Technology not only marks a class conflict here, it also serves as an icon for a western lifestyle.

But the dream sequence is most significant since it reveals the 'intention of the text'. In order to go to Hollywood Azize has to locate her unknown composer, but Kenan is none too happy with her enthusiasm, and is reluctant to give away his secret. As he tries to make his mind up he falls asleep and has a dream. In the dream we see the chamber of the maharajah. Azize enters the scene and begins to dance in front of a man whom we are not allowed to see (fig. 1). Then Kenan sneaks into the chamber through the back door, and becomes furious when he sees Azize dancing for someone else (fig. 2). In response, Azize puts out her tongue in mockery. But what strikes Kenan most is that right behind Azize, accompanying her on the flute, he sees himself, dressed in Indian clothes (fig. 3). Kenan produces a bomb (a molotov cocktail) from the pocket of his coat and throws it right into the middle of the chamber (fig. 4). The bomb explodes and Kenan awakes. He has made his decision: he will not let Azize go to Hollywood.

When Kenan detonates the bomb we do not see any damage done: we do not see the palace falling into pieces, we do not see anybody killed, and we do not hear any screams. We see only a smoke-screen and then, in closeup, Kenan awakening in dismay. What has broken down is not the content of the dream but the fantasy screen itself.

As Mahmut Mutman stresses, colonial discourse and orientalism play on sexual difference. Psychic processes (fantasy, castration, fetishism, aggression) which mobilize the discourse, enable the re-presentation of Woman as a cultural construct: 'Muslim woman stands where the political, the economic and the cultural "values" meet: her culturally specific embodiment is the commodity that is exchanged with other commodities'.²² Which applies to *both* sides (colonized and colonizer) of colonial discourse. In Turkish, *anavatan* and *anayurt*, which might be translated as 'motherland' and 'mother country', are terms which explain how Woman comes to represent values attached to the concept of nationhood. And this is precisely what *Karagözüm* does through the agency of Kenan: Chopin/the unknown composer is asked to trade Azize for a brilliant career (she dances to his music). Azize, an Arabic word in origin, means 'dear' or 'beloved' in Turkish and can easily be associated with the common usage *Aziz Vatan* (beloved country). The molotov cocktail was an icon of the militant Left in the 1970s, frequently used in demonstrations against the growing US hegemony. It was considered an unsophisticated, cheap, easy-to-produce, easy-to-use combat weapon, a suitable device for a 'people at war with imperialism'.

What seems problematic to my analysis at this point is that Kenan's dream actually serves as a screen onto which 'Hollywood' projects its fantasy. It is also the very dream Kenan refers to when he accuses Azize of being adrift in a Hollywood dream

Through his music, Kenan fixes his beloved as an object of desire, and then exhibits her body (that is, hands her over) to Hollywood. More importantly, the splittings of Kenan verify the ambivalence of colonial discourse: there is a Kenan (the flute player) who accompanies Azize with his music, a Kenan (the white male hero) who is struck by what is going on in the scene and explodes the bomb, and finally a Kenan who dreams all of this. I suggest that the dream sequence forms the kernel of the entire film. The splittings that take place within it are parallel to the diegetic ones: the flute player is the unknown composer, now unmasked, the one who bombs the palace is the waiter, and the one who dreams is a Kenan who retired from 'Chopinhood' in favour of Azize. But who is the maharajah? Although we see very little of him, he is a pivotal figure around which the rest of the characters revolve. Motionless, he is watching Azize dancing. It seems he controls the space with his gaze. He can see Azize and the flute player and vice versa. He cannot see the waiter (or the audience), and although the waiter cannot see his face he is very well aware of his presence. So the maharajah is also a borderline separating the waiter and the audience from Azize and the flute player. The audience identifies first with the dreaming Kenan and then with the waiter. When Kenan throws the bomb, he not only puts an end to the dream, but also to the voyeuristic pleasure of the maharajah. The audience of the exotic films of Hollywood shares the erotic experiences of the Oriental despot and then identifies with the white male hero who bursts into the palace and takes the girl away from him. In this connection, the explosion has a double effect which brings us back to the problem of split identities: Kenan tears apart the fantasy screen of 'Hollywood', yet identifies with it by playing the white male hero who is already a part of this same fantasy. Therefore, *Karagozlum* offers us a dual set of relationships which reveal the actual fantasy of the colonized – to share the colonizer's fantasy. This is made possible by a subtle reversal: the narrative switches positions and the colonized becomes someone other than Kenan. Aggression takes place elsewhere, neither the word 'maharajah' nor the setting is Turkish, but it is still Oriental.

Azize and her father ride to the fish market on a shabby motorcycle they have named Apollo. If we go back to 1970, the production date of this film, we can see the reference to the US moon landing. To name an old motorcycle after Apollo is a parody intended as mockery, but as Fredric Jameson emphasizes in a different context, 'the parodist has to have some secret sympathy for the original' and 'there remains somewhere behind all parody the

23 Fredric Jameson 'Postmodernism and consumer society' in Hal Foster (ed.) *Anti aesthetic Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend: Bay Press 1986), pp. 113–14

24 It must be noted that *Karagözüm* borrows its title from a popular song like many other Turkish films

feeling that there is a . . . norm'.²³ And *Karagözüm* re-establishes western norms by illustrating cultural deviations. Throughout the film we hear three sorts of music, representing three levels of culture: classical western music (Kenan – the norm), traditional Turkish popular music (Azize – the settlement) and popular dance music (Semra – the corrupt).²⁴ Kenan has to sacrifice classical music (the norm) for Azize and the values she represents (the popular), when he thinks he has lost her to Hollywood, he decides to marry Semra (the corrupt).

My observation is supported by another film. In *Sana Tapıyorum! I Worship You* (Aram Gulyuz, 1970), Ayşe (Zeynep Değirmencioglu) studies ballet at a dance school. In order to meet her expenses, her mother works as a singer in a night club, which utterly embarrasses Ayşe. When the rumour is spread that her mother is more or less a prostitute, Ayşe is cut by her classmates and teachers. She drops out of school under pressure and, at the same time, she is informed that her mother is dangerously ill. The doctors tell her that she will die unless she is sent to Switzerland for an operation. Ayşe is desperate because she cannot afford to pay for the operation. Her mother's boss offers her money, but she would have to dance in his night club in return. When Ayşe refuses the offer furiously, he asks ironically whether her body is more sacred than her mother's life, remarking that her mother did the same thing in order to be able to pay her tuition fees, upon which Ayşe agrees to start working in the night club. Ayşe's classmates and teachers appreciate the sacrifice she has made for her mother and decide to help her. In the meantime, Ayşe locates her long-lost father, who was once a famous brain surgeon and is now an alcoholic, and after a climactic speech she persuades him to do the operation. In the final scene we see Ayşe taking the leading role in a ballet performance and all the characters in the audience, especially the owner of the night club regretfully weeping. Her body, as in many Yeşilçam melodramas, is a metaphor for postponement and sacrifice. Once again, Woman provides the ground for an exchange of values. The body which represents the cultural values of the dance school (the norm) is not more sacred than the Mother. It must be sacrificed for the Mother and submitted to the night club. Only then will the Mother survive and the Father assume his identity.

'Pay it to the waiter!'

As I have tried to demonstrate, colonial discourse and its derivatives operate in a vast area, and neither nationalism nor any other sort of anti-western practice can easily avoid reproducing them. For Yeşilçam, the moment of colonial discourse is the moment of transgressing the boundaries it has defined. Yeşilçam depicts the

West performatively; however, it suppresses the fact that the social class which represents the West is represented in fantasmatic scenes where everything can be vindicated and thus desired unashamedly.

One must, nevertheless, not forget that Yeşilçam melodrama stages a real ambivalence in the sense that reversals work both ways. It imposes the cultural values attached to national identity as necessary and temporary deviations. One must conform to them for now so as to acquire the norm (that is the West) in the future. To be able to be Chopin one day, one must be a waiter or an unknown composer now – because Azize is at stake; to be able to go back to the dance school one day, one must work in a night club – because mother is ill and money is required for the operation.

When the Hollywood producers burst into Azize's dressing room to meet her, the owner of the music-hall cannot figure out what they want. 'They want the bill', Azize guesses, and points to Kenan, who happens to be there. 'Pay it to the waiter', she suggests. Kenan's intervention prevents Azize from going to Hollywood, so Hollywood does pay the bill to Yeşilçam in a way. Yeşilçam seems determined to demand a payment, only it cannot avoid reproducing colonial discourse once again, since it fixes national identity precisely in this problematic moment.

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