RESIGNIFYING THE MAINSTREAM:

TRANSGENDER EMBODIMENT IN CINEMA IN TURKEY

BERFU ŞEKER

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

2011

RESIGNIFYING THE MAINSTREAM:

TRANSGENDER EMBODIMENT IN CINEMA IN TURKEY

Thesis submitted to the

Institute for Graduate Studies in the Social Sciences

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Critical and Cultural Studies

by

Berfu Şeker

Boğaziçi University

2011

Thesis Abstract

Berfu Şeker, Resignifying the Mainstream:

Transgender Embodiment in Cinema in Turkey

This study focuses on the mainstream representation of the transgender phenomenon in the cinema of Turkey during a forty year period starting from the 1960s. In studying these images, the main argument of this thesis is that although mainstream cinema has been conceptualized as incapable of producing meanings that are anti hetero-patriarchal; factors such as audience reception, textual incongruity and directorial intentions might produce ambiguities in order to trigger subversive readings and identifications with these images. By reaching masses of audiences, mainstream representation of transgender embodiment might offer a possibility that might challenge the binary thinking and normative identificatory mechanisms. Conceptualized within their specific historical milieu and in relation to each other, these images also refer back to a historical subconscious in which the repressed desires return back to haunt the heteronormative binaries of gender and sexuality. Reading these films through gender parody, masquerade, heterosexual melancholia, shame and transnational circulation of transgender images, this study explores the relation between performance and performativity in order to resignify the mainstream from within.

Tez Özeti

Berfu Şeker, Ana Akımı Dönüştürmek:

Türkiye Sinemasında Transgender Tecessüm

Bu çalışma 1960lardan başlayan kırk yıllık bir dönem içerisinde transgender fenomeninin Türkiye sinemasındaki ana akım temsillerine odaklanmaktadır. Tezin ana argümanı antiheteropatriarkal anlamlar üretmekten yoksun olarak kavramsallaştırılmış ana akım sinemanın izleyici alımlaması, metinsel çelişki ve yönetimsel niyet gibi unsurlarının yıkıcı okumaları ve yıkıcı özdeşimleri tetiklemek üzere bir takım muğlâklıklar üretmekte olduğudur. Transgender tecessümün ana akım temsilleri, büyük izleyici kitlelerine ulaşarak ikili düşünmeyi ve normatif özdeşim mekanizmalarını sarsacak bir imkân sunabilir. Spesifik tarihsel ortamları içerisinde ve birbirleriyle ilişki içerisinde kavramsallaştırılan bu imgeler aynı zamanda bastırılanın cinsiyet ve cinsellikle ilgili heteronormatif ikilikleri tehdit etmek üzere geri döndüğü tarihsel bir bilinçdışına da işaret etmektedir. Bu çalışma bahsi geçen filmleri cinsiyet parodisi, *masquerade*, heteroseksüel melankoli, utanç ve trans ulusallık gibi konseptler üzerinden analiz ederek performans ve performatiflik arasındaki ilişkiyi ana akımı içeriden dönüştürmek üzere incelemektedir.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First I would like to express my gratitude to Nezih Erdoğan, the supervisor of this thesis, who supported me with his insightful comments in times that I felt totally blocked. He has been a great influence throughout this study and without his encouragement and support I would not be able to write this thesis. I should thank Işıl Baş, who is the coordinator of Critical and Cultural Studies Program and also the co-advisor of this study for her contributions to this thesis. She has provided me with the best tools to evolve during my MA studies which have been an astonishing experience in my life. I should also thank Cüneyt Çakırlar whose courses on film have taught me a lot on queer theory and cinema. These courses and his influence have been life-altering, enabling me to improve both intellectually and personally. I am grateful to him for his valuable criticisms on this thesis and inciting me to think about the global/local circulation of images and concepts. I would like to thank my jury members Didar Akar, Sibel Irzık and Özlem Öğüt whose feedback has been very inspiring in finishing this thesis. I should thank my dear mother and father who have supported me regardless of the troubles I have caused them. I will never be able to pay away what they have generously offered me for so many years. Last but not least, I should also thank İlksen Gürsoy who stood by me even in my most depressed and pessimistic times trying to write this thesis. I would not be able to finish this study without his encouragement, friendship and care.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the representation of transgender phenomena in the narrative cinema of Turkey from the 1960s to 2000. I will try to show that studying a span of forty years gives an account of the historical and aesthetic aspects that participate in the production and consumption of such images. The study also elaborates the ‘regulatory ideal’ that lies at the center of the materialization of a rigidly dichotomized sex/ gender system in order to preserve the heterosexual regime. However, as I will argue in this study, there are many complex elements of the filmic medium that sometimes blur and subvert narrative plot and raise ambivalent affections despite of the film’s normative ending. I will try to discuss whether the ambivalences these images raise could be considered as opening up possibilities for subverting hegemonic discourses on sex, gender and sexuality.

Elisabeth Cowie suggests that various codes from cultural ones to cinematic and non-cinematic ones are at work in a filmic system. However, the analysis of these codes does not involve a de-coding along the lines of “translating the film ‘back’ from something like morse code, but rather, the discovery of the various codes in play in and the structure of meaning produced by their combination in that specific film” (Cowie 1996, 38). I side with Cowie’s contention and will try to discover the codes at work concerning the text, audience and reception. Alexander Doty suggests that an analysis related to mass cultural productions should point to the ways in which cultural heterocentrism and homophobia shape our understanding of the text/representation as well as our understanding of producers and readers (Doty 1991, xiii). Thus, the main aim of this study relies on a certain relation with the cinematic medium, that is, my subjective position as a spectator vis-à-vis these images that work within a performative strategy. This performative strategy is to consider these films in their relation to gender and spectatorial fantasy as well as in their relation to other films in cinema in Turkey. The period known as Yeşilçam[1] (marking a period between 1960s and the 1980s) and *arabesk* genre in the 1980s have significance in this intertextual relation that still can be traced in recent filmic productions. The Turkish film historian Nijat Özön has criticized the years that Yeşilçam was in its heyday (namely1965-1975) with a production of around 300 films a year, by calling those days "the period that our cinema lived its darkest days" (Mutlu 2001,111). Mutlu argues that the basic idea behind this statement is a certain disdain of the Yeşilçam tradition for being devoid of any intellectual content and artistic value. This tendency of despising Yeşilçam and later *arabesk* films started with *Yeni Sinema* journal's attempts to deploy a more universal, western and artistic film style which they thought Yeşilçam totally lacked. According to them, these films were commercial, cheap, devoid of artistic creation and were producing bad taste to exploit the spectator. They considered Yeşilçam to be a non-illusionist cinema imbued with tradition that did not correspond to any reality about society (Mutlu, 111).

My analysis in this study does not consider the reception and textuality of these films as distinct material; neither does it give priority to one over the other. Rather I consider them to be as intertwined with each other. I intend to do this analysis within a framework of queer theory, its contradictions with feminist film criticism and the transnational circulation of images and concepts, as well as by

[1] Yeşilçam is the name of the street in which film production companies were placed. The productive period of cinema in Turkey was referred as Yeşilçam between 1960s and early 1980s.

conjoining socio-historical aspects of Turkish cinema. Taking film as text, I will direct queer theory's criticisms on the categories of gender, sex and sexuality as well as well as discussing whether these films could refer to a 'camp sensibility' or at least a 'camp affinity' in this specific culture in order to resignify heterocentrist images. These images which have been worked through comedy, melodramatic modality, and the affect of shame will be reworked in this study in relation to time, space and new forms of relationality with transgender images. Butler suggests, "'intelligible' genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice and desire" (Butler 1999[1990], 23). What I refer to as transgender in this study marks the discontinuity between sex and gender, blurring the culturally specific boundaries that constitute coherent identities as an effect of the heterosexulization of desire. Thus cross-dressing, the figure of the mannish woman, intersexuality, transsexuality and drag will be discussed under the rubric of transgender practices that disrupt the heterosexual economy of desire.

This disruption also works in a performative manner to denaturalize and resignify the heterosexualization of desire which is the normative effect of the attempts to stabilize gender into rigid binaries of male/female. Performativity needs to be elaborated here. Butler contends that gender does not stem from an origin or is not inherited by the subject as something innate; rather it is the performative effect of repeated acts, which she calls 'reiterative'. She argues that gender is performative in that it is "always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (Butler 1999[1990], 33). Butler also relates her theory of gender performativity to J.L. Austin's theory of speech acts. Some utterances, J.L Austin argues, are performative in the sense that they have the power to produce effects. A performative indicates “that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action (Austin 1975, 6). Drawing on Austin’s theory of the performatives and Sedgwick’s reflections on queer performativity, Butler refers to the performative power of utterances which produce the subjects they name by resorting to the performative effect the word “queer” once had. Butler notes that the word “queer” “has operated as one linguistic practice whose purpose has been the shaming of the subject it names” (Butler 1993, 226). However as an outcome of performativity as a strategy, the word queer is appropriated by queer subjects by a repetition that both “mimes and exposes both the binding power of the hetersoxeualizing law and its expropriability” (230-231).

For Butler “performing gender norms and the performative use of discourse” which seem to be two different senses of performativity might “converge as citationality in which the compulsory character of certain social imperatives becomes subject to a more promising deregulation” (231). Thus my performative strategy in reading films as texts stand in strict relation to this kind of deregulating possibility. , I will read these films in relation to queer erotics, gender melancholia and shame performativity in the three consecutive chapters through the use of camp as a performative strategy, which refers to an anti-normative identification with mainstream images to resignify and reappropriate their heterocentrist meanings. In the last chapter, I will discuss the performative manipulation of the mainstream cinema through queer director’s representation of the transgender phenomenon. By placing transgender/queer embodiment at the heart of the narrative within familiar codes of narrative cinema, queer cinema can access a large mass of mainstream audience ranging in gender, social status, age, sexuality, class and nationality. Thus, queer cinema, even within conventional forms of representation, offers possibilities of camping and resignifying a set of binarisms that the heterosexual matrix produces.

Transgender representation reflects beliefs, fantasies, anxieties and conflicts of a culture in which the gender hierarchy and asymmetry is based on a construction of morphologically distinct and dichotomically sexed bodies. These representations/texts reveal some aspects of the ‘technologies of gender’ of Turkish modernity in order to name, classify and discipline the bodies and sexual practices of its subjects. Thus, one task of this study will be a socio-historical one that analyzes the sex/gender politics, cultural beliefs and conflicts of the historical milieu of the films discussed here. Nevertheless, cinematic representation is not a mirror or the mimesis of the world we live in. Cinema “frames the world in order to picture it on celluloid, it selects and excludes” (Cowie 1996, 37). Hence, an analysis of the representation of transgendered bodies in this specific culture consists of a variety of elements that shapes the reception of such images.

The Research, Methodological Concerns and Limits of the Study

There are various films that deal with sexual disguise in mainstream cinema in Turkey especially in the genre of comedy. Rather than challenging the naturalized systems of sex, gender and sexuality they can be interpreted as vehicles to mock femininity, homosexuality and transsexuality to reestablish the boundaries of gender asymmetry. Thus my concern in this study is not to present an inclusive analysis of each and every image dealing with some form of sexual disguise or transgenderism in mainstream cinema. Rather, my aim is to point out to the distinctive examples of mainstream cinema in their ambivalence in representing transgender phenomena which causes different possibilities of identification and refiguration. These films are also significant in that they are related in some respects to the debates surrounding sex/gender and sexuality in the specific historical decades in which they were produced.

I have selected a number of films in relation to the decades of their production in order to analyze how they can be related to camp affinities and queer readings. This endeavor is part of the queer strategy of this study that employs performatively in order to reveal the possibilities for the reappropriation of these images. This strategy also reveals the subconscious of a culture in which some histories pertaining to gender and sexuality have been suppressed. In order to analyze the cultural climate of the decades mentioned along with the films, I have used interviews from tabloid magazines and newspaper articles. *Ses* magazine and *Milliyet* daily newspaper which have been significant in reading the debates concerning transgender phenomena. Thus, while I present an analysis of these films within queer theory and film studies, I will also be suggesting an analysis of the cultural debates surrounding transgender phenomena.

In selecting the films of this study I have been reticent to select imagery which deals with transgender phenomena in ambivalent ways that sometimes exceeds directorial intentions. Some of these films which are produced with ideological intentions that are implicitly or explicitly homophobic and transphobic; produce meanings that exceed their intentions. Because of this, I have selected a number of films that might be considered “odd” for the times they were produced. I have also considered them in their relation to camp performativity. Kutluğ Ataman’s *Lola+Bilidikid* which is analyzed in the last chapter is also distinctive in the way that it deals with the term “transness”[2] within a context of transculturalism and thus stands in a queerly different position to its counterparts produced in the same decade.

In Chapter 2, I will first give a brief account of the ways in which the practices of cross-dressing, drag and transvestism are conceptualized within queer theory and transgenderism. Then, I will explore the relation of drag practices to the history of stage performancesin order to reach a better understanding of how cross-dressing has been the site of “category crisis” throughout history in Turkish culture and explore their relation to gender performativity. These performances have aroused cultural fascination as well as cultural anxiety. The ambivalent responses to drag performances are still intact. The hate crimes towards transgendered people in our culture indicate that while drag might be applauded as a stage performance, it might be met with violence off stage.

In the Ottoman performing arts, cross-dressing held a significant place. The figure of the *köçek* dancers is a prominent one within cross-dressing practices. *Köçek*s were boys who cross-dressed as women and performed for the male gaze in taverns, pubs and even in the Sultan’s harem. Since women’s appearance in the public sphere was bound by strict prohibitions, women impersonators were quite popular as spectacles as well as the site of sexual attraction (Zilfi 2010). Smilarly, the *zenne* is a prominent figure in the Ottoman theatre called *Orta Oyunu*. Since women could not perform in those years, men used to cross-dress as women and perform the female parts in plays. Again in a significant number of *Karagöz* Shadow plays, Karagöz cross-dresses as a woman in order to trick his comrade, Hacivat, or falls in love with *köçeks.*

[2] Christopher Clark in Transculturation, *Transsexuality*, and Turkish Germany: Kutluğ Ataman’s Lola und Bilidikid, conceptualizes the term transness as “a moment of in betweenness” a term that describes the instability of categories not only pertaining to sex, gender and sexuality but reveals the instability of all categories constructed as in rigid oppositions.

In the Ottoman era, conceptions of gender and sexuality were quite different from our modern understandings of these notions. Because it was deemed indecent for women to act in Ottoman culture, men disguised as women in order to perform women's parts. In Ottoman culture, it was also deemed indecent to declare a woman as an object of desire. Thus boys were given nick names as girls, and poems and eulogies were written for their beauty and sexual appeal. Again in Ottoman culture sexuality was not fixed as an identity category within the homo/hetero binary; rather male sexuality did not choose between any gender as long as the other party could be dominated and penetrated (Andrews&Kalpaklı 2005, 178). Even female homoerotic desire was acknowledged as it could be represented as an ordinary cultural practice in Karagöz plays. However with the rise of the modernist reforms, these practices were soon erased from the sphere of cultural representation.

In Chapter 3, I will discuss male and female cross-dressing in Turkish cinema as they are portrayed in comedy and melodrama. Comedy films, *Fıstık Gibi Maşallah* (Hulki Saner, 1964), which is the Turkish adaptation of Billy Wilder's famous film *Some Like It Hot* (1959), *Şabaniye* (Kartal Tibet, 1984) *Belalı Torun* (Memduh Ün, 1962); and melodramas *Şoför Nebahat /Nebahat, the Taxi Driver* (Memduh Ün, 1960), *Erkek Fatma*/*Mannish Fatma* will be discussed in this chapter in the light of certain questions that feminist and queer critics have addressed. Do these mainstream representations of cross-dressing simply serve to reproduce sexist clichés on gender asymmetry and mock real women? Are they phallocentric in the way that they can only fancy the empowerment of women or femininity when combined with masculinity? Or is it possible to view them in the light of queer theory as parodying gender and revealing its performativity? I will argue that these figures are disturbing and indignant in the male dominated public imaginary although they are appropriated within the heterosexual narrative structure showing that they are ambivalent in appropriating and challenging the gendered and sexual ideals of Turkish modernity.

Butler argues that “such films are functional in providing a ritualistic release for a heterosexual economy that must constantly police its own boundaries against the invasion of queerness, and that this displaced production and resolution of homosexual panic actually fortifies the heterosexual regime in its self-perpetuating task” (Butler 1993,126). However this argument ignores the measure of incongruity such narratives produce which then enable camp identifications. However these images might be thought as being contained within the heterocentrist melodramatic modality dispersed through every genre, these representations conflictingly imply that the transvestic fantasy is implicitly desired by the characters who inhabit the position of the drag. Moreover the desire that these androgynous characters evoke might complicate issues concerning the heterosexual object choice. Thus, I will try to suggest that a camp reading from the point of gender performativity, gender melancholia and masquerade will enable further readings that offer the denaturalization of gender identity and deheterosexualization of desire. It is important to also note that this enabling camp potential is opened up through a certain temporal and spatial distance that “provides the necessary detachment—or arouses a necessary sympathy” (Sontag 1999, 60).

In Chapter 4, I will discuss films that take up the issue of transgender identity overtly for the first time in Turkish cinema. *Köçek* (Nejat Saydam, 1975) which takes up the issue of intersexuality and *Şöhretin Sonu/Yüzkarası, End of Fame /Shame* (Osman F. Seden, 1981) which deal with the transsexual identity of the famous *arabesk* singer Bülent Ersoy are distinct from the films discussed in Chapter

2, as they are not progress narratives in the sense that they represent drag as a temporary disguise. However these films are ambivalent in their approach to gender identity and sexual orientation. I argue that this ambivalence stems from the essentialist and heteronormative conception of gender in Turkish culture as strictly defined in terms of the genitals and reproductive capacity which considers transgenderism as monstrosity or perversity. However the heteronormative coercion in organizing bodies in a dichotomized sex/gender system in order to preserve the heterosexual imperative does not fully operate because as Butler claims bodies never simply comply with these regulatory norms. The same argument can be made for the filmic medium itself, that representation is a complex process that never simply complies with the heteronormative imperative in its dealing with transgendered bodies. The gaze can queerly identify with these images in a manner that detaches these images from their heterosexual nexus.

In this chapter, I will first give an account of the shifting and proliferating discourses on gender in the cultural milieu of the late 1970s and 1980s. Yeşilçam narratives, which targeted mostly female audiences in the previous decade, were replaced with representations of masculine gender identity, which was in crisis. I will define the genre of *arabesk* and musical films that dealt with such crises in this period. Later, I will discuss these images through the affect of shame which I consider to be the mutual approach to the transgender phenomena in these films. Shame as argued by Eve Sedgwick is the primary queer feeling which lies at the heart of ego construction for the queer subjects. Shame as a performative, works to isolate, and shield the subject it floods with a felling of badness and negation. (Ahmed 2004, 103) As Sarah Ahmed contends, shame can also be the outcome of a failure of living up to the ideals of normative existence (Ahmed 107). In *Köçek*, the gender ambiguity of the protagonist evokes the repressed cultural memory of the incongruous gender embodiment of *köçek* dancers, which was once considered as part of the mundane cultural life. However, in modernized Turkey, *köçek* now has the performative power to shame the intersexed belly dancer Caniko (Müjde Ar) who lives in the liminal spaces of cultural intelligibility. Through the shaming performative of *köçek*, the film narrative turns the masculine identified Caniko into a woman, revealing Müjde Ar, who was the epitome of feminine beauty at the time. Also, this intervention which is accompanied by a scientific discourse on how to regulate bodies, functions as the prerogative of the performative "I declare you man and woman" which is the ultimate heteronormative conclusion line of melodramatic modality.

Nevertheless the ambiguity of the intersexed body hinders single readings that only support the heteronormative function of the narrative. The gender ambiguity of Caniko/ Raziye opens up a terrain of interrogation where sex, gender and sexuality are constantly contested. Performance and performativity become the sites of this interrogation revealing the fact that gender is something that is done rather than a biological inheritance. Also the gender incongruity of Caniko/Raziye, opens up the possibility of an ambivalent identification with the image that challenges the normative assumptions on sexuality with connotations of homoerotic desire. The raced, intersexed and inevitably gendered body of Caniko/Raziye thus allows us to make readings from plural positions despite its heteronormative ending.

. *Yüz Karası*, starring Turkey's most famous living male to female transgendered *arabesk* singer Bülent Ersoy, reflects the category crisis that her androgynous body had opened up in Turkish public and politics. *Yüz Karası* bears some autobiographical aspects of Bülent Ersoy's life. At the time of the film's production, Bülent Ersoy's sexual identity was on the boil more than ever since she was going through her sex re-assignment process. In *Yüz Karası* she is constantly punished by her comrades, family and the law because of her gender transition which is implied to be a contravention against a moral and also juridical law. As the film's title implies Bülent Ersoy has shamed the nation by her transgression of gender norms. I argue that, the film by shaming Ersoy assigns her to the space of abjection. Also, in order to restore Ersoy's place as a "good "citizen and contain her transgressive embodiment –to consolidate the boundaries that are challenged by her glamorous ambiguity that appeals audiences of both sexes—the film makes Ersoy apologize to the Turkish public. However, what I want to further elaborate on reading the film is how the performatives of shame which abject Ersoy's embodiment can be transformed into a healing energy through queer performativity.

Shame is a crucial affect in that it is the constitutive element considering queer/transgendered subjects' relation to heteronormative institutions of reproduction and nation. As *Köçek* and *Yüz Karası* imply, in order to get rid of this deregulating affect, the subject has to be incorporated within the heteronormative bonds of national, cultural life. If the shamed subject goes onto act shamefully, i.e. insists on being perversely queer, this means that a certain break will take place from the normative institutions of family, work, nationalism etc. What Douglas Crimp means by arguing that we need an urgent understanding of "how the dysphoric affect shame functions as a nexus of production: production, that is, of meaning, of personal presence, of politics, of performative and critical efficacy" (Crimp 2009, 63) is bound to this relation between shame and queer existence. Moreover, shame, beyond being an isolating affect, is also an affect that forms heterogeneous communities on a mutual bound, since shame floods the audience in taking up the shamed person's vulnerability (Crimp 2009 71). Thus I argue that to think about shame and to act on shame is a crucial political endeavor. Through Sedgwick's conceptualization of shame/performativity as a critical tool, I will perform a reading of Ming Wong's camp video performance *Biji Diva* which resignifies the shamed figure of Bülent Ersoy through the queer community's heterogeneous identification with shame through humor. Wong's reappropriation of Ersoy's image also shows that camp sensibility circulates in a transnational context, in which the local and the global merge into one another.

Ming Wong's performance opens up to a space of possibility in which transgender embodiment not only destructs the boundaries of sex/gender and sexuality, but also works to subvert the boundaries between the national/universal. Thus, in Chapter 5, I take up the argument from the point of the transnational circulation of queer spectatorship and production. In this chapter, I will discuss how queer cinema might exploit the dominant forms of mainstream cinema to represent transgender/queer embodiment transnationally. First, I will discuss the rise of identity politics in the late 1980s, which provided lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender subjects' visibility in politics and media in the 1990s. The proliferation of discourses on anti-normative sexualities and gender identifications which were repressed during the course of Turkish modernism also effected mainstream representations in cinema. *Dönersen Islık Çal /Whistle If You Come Back* (Orhan Oğuz, 1992), *Gece Melek ve Bizim Çocuklar/ Night, Angel, and Our Boys* (Atıf Yılmaz, 1993), *Ağır Roman/ Cholera Street* (Mustafa Altıoklar, 1997), *Lola+Bilidikid* (Kutluğ Ataman, 1999) represented transgender subjects in their relation to urban space, time and other socially abjected beings. 1990s were a period in which transsexual sex workers had become a subject of voyeuristic fetishism in media. Also state coercion on these promiscuous subjects became truly brutal during the Habitat II conference which took place in Istanbul in 1996. In collaboration with nationalist residents, the police, forced transgender sex workers to leave their homes where they lived in solidarity within refigured kinship relations that were not based on blood connection.

In this chapter, I will focus on a close reading of *Lola+Bilidikid* which subversively challenges a set of binaries through transgender embodiment and transnational production. Taking Deniz Kandiyoti's contention that the transsexual networks are transnational, I will try to explore how performatively Kutluğ Ataman works on the issues of ethnicity, class, age, gender, time and space through a camp sensibility to refigure identities constructed as rigidly unchangeable. The conflict between the modern and the traditional is challenged through the relation of queer Turkish diaspora to German neo-Nazi's in Berlin. Ataman's film opens up a space of cross-cultural interaction as well as evoking the violent pasts and presents of both parties. Also, the film reworks genre expectations of narrative cinema by camping them. This resignification of the narrative and aesthetic elements of the filmic medium enables a queer relationality with transgender embodiment. In order to explore this relationality I use the concept "friendship as a way of life" which Foucault defines as a more threatening force of homosexuality as a way of life than the sexual act itself. (Foucault 1980)

Taking the issue of performance and performativity as a challenging position towards the readings of mainstream representations, this study will proceed to an argument in which transgenderism become the signifier in which every set of binaries are being queerly challenged and refigured. Although representation claims to be mimetic in its ideological configurations, as this study will claim, it "always contends more than it intends, and it is never totalizing. The ‘excess’ meaning conveyed by representation creates a supplement that makes multiple and resistant readings possible” (Phelan 1993, 2). This excess and its rupturing capability is the matter of concern that this study seeks to analyze.

CHAPTER 2

PERFORMANCE AND CROSS-DRESSING:

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CROSS-DRESSING ON THEATRE AND CINEMA

In this chapter, I will first discuss the term and the practice of cross-dressing within transgenderism and queer theory to clarify how the term functions in relation to transvestism and drag. Then, I will give a brief history of cross-dressing practices in the sixteenth century Ottoman Empire, to show that cross-dressing worked as a theatrical form of entertainment which enables ambivalent readings. The phenomenon of cross-dressing works in both subversive and hegemonic contexts. While challenging the notions of sex, gender and sexuality, it is constantly re-appropriated within hegemonic discourses that claim gender to be fixed, static and innate. Nevertheless, cross-dressing becomes challenging in that it opens up an ambivalent space of the confusion of sexual object choice which serves as a threatening model to the modern constructions of sex, gender and sexuality. The prohibition of the *köçek* performances as a procedure of modernizing practices of the Ottoman Empire indicates that modern gendered identities have been constructed in relation to the prohibition of homosexuality and gender ambiguity. Later, I give an account of the ways in which cross-dressing has been differently conceptualized in western mainstream cinema by feminist critics and queer critics of film and situate my position vis-à-vis the representation of mainstream images in cinema in Turkey. My readings are concerned with the unfixable states of reception and representation within mainstream cinema that is open to resignification and recontextualization.

Cross-dressing within Transgenderism and Queer Theory

"All history is memory and the history of theatre… is a history of desire."

Stephen Orgel

With the prominence of queer theory in Western academia, cross-dressing has been one of the most crucial topics of cultural criticism especially in literary texts. As Clark and Sponsler claim, cross-dressing has been the focus of theoretical work "in studies of the theater of the English Renaissance" (Clark&Sponsler 1997, 319). They go onto argue that cross-dressing was also the standard practice in medieval theatre "with male actors almost without exception playing all roles, both male and female" (319). It was similarly one of the central practices of Ottoman performing arts due to the prohibitions that prevented women from performing in public. Thus, cross-dressing has been one of the major practices of representation since the medieval times and its popularity has not only been specific to Western cultural forms, it is also a very common subject matter in the East.

Before a historiography of the cross-dressing practices and its relation to performance, I would like to suggest a conceptual background of the terms that signify the practice of cross-gender dressing. The terms tranvestism, cross-dressing and drag all have historical, political backgrounds that need to be explained in order to clarify on how they are related and differentiated and how they are situated within transgenderism. Since the 1990s, transgender has been used as an umbrella term including all people who have trouble with the norms of strictly differentiated gender categories as well as the binarity of the sex categories. Julia Serano claims the term of transgender includes:

> […] people who are transsexual (those who live as members of the sex other than the one they were assigned at birth), intersex (those who are born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not fit the typical definitions of female or male), and genderqueer (those who identify outside of male/female binary), as well as whose gender expression differ from their anatomical or perceived sex (including crossdressers, drag performers, masculine women, feminine men, and so on). (Serano 2007, 25)

Tim Dean makes use of the term in a broader sense to include "anyone who expresses dissatisfaction with the normative exigencies of masculinity and femininity" including "feminists as well as lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered, the intersexed and their political supporters" (Dean 2000, 62). Queer theory as put forth in Butler's theory of performativity has focused on drag and cross-dressing particularly in order to "demonstrate that sex, gender and sexuality are naturalized effects of citation and repetition" and "denaturalization is visibly demonstrated by drag" (Carvell 2009, 125).

The practice of cross-dressing was formerly termed transvestism, coined by Magnus Hirschfeld, the German sexologist in 1910. He used it to describe "'the erotic urge for disguise'" (Stryker 2008, 16). Although the term is still in use, it is mostly replaced with the term cross-dressing as a non-judgmental term and "usually considered to be neutrally descriptive of wearing gender-atypical clothing rather than associating that practice with an erotic impulse (17). Thus cross-dressing might signify either the more resistant model of challenging the gender norms by wearing incongruous clothing according to a socially assigned gender or it could be a part of mundane/cultural practices such as theatre, fashion, festivals, holidays and religious rituals (18).

Drag, on the other hand, originates particularly in gay and lesbian cultures, which means "clothing associated with a particular gender or activity, often worn in a parodic, self conscious, or theatrical manner. "'[D]rag king' and 'drag queen' [are] people who engage in cross-gender performance, either on the stage or on the street, usually in subcultural spaces such as gay-friendly bars, nightclubs, neighborhoods, or commercial sex zones" (23).

In this study, however, I will not distinguish the terms of cross-dressing and drag, rather I will use the terms as they are counterparts to underscore their subversiveness. The term transvestite will be used when referenced authors use the term as such.

Ottoman Theatre and Cross-dressing

Cross-dressing is not only intrinsic to Western forms of sex/gender and sexuality as a constitutive as well as subversive practice, rather the figure of the cross-dresser indicates the place of the "category crisis", which is not the exception but rather the ground of culture itself (Garber 1997). In the Ottoman Empire, which was replaced by the Turkish Republic in 1923, male to female drag performances had a long history. "The Ottoman sultans kept young dancers to perform in woman's clothes and sometimes were part of the sultan's or some rich pasha's harem" (Janssen 1992, 84). These cross-dressed performers were called *köçek* and were also welcomed as a part of the daily life as. They were professionals who made their living by dancing in the taverns of the Galata district or at wedding parties and circumcisions. Since women were banned from the public sphere of entertainment and spectacle, street performers, singers and dancers as well as the dramatic troupes were all composed of males (Zuhur 2008, 34). Thijs Janssen observes that:

> The most popular dances satirized the manners and scheming of upper-class ladies. The clown played the role of the underhand lover, who—if accepted—took the woman out onto the floor making obscene gestures to

> the dancers and the audience. The *köçek* wore women's dress, i.e., veils, long vividly colored skirts, and metal adornments (84).

Madeline C. Zilfi in her book *Women and Slavery* mantains that in male dominant cultures where women were bound to strict rules by the patriarchal authorities (whether in Europe or in the Middle Eastern societies), women impersonators gained strong popularity:

> Although transvestite dancing boys (*köçek*) were occasionally banned from the palace in moments of imperial self-awareness, their performances apparently remained a staple entertainment of the palace…A frequent subject for the painters of the period, boy-girl dancers, some known as rabbits or bunnies (tavşan) were immensely popular in elite circles and remained so into the nineteenth century. (2010, 74)

Andrews and Kalpaklı, in their analysis of the sixteenth century Ottoman poetry argue that from the medieval times till the nineteenth century, elite male desire did not distinguish between boys/girls or women in terms of making them their sexual object choice.(Andrews&Kalpaklı 2005, 178). They contend that the genders blended into each other so that each one could act the part of the other in an erotic script. Anyone who could be dominated and penetrated could be the object of (male) sexual desire" (178). They also observe the similarities between the Elizabethan and Ottoman discourses of gender and male homoerotic desire as such:

> On the Elizabethan stage, boys played female roles—in part because it was considered indecent for women to appear as actors. In the poetry of the Ottoman elites, the role of the beloved was played by an epicene youth—in part because it was considered indecent to imply that a particular woman was the object of desire (i.e., that she was "unguarded/uncovered") or that a "poetic" (platonic, intellectualized, spiritualized) love could properly be directed toward the class of women available for public protection […]. (178)

Andrews and Kalpaklı suggest that"[t]he Ottoman act of giving a boy the nick name *Kız Memi* (Girl Memi) or *Sürmeli Kadın* (Eye Shadowed Woman) is the implication that the beautiful boy is in some degree a transvestite, a girl in boys clothing…"(178). The boy-girl beloved was not subjected to the constraints to which women were subjected and thus were more advantageous and more available for the young men of the time who did not have households.

However, the figure of the *köçek* led to rising controversy among the Janissaries[3], and Sultan Mahmud II, in order to quell the riots within the army forbade their appearances. In 1857, a law passed outlawing *köçek*, and prohibiting their performances (84). When read as part of Tanzimat reforms which were conducted in Sultan Mahmut's reign in order to modernize the Empire, this prohibition becomes significant as a technology of sex and gender which rests on the Western construction of these categories. The idea of basing the modern form of the Turkish nation on the foundation of the nuclear family, certain practices of sexual congress or blending genders were totally erased from the arena of history. Kandiyoti argues that the disappearance of the merging myriad identities such as social status, ethnicity and sexuality in the nineteenth century was strictly attached to the proliferation of discourses on marriage, family and appropriate gender roles. As Kandiyoti contends modernization"was primarily reordering the domestic lives of a new citizenry, which must now include women (Kandiyoti 1997, 96).

Kandiyoti's contention supports Foucault's claim that sexuality is a technology of power and knowledge, in which it is historically constructed and naturalized at the surface of the bodies to produce the effect of an innate sex/gender and sexuality (Foucault 1981[1976], 105-106) However, as will be discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, this production did not occur in the Turkish context as an incitement to discourse which accompanied a scientific will to know.[4] Rather, it was a total

---

[3] Janissaries were the army of the Ottoman Empire. They were famous with their riots; whenever they felt discontent with the reign of the sultan, they rebelled against him and sometimes they even decrowned him.
[4] See Gurbilek *Vitrinde Yaşamak: 1980'lerin Kültürel İklimi*, (2009[1988])

repression where sexuality became the unspoken taboo until the late 1980s cultural climate of cultural diversity.

Cross-dressing, however, was not only seen in the dancing performances of the *köçek*s, it was also intrinsic to other Ottoman performing arts such as the *Karagöz* shadow play (also known as Hayal Oyunu or hayal-ı zill) *Ortaoyunu* (theatre in the round) and *Meddah*. The *Karagöz* shadow play, *Ortaoyunu* and *Meddah* were all traditional performing arts of the Ottoman era, and they were all common in the sense that they are vehicles of articulating social critique against the authority and hegemony. As Nicholas N. Martinovich argues, contrary to the western assumption that Ottoman people could never criticize the authority of the Sultan, these performers very often expressed their discontent with the authorities on the stage (Martinovich 1933). Moreover, these performances were the presentation of the society by and to itself, thus circulating alternative cultural narratives against the formal ones that imposed certain religious codes and modes of behavior. Ze'evi notes that the *Karagöz* shadow theatre "poked fun at morality and voiced a truth about society that hides within fiction" (2006, 126).

First, it should be noted that due to the ban against women's appearances in the public sphere as performers, these performances were conducted by male actors and professionals. As mentioned above, transvestism or gender ambiguity was quite popular in the Ottoman era around sixteenth century. Norms concerning gender and sexuality were quite different from our modern understanding of the binaries of sex (female/male), gender (woman/man) and sexuality (heterosexual/homosexual) as "sodomy was a category of forbidden acts"[5] and men were especially considered to have different sexual stages in the course of their lives. Thus, cross-dressing or

[5] See Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 1981.

imitation of women/femininity by male performers was part of these theatrical presentations. All of these performances were based on certain stereotypes and stories that are familiar to the audience which is reiterated constantly in the plays. These stereotypes were the imitation of actual people living in the Ottoman society such as the Turk, the Jew, the Armenian, the Arnaut, the Greek, Çelebi (the dandy) and Zenne (woman).

Orta Oyunu which is more akin to the Western forms of theatre among other traditional performing arts has similarities with classic mime and Italian commedia del'arte. It was a popular street theatre in which the audience seated around a circular stage on which the performance took place. The plots of the stories in *Orta Oyunu* in general is very much like the ones in *Karagöz* and even the characters are the same in these plays with only different nicknames. Since women were not allowed to perform on stage in those times, the role of the *Zenne* in *Orta Oyunu* was acted by males who cross-dressed as women. Martinovich notes "[t]he feminine roles from the earliest days to our own time have been played exclusively by men, dressed in women's costumes with special make-up. These men must have high voices that they may better imitate the feminine voice" (18).

Meddah which was another type of Ottoman popular theatre, "means encomiast, eulogist, panegyrist…Later it began to be used in general sense to mean a story-teller who used mimicry, without any special idea of eulogy"(Martinovich, 21). Martinovich observes that among Meddah performers one was quite popular as he notes that "*Kiz Ahmed* (Girl Ahmed) [was] famous for his talent and ingenuity [and] enjoyed such popularity that his plays were attended even by European tourists" (23). As argued above giving a boy a girl's nickname indicated gender ambiguity and transvestism, implying his beauty and desirability. We could deduce from our knowledge about the *köçek* dancers' sexual appeal to male audience that the femininity of these actors also might have been the center of sexual attraction.

The most important form of Ottoman traditional theatre for this study is however the *Karagöz* shadow play or *hayal-ı zill* as it is mostly accepted as the precursor of cinema. Ze'evi describes the technique of the shadow theatre as:

> Usually a large curtain of dark material is set up. In the middle of the dark curtain, a smaller rectangular aperture is covered with white cotton cloth and lit from behind, in the past usually by candles or lanterns "that smoke abominably". A flickering light shines on the puppets, which are made of thin, translucent, smoothly dressed, and richly painted camel leather. The leather is then perforated, so that the picture projected on the screen is not a uniform black shadow, but rather a cartoonlike image in full color. The puppeteer manipulates the puppets by means of long sticks, which he hides by placing them at a direct angle to the source of light. He also plays all the roles in the play, frequently as many as twenty, and usually sings songs as well. (Ze'evi 2006, 127)

As Ze'evi notes, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, the *Karagöz* shadow theatre was a hot topic frequently contested by the orthodox *ulema*[6] for its open sexuality and vulgar language. They demanded that these shadow plays should be banned or censored; faithful men should not attend these morally corrupt shows (130). Starting with the *Tanzimat* reforms in the nineteenth century, the plays were actually censored and purified of their open sexual references. Since shadow plays (also Meddah and Orta Oyunu) are orally transmitted from the master to disciple, previous plays were not inscribed. Thus, we have very limited access to these pre-modern versions that had overt sexual content and language.

Nerval claims that "*Karagöz* appropriates freedom of speech and defies injustice, the sword, and the whip" (Ze'evi, 135). Also in *Karagöz* gender expression and sexual desire is not as heteronormative and patriarchal as is in the modern reductions of the shadow theatre. Ze'evi suggests that "Although Karagöz is "most

[6]The name of *Ulema* in the Ottoman Empire is given to the class of men including the jurists, religous intellectuals and educators.

often found chasing women of all sorts (and usally failing miserably), he is definitely not a homophobe" (135). Karagöz does not avoid homoerotic encounters that could be considered as either active or passive, also in many of the plays he cross-dresses as a woman (135).

Ze'evi argues that the most subversive character in the shadow theatre is *zenne* which comes to represent the woman as "anonymous yet all-encompassing", who is mostly a prostitute. She is not veiled and even her breasts are revealed most of the time. In the figure of the *zenne*, women are represented as characters who are autonomous sexual subjects and they are not condemned because of their gender for being seductive and destructive:

> Female independence, authority, and freedom find their ultimate expression in *Zenne…Zenne* might be any woman, but she is also a female mirror image of the men on stage…Since there are rarely virtuous men or chaste women on stage, including the wives of the protagonists, this seems to be a description of all human kind. Yet it is also true that *zennes* –unlike the wives— are respected, independent, opinionated, and sometimes wealthy. (Ze'evi, 136)

In the medieval medical texts and literary models of the era, women were depicted as the failed gender as the result of the one sex continuum for men and women,[7] and a threat to the virtue of men. Women were embodiments of *fitna*, a threat to the morality of men and the whole world. However, in the *Karagöz* shadow play, *zenne* and men were equally promiscuous and sex positive, women were not the representation of corruption rather all people were equally available for decadence (Ze'evi, 141).

Ze'evi also concludes that in Shadow Theater "homoerotic tendencies are not shameful or forbidden. They are taken in stride and regarded as part of 'normal'

[7] This was also the case in the depictions of sex/gender system as we have seen in Laqueur's argument on one sex theory in Renaissance Europe.

sexuality" (142). However homoerotic affairs rarely go beyond jokes or dirty language. Female homoeroticism is also articulated in the play *Hamam* that depict a lesbian couple who separate and unite in the end. In plays such as *Bahçe* and *Meyhane,* Karagöz mistakes *köçeks* for women, falls in love with them and tries to seduce them. Ze'evi suggests that crossing gender boundaries was a rich vein of the *Karagöz* plays as was the case in the English theatre between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Karagöz shadow plays which represented cross-dressing as progress narrative might be read as revealing gender a doing—in the Butlerian sense—rather than something one achieves as innate.

Cross-dressing on Cinema

Cross-dressing has also been a rich vein of representation in cinema since the silent movies. In the sound era, male-to-female cross-dressing mostly served as a comic or horror device while female-to-male cross-dressing has been represented as a vehicle for women to gain agency and power in the unequal, male dominated public sphere. Feminist and queer critics of film, had divergence about the ways in which these representations have subverted or reproduced the heterosexual matrix and gender asymmetry.

Annette Khun in her article *Sexual disguise and Cinema* observes that very little work had been done on the issue of cross-dressing and cinema up to the 1980s (the period she wrote the article) despite the subject matter's popularity within mainstream cinema. However, queer theory's breakthrough in the 1990s, in gender as well as film studies, gave way to queer scholars' efforts to uncloset the mainstream Hollywood cinema in order to rewrite an anti-heteronormative history of popular cinema and to queer the mainstream from within. This endeavor led queer critics of cinema to discover the hidden sexual identities of Hollywood directors and actors/actresses and also to analyze the queerness of some Hollywood star personas such as Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, Bette Davis or Joan Crawford. Moreover they also focused on the films that dealt with issues of sexual disguise as a central narrative plot to reveal their subversive potential which had been ignored or thwarted by feminist film critics.

Smorol (2010) argues that the early representations of cross-dressed performances of female actresses were challenges to the patriarchal and masculinist order of things in which women were oppressed and controlled. These representations:

> sought to deconstruct meanings that had been portrayed as fixed and unchangeable by powerful forces. Namely the ideas that women were dependent, that their sexuality needed to be controlled, or that their bodies were (or should be) subjects of a singularly male gaze, were all successfully challenged by these subversive representations”. (88)

In *Morocco* (Josef von Sternberg, 1930) Marlene Dietrich, gave one of the most significant and iconic performances of male cross-dressing. In one scene, Dietrich enters the crowded dancing hall, wearing a tuxedo and a hat, approaches a woman sitting on a table to ask for the flower in her hair. Mesmerized by the astonishing persona that Dietrich performs so amazingly, the woman gives her the flower and receives a kiss on the lips as an act of appreciation. Dietrich then turns to the man and gives him the flower, glamorizing both the man and the woman. Smorol argues that this representation of bisexual erotics have enabled the lesbian filmgoers to enter the realm of pleasure that was served for man as Mulvey had argued “woman [is the] image and man [is the] bearer of the look” (Mulvey 1975; Smorol 2010, 89).

In 1933, Greta Garbo played in the film *Queen Christina,* which was based on the true life story of the Queen of Sweden who was the regnant of the country between 1632-1634. Christina was famous for her appearance in male clothing and her refusal of marriage which incited gossips around her sexual identity. Vitto Russo argues that she had passionate feelings for a beautiful Swedish noble woman, Ebba Sparre "who lost most of her interest in Christina when Christina ceased to rule Sweden" (Smorol, 91). Smorol suggests that however Vitto Russo's argument is that Greta Garbo's performance did not indicate the lesbian desire of Christina, "[a]t any rate, she certainly offers enough behavioral (and literal) language to create a compelling subtext, or coded reading" (91).

In Sylvia Scarlett (George Cukor, 1935), Katherine Hepburn is disguised as a boy in order to escape the law and in Victor/Victoria (Blake Edwards, 1982) Julie Andrews is disguised as a gay man in order to get a job as a female impersonator in the show business of the 1934 Paris. Annette Kuhn argues that "[g]enerally speaking there is a marked difference between representations of male and of female characters that cross-dress. Female characters such as Katherine Hepburn in *Sylvia Scarlett* continue to look sexually attractive and desirable whilst male characters such as Dustin Hoffman's *Tootsie* (Sydney Pollack 1982) tend to appear ridiculous and laughable" (Kuhn&Radstone 1994[1990],102). She bases her argument on Mulvey's theory that the woman is the fetishized sexual object that is presented to the pleasure of an active male gaze. Thus she concludes that even a woman in masculine attire "remains eroticized for the look" which she believes to be emphasized in Marlene Dietrich's fetishized image in male clothing in *Morocco.* However, this argument is in ignorance of queer erotics that Marlene Dietrich's astonishing persona serves for both of the genders.

Kuhn also argues that through cross-dressing performances which enable "a disjunction between clothes and body, the socially constructed nature of sexual difference is foregrounded and even subjected to comment: what appears natural, then, reveals itself as artifice" (Kuhn 1985, 49). Nevertheless her point is that the subversive practice of cross-dressing fails when "deployed through the conventions of dominant cinema" (1985, 50). According to this point of view, films such as *Some Like It Hot (Billy Wilder 1959), Tootsie*, *Calamity Jane* (David Butler, 1953) and *Victor/Victoria* through the representations of cross-dressing, "draw upon and rework certain sets of cultural meanings and ideologies" (1985, 51).

> In such narratives of sexual disguise, cinema asserts quite firmly that the body beneath the clothes is indeed the ultimate site of sexual difference, and that the difference is after all absolute. At the same time, though, does it not also offer a softly whispered comment upon its own capacity to deliver such bold assurances (Kuhn 1985, 73)

This brings us to Judith Butler's argument that films such as *Some Like It Hot*, *Victor/Victoria*, *Tootsie* are products of heterosexual culture, representing drag as "high het entertainment"(Butler 1993, 126). Butler suggests that "these are films which produce and contain the homosexual excess of any given drag performance, the fear that an apparently heterosexual contact might be made before the discovery of a non apparent homosexuality" (126). Judith Butler refuses any subversive potential to these images as Kuhn does and argues that they are indeed functional in the sense that they "provid[e] a ritualistic release for a heterosexual economy that must constantly police its own boundaries against the invasion of queerness, and that this displaced production and resolution of homosexual panic actually fortifies the heterosexual regime in its self-perpetuating task" (126).

Thus drag performances in mainstream films are reduced to being products of the heterosexual matrix to set its boundaries against the invasion of queerness and are the interest of theory only in the sense that they engage in this kind of heteronormative reproduction. On the other hand avant-garde drag as is represented in *Paris Is Burning* or John Waters' films starring drag queen Divine such as *Pink Flamingos, Hair Spray* and *Female Trouble* are of interest to theory for their subversive potential to reveal the performative nature of all gender. Butler underscores this subversive potential by arguing that the drag queen/ king reveals that gender is a mere artifact, it is a "doing" rather than "being".

> To claim that all gender is like drag, or is drag, is to suggest that "imitation" is at the heart of the *heterosexual* project and its gender binarisms, that drag is not a secondary imitation that presupposes a prior and original gender, but that hegemonic heterosexuality is itself a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealizations. (1993, 125)

However as Kuhn notes, narratives which produce the effect of gender mutability through cross-dressing practices open up a space for *jouissance* by offering a space of identification that enables gender fluidity for the spectator. Nevertheless, Kuhn goes onto argue that "[i]f cross-dressing narratives always in some measure problematise gender identity and sexual difference, then, many do so only to confirm finally the absoluteness of both, to reassert a 'natural' order of fixed gender and unitary subjectivity" (57). However, I argue that spectatorship cannot be bound to singular heteronormative readings even in mainstream representations which are produced within the conventional codes of narrative cinema. These films might unintentionally challenge heterosexual codes of gendered subjectivity, at least at the level of audience reception. Also as will be argued in Chapter 5, the mainstream can be used as a vehicle by the queer director to access mainstream audiences by queer production and challenge the notion of discrete genders and reproductive sexualities. As Michael Warner argues

> [u]sually the notion is that fantasy and other kinds of representation are inherently uncontrollable, queer by nature. This focus on messy representation allows queer theory, like non-academic queer activism, to be both antiassimilationist and antiseparatist: you can't eliminate

> queerness, says queer theory, or screen it out. It's everywhere". (Doty 1993, xiii)

Against Laura Mulvey's argument that only an avant-garde cinema can represent the differences of women in so far as the mainstream codes of narrative cinema objectifies and represents women only as sexual difference, Linda Williams suggests that "[i]t is an understandably easier task to reject 'dominant' or 'institutional' modes of representation altogether than to discover within these existing modes of glimpses of a more 'authentic' female subjectivity" (Williams 1991, 6). This argument is insightful also in discussing the more 'authentic' ways to explore queer subjectivities and erotics in mainstream representations of drag and transgendered bodies. My aim here is not to locate queer spectatorship and camp sensibility into the hegemonic minoritizing view that places queerness "as an issue of active importance primarily for a small, distinct, relatively fixed homosexual minority" (Sedgwick 1990, 1). Rather my aim is to read queerness into what is supposed to represent the majority in order to make a queer historiography of representation. Albeit the terms "queer" or "camp" are grounded in contemporary Western subcultures and scholarship, and might be considered as avant-garde practices addressing a minority group of people who have refined tastes in spectatorship, my argument is that transgender and queer performativities have a long history that have addressed the majority of people as I tried to briefly discuss in this chapter through the history of cross-dressing in theatre and cinema.

In this study, I consider the audience and their reception "to be fragmented, polymorphous, contradictory and nomadic" as they are acknowledged in cultural studies (Doty 1). Thus, my discussion of the films stands in a critical position to the images of the transgendered bodies in order to point out to their queer resignification.

This endeavor is based on a certain queer performative understanding that even "heterocentrist texts can contain queer elements, and basically heterosexual, straight identifying people can experience queer moments" (Doty 3). Hence, my position as a spectator becomes prominent in this endeavor to interpret and resignify the anti-straight, non-normative moments and theoretical positions that the gender incongruity of these images enables. In the following chapters mainstream cinema will be discussed in order to enable such readings of reappropriation, while also enabling, the queer director to access a majority audience and manipulate the mainstream to challenge the notions of sex, gender and sexuality as well as nationalism, ethnicity, class and age.

In the next chapter, I discuss the aesthetic elements of Yeşilçam cinema and how it has been conceptualized as a low cultural form by advocates of European cinema and modernist elites. This aspect of Yeşilçam is worthy of attention since low cultural forms and "bad taste" are crucial for producing camp taste. I will look at the ways in which cross-dressing is represented in relation to specific genres to explore how these figures within conventional aesthetics might be performatively interpreted to disrupt the heteronormative binaries of sex, gender and sexuality.

CHAPTER 3

UNDOING COMEDY AND MELODRAMA: CAMP AFFINITIES AND GENDER PERFORMATIVITY IN CINEMA IN TURKEY

In this chapter, I will first give an account of the history of cinema in Turkey to indicate its relation to the traditional theatrical forms discussed in the previous chapter. The popularity of cross-dressing narratives produced in the heyday of Yeşilçam reveals the fascination with the stars in drag which also operate as the repository of the once repressed gender variations and sexualities. Starting from the 1960s, a considerable amount of films was produced which dealt with sexual disguise. Even some of the plots were reproduced several times. For instance, *Fıstık Gibi Maşallah* which will be discussed in its relation to queer erotics and camp taste, was reproduced for two more times in the consecutive years. The second reproduction of the film by the same director was called *Fıstık Gibi* and the actors in drag gave a photo-interview for the famous *Ses* magazine of the time (Ses magazine 1970, issue:20) which reveals the public fascination with the phenomenon. Also in 1966, male to female Italian transsexual actress Dolly (Carla Maria) was offered to play the lead in a film by the Turkish director Sırrı Gultekin, which attracted media attention considerably.

The period between 1960s to 1980s is called Yeşilçam in cinema in Turkey which is named after the street in Beyoğlu where the production companies were found. The modernist elites considered this cinema to represent a “backward” aspect of Turkey which did not reflect the truths about the country and its people. In this chapter, I will try to determine the relationship between performativity and Yeşilçam through cross-dressing narratives that stand distinctive from their counterparts. Taking camp as a spectatorship practice, I will try to perform a queer reading of the film.

In another section of this chapter, I will try to perform a reading of the figure of the mannish woman in relation to Butler's theory of gender melancholia and performativity in order to resignify this figure as a trope of lost attachments to same-sex desire. I will try to discuss the mainstream filmic genres that are considered as tropes of heteronormative reproduction in their relation to gender performativity, camp sensibility and heterosexual gender melancholia in order to read how these texts can be manipulated by queer spectatorship practices.

Cinema in Turkey

Rekin Teksoy notes that "the first cinematograph screenings took place in the Pera district of Istanbul most probably towards the end of 1896" (Teksoy 2008, 14). After the first screenings in the Ottoman palace, beerhouses and coffeehouses in Pera hosted these screenings. On the eve of the First World War, there were many theatres in the Ottoman cities of Istanbul, Izmir and Salonica (15). The popularity of cinema in this era is often related by some critics to the similarity between cinema and the traditional shadow play in the Ottoman culture. In fact some of the first screenings took place in the coffee houses which hosted Karagöz shadow plays in Ramadan such as Feyziye coffeehouse. These presentations were not made with new organizations that were in concord with the western screening techniques, rather they were presented with the existing setup for the shadow plays “in order to incorporate film into existing spectatorial practices” (Arslan 2011, 27).

These screening practices led to an interesting relationship between the two distinct forms of entertainment and effected the way in which Turkish cinema took shape. Nijat Özön has claimed that “the elements of traditional theater, from shadow puppetry, outdoor theatres in town squares, to other forms of public narration…led to a ‘cinema of Karagöz’ employing common stock characters and speaking style”(Arslan, 27). What he implies is that, Yeşilçam cinema has adopted the style of ‘non-illusionism’ from Ottoman performing arts such as *Karagöz, Orta Oyunu* and *Meddah* discussed in the previous chapter. This relation of tradition and cinema was considered as a certain lack of creativity for advocated of European (i.e modern, perogressive) cinema. Nezih Erdoğan notes that “Yeşilçam bears a striking resemblance to Brechtian alienation effects” with its hybrid aesthetics that “oscillated between non-illusionism and classic realism” (Erdoğan 2002, 326). However he remarks that rather than appropriating Yeşilçam into Brechtian terms, this effect should be considered as an outcome of the tradition of Turkish non-illusionism, especially in relation to *Karagöz* (Erdoğan 326).

Savaş Arslan also argues that “what remained intact in the cinema of Turkey is *hayal* which literally means not only dream but also shadow, specter, imagination, and mirror” (27). This aspect of tradition as intrinsic to Turkish cinema is what caused distaste on the side of the film critics such as Özön. Arslan claims “the preservation of this tradition was directly opposed to the aesthetic expectations of Kemalist intellectuals” (27-28) who accepted a progress in the arts in line with western forms of high art while imbuing them with nationalist codes. As Yeşilçam resisted this type of modernization, the critics who gathered around *Yeni Sinema*

(New Cinema) journal such as Özön claimed that Yeşilçam "is the swamp that should be dried", that "it was a cultural machine producing nothing but bad taste" (Mutlu 2010, 418).

The state only interfered with cinema through censorship to clean out the elements that were deemed harmful in the production of a westernized and authentic Turkish culture, nationalism and mores. At the core of nationalism, there lied 'Turkification' which was one of the "driving motives of a cumulative modernization project of a newly founded nation-state that had multiple repercussions on the social, political and cultural life of the republic" (Arslan 2011, 44). Arslan introduces the term "Turkification-from-above" in an attempt "to indicate a limited view of change and progress that created an active process of segregation and discrimination to modernize and westernize the country" (46).

Cinema as mentioned above was exempt of this type of Turkification-from-above by the direct intervention of the republican elite. The republicans did not give much attention to cinema as a means of state propaganda as was the case in the Soviet Russia. Nevertheless, Yeşilçam cinema which reached its heyday in the 1960s adopted the ideals of Turkish nationalism akin to that of the republican elites in order to exclude and abject ethnic, religious and sexual minorities. Yeşilçam cinema produced a discourse of modernity independently but in accord with the discourses of nationalism and Turkificiation, combining the global with the local, the modern with the traditional. Rather than addressing the republican elite, Yeşilçam addressed masses of lower classes. While adapting or plagiarizing western texts into the Turkish cultural milieu they were not simply translated into Turkish. Rather they were transformed, interpreted and localized in concordance with nationalist discourses.

Considering this relation of Yeşilçam cinema to traditional art forms, one is incited to think that the cross-dressing narratives in Turkish cinema also stand in relation to the figures of *zenne* and *köçek* discussed in the pervious chapter. Nevertheless, the modernist discourse was also constitutive of Yeşilçam cinema which repressed ambiguous gender identifications and sexualities. Thus, while on the narrative surface, sexual disguise or gender ambiguity appears to serve as a temporary transgression that would be incorporated in the heterosexual matrix, they might be queerly received. I consider that the spectatorial gaze is not fixed as Munoz suggests. Rather it is "always vacillating and potentially transformative in its possibilities… [T]he contradictions within the text and between text and viewer" forms "assertive, even transgressive, identification and seeing" (Munoz 27-28). I will try to read the films in light of this insight of incongruity within text and between text and gaze.

Comedy and Cross-dressing in Yeşilçam

As suggested in the previous chapter, cross-dressing has been used as a comic device in pre-modern texts as well as in the modern ones. These comedies have included cross-dressing as temporary phenomena, and did not include the permanence of cross-gender identification. As some critics argue, comic scripts thus involve cross-dressing as an instrument of disguise to amuse and fascinate the spectator with the playfulness of gender codes. Nevertheless in doing so, I suggest that, some of these texts open up the possibility to problematize the categories of sex, gender and sexuality determined by the patriarchal and heteronormative culture in which they are produced.

John Philips suggests that comedies as such do not offer subversive possibilities because they "represent the temporariness of transvestism and not the permanence of transsexuality (Philips 2006, 17). For Phillips, any transgressive reading of these films offered by other critics are "over-readings" of queerness into texts. He goes onto argue that in films such as *Some Like It Hot*, it is true that there is a temporary transgression of gender boundaries. However, to interpret what is intended to be comic as homoeroticism is an over-interpretation (57-58). Philips's argument is akin to Butler's, that the mainstream representation of cross-dressing in comedy genre is not subversive or parodic but rather "fortifies the heterosexual regime in its self-perpetuating task" (Butler 1993, 126). On the other hand, other film critics read the relationship between comedy and gender more subversively, as feminist film critics have read melodrama and female spectatorship from such a point. Kathleen Rowe Karlyn argues that "[by m]aking fun of and out of inflated and self-deluded notions of heroic masculinity, romantic comedy is often structured by gender inversion" (Karlyn 2008, 157). Moreover, she argues that while "tragedy is the most masculine of genres, implications of gender for comedy are less clear" (157). Thus, contrary to Butler's and Philips' assumption that mainstream comedy films focusing on drag do not challenge the normative categories of sex/gender and sexuality, I argue that comedy, which is not gender specific as a genre, is capable of problematizing sexual difference and culturally constructed, historically specific categories of sex, gender and sexuality. In his introduction to *Making Things Perfectly Queer* Alexander Doty's suggestion of how to read queerness into texts is highly influential in this sense:

> […] the queerness I point out in mass culture representation and reading in this book is only "connotative", and therefore deniable or "insubstantial" as long as we keep thinking within conventional heterocentrist paradigms, which always already have decided that

> expressions of queerness as *sub*-textual, *sub*-cultural, alternative readings, or pathetic and delusional attempts to see something that isn't there—after all, mass culture texts are made for the "average" (straight, white, middle-class, usually male) person aren't they? I've got news for straight culture: you readings of texts are usually "alternative" ones for me, and they often seem like desperate attempts to deny the queerness that is so clearly a part of mass culture. (Doty 1993, xii)

The films I will discuss in this section which focus on cross-dressing are "progress narratives" in the sense that Marjorie Garber has used the term. In, *Fıstık Gibi Maşallah* (Hulki Saner 1964), *Şabaniye* (Kartal Tibet 1964) and *Belalı Torun* (Memduh Ün, 1962) the protagonists disguise in order to escape villains or to achieve socio-economic success. These characters unwillingly engage in the practice of cross-dressing and since "heterosexual desire is for a time apparently thwarted by the cross-dresser's assumed identity, so that it becomes necessary for him or for her to unmask" (Philips 2006, 52-53). Philip's concludes that this is the result of the heteronormative ideology that can only accept cross-dressing as soon as it is temporary and thus "fun" and "functional".

In *Fıstık Gibi Maşallah* which is the remake of Billy Wilder's *Some Like It Hot*, the two buddies Naci (İzzet Günay) and Fikri (Sadri Alışık) disguise as women in order to escape the mob. In *Şabaniye*, Şaban (Kemal Sunal) disguises as a woman in order to escape the blood feud while in *Belalı Torun* Kamuran (Fatma Girik) living abroad for years, disguises as male to trick her sexist grandfather who devalued having a granddaughter. Cross-dressing characters are represented as heterosexual and their heterosexuality is mostly confirmed and appropriated by including heterosexual romance at the center of the narrative plot. Philips argues the comedies which focus on cross-dressing"all address in this way the web of sex, gender and sexuality, and with few exceptions appear to reinforce assumed normative links between them" (55).

For instance in *Şabaniye* and *Belalı Torun,* whenever the cross-dressed body of the protagonist leads a confusion of the heterosexual object choice, the narrative plot progresses in the direction that prevents homosexual erotics which might be subversive for the heterosexist ideologies of gender and sexuality. For instance in *Şabaniye*, Şaban/iye plays joyfully on the male desire of the *gazino* owner Dursun in order to possess the wealth and fame offered by him, or to deter Şehmuz (Erdal Özyağcılar) from killing Şaban. Nevertheless, whenever any intimate encounter is at stake, Şaban/iye repels men by claiming that "she is a chaste woman" who will not engage in any sexual activity before getting married. Thus cultural moral codes managing women's sexuality becomes Şaban/iye's pretence for avoiding homosexual encounters. Nevertheless, *In Belalı Torun* Kamuran seems to be more serene when she flirts with the women that Namık (Ayhan Işık) and her grandfather Kaptan Baba (Hulisi Kentmen) are involved with. However the possibility of lesbian erotics is not further represented.

Fıstık Gibi Maşallah as I will try to argue holds a significant place among these films in terms of queer erotics and camp affinities. *Fıstık Gibi Maşallah* is the remake of *Some Like It Hot* which was itself the remake of the German film *Fan Faren der Liebe* released in 1951. Scognomillo notes that in 1972, Turkey was amongst the top movie producer countries, ranking third in the lists with the production of 301 films and remakes were quite popular at this peak period of Yeşilçam. "Almost 90 per cent of these movies, however, were remakes, adaptations or spin offs" (Gürata 2006, 242). Turkish scenario writer Bülent Oran claims that "there were all sorts of sources and thousands of books available for free" (Gürata, 243). Because of the lack of any legal procedures concerning copyrights, filmmakers of Turkey could use the material as they wished.

Gürata also notes that most of the remakes were shot between 1960-1975, while the originals were from the 1940s and 1950s, and due to the socio-economic changes that Turkish spectators underwent, the originals were seen by a minority group of people while their remakes attained a wider group of filmgoers. Gürata writes: “Thus it is unlikely that the same audiences saw the original and the remake. In fact, one can argue that they appealed to two distinct socially and economically constructed audience groups” (243). While some have argued that the recourse to remakes was about the assembly-line production system in Yeşilçam which restricted script writers’ creativity and authenticity, writers such as Bülent Oran has argued that literature adaptations and remakes of Hollywood productions was a much more troublesome endeavor in terms of creativity and the effort spent. Gürata claims that this is because of the contextual differences, as the remaking of films rise problems in terms of cultural codes and values. Thus Gürata makes a recourse to the metaphor of translation “to explore the remake as a cross-cultural interpretation” in order to explain how remakes functioned in the Turkish context (244).

In Tanzimat novels, the West or, over-Westernized characters were represented in relation to the body and materiality (Parla 1993[1990], 81). Beyoğlu was associated with the threats the West pose such as “corporeality, sensibility and sexuality” which was against Turkish mores (81). Thus over-Westernized characters were considered as corrupted, represented as “individuals to be made fun of or to be despised”, ‘as traitors to their culture whose example is to be shunned” (Gürata, 246). However, as Gürata argues that this is not an anti-modern stance, rather “[the critique of] over-Westernization was used to support a line of modernism more in consort with traditional values” (247). This critique of over-Westernization, represented as superficiality, stupidity and corruption was best embodied by the decay of the modernized female characters. Jale Parla notes that “there are two objects of male sexuality” in the novels, good women who are benevolent and savior, bad women who are beautiful, passionate and lethal.(1993[1990], 93) These gender roles were intact in Yeşilçam in absolute contradiction to each other. As Gürata argues that “in contrast with these models, remakes offered a new type of woman who is sexually attractive yet virtuous” (247-248).

In Yeşilçam melodramas, discourses on gender and sexuality revolve around the dichotomy of female bodies constructed in contradiction to each other: the good woman (i.e the chaste, virtuous woman) and the bad woman (over-Westernized, sexually active woman). While the heroine –who is traditional but refined with the codes of modernity—keeps her chastity regardless of the circumstances; the bad woman is represented as excessive, lost in a world of hedonistic affairs such as partying, commodity fetishism and sexuality. Thus virginity held a significant place in the conflict between the good and the bad. In the beginning of the twentieth century virginity was also the central theme when Hollywood appropriated melodrama. However in the 1940s, the subject matter had lost its significance as a central theme in Hollywood melodramas, thus Turkish remakes were mostly inspired from the early American melodrama” (Gürata, 249).

However in FGM, the dichotomic construction of the chaste versus desiring woman is inverted. As a result of translating the film into contextually familiar codes for the audience in Turkey, the dominant yet desexualized character of the band leader Sweet Sue is replaced with a republican stereotype of the chaste woman embodied by Bedia (Mualla Sürer). However, this time the chaste and virtuous woman is not represented as the site of identification; rather she is turned into a parody of the modernized republican gender ideology. Bedia, the band leader, is represented as comic in her endeavor to obstruct other women's sexuality and hedonistic practices. This time, in contradiction with the general narrative line of Yeşilçam, she becomes the embodiment of stupidity with her disciplinary and conservative ways. As Kandiyoti has argued this construction of womanhood as the desexualized "sister" had enabled women's circulation in the public sphere in a Muslim society in which women and men had been segregated for centuries (Kandiyoti 1997). However the film sidesteps this aspect of gender construction in Turkey and adopts most of the basic points represented in the original script. Gülten (Türkan Şoray) who plays the role of Sugar Kane (Marlyn Monroe), is the character of identification although she drinks, smokes, chases rich men and kisses Naci passionately.

In FGM, as it is in SLIH, the two characters who cross-dress respond differently to their cross-dressing experiences. While Naci/ye "retains a sense of himself as male, assuming a second disguise as a man for the purposes of seducing" Gülten, Fikriye "allows himself to be seduced" by a man, *Horoz* Nuri (Vahi Öz) (Philips 2006, 57). However, this temporary transgression of the gender binaries is ambivalent according to Philips, appearing to "problematise gender identity and sexual difference" while on the other hand films as such end up confirming "the absoluteness of both, to reassert a 'natural' order of fixed gender and unitary subjectivity" (Philips 2006, 57; Kuhn 1985, 57).

However critics such as Terrell Carver and Maria Jesus Marinez argue that SLIH offers more subversive and transgressive possibilities in contradiction to this argument. Marinez suggests:

> […] *Some Like It Hot* endorses such a view: the film privileges the heterosexual couple as the 'normal' or 'natural' one and displays a female sexuality subordinated to male pleasure. Yet to leave the matter here would amount to imposing an artificial unity and, consequently, an

> illusory narrative closure on the film. It is in this sense that an analytical concept such as the already mentioned notion of negotiation becomes useful. Accordingly, and in spite of its patriarchal standpoint, *Some Like It Hot* allows us to negotiate a different interpretation of the film narrative, one which is arrived at when we focus on a series of individual moments that threaten to deconstruct the overt (patriarchal) discourse of the film. (Marinez 1998, 145)

While it is true that, like many of the mainstream representations of the female body, FGM as SLIH, constructs the female star as the fetishistic object, serving for the male gaze and pleasure, there are other aspects in the film that ambiguously subverts the tropes of gender and sexuality. It is important to note that the sex symbol Marlyn Monroe is replaced with the Turkish diva Türkan Şoray, who is also the site of sexual fascination as Monroe. However Şoray, at the peak of her carrier, turned her star persona into a signifier of repressed sexuality by setting a set of rules. Just a couple of years after FGM was released, Türkan Şoray declared that she would no longer strip or even reveal her knee, would not act in passionate scenes or kiss (Büker&Uluyağcı, 1993). These rules constructed her star persona as a more conservative one after her films such as FSM in which she reveals her body and passionately kisses with Naci/ye.

Butler following Esther Newton has suggested that drag reveals the fact that gender is performative. In doing so it shows that the supposed anatomical sex and gender identity does not have to follow from each other. As stressed in FGM, Naci/ye and Fikri/ye are performers, as is in most of the cross-dressing narratives which refer to the link between performance and gender in the first stance. Naci/ye and Fikri/ye in their drag personas, reveal the fact that gender is not a biological essence; rather it is all about clothing, gestures and modes of behavior. As they turn into Naciye and Fikriye, gender becomes apparent in its construction, as it is manifested as a "free floating artifice" that can attach to any biological body assigned as male or female. Terrel Carver claims:

> In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency. Indeed, part of the pleasure, the giddiness of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency in the relation between sex and gender…In the place of the law of heterosexual coherence, we see sex and gender denaturalized. (2009, 128)

According to Butler "gender is the performative effect of reiterative acts, that is, acts that can be, and are, repeated. These acts which are repeated in and through a highly rigid regulatory frame, 'congeal over time to produce the appearance of a substance, of a natural sort of being" (Sullivan 2003, 82). Butler, extends her analysis to the idea that not only gender identity but all the identity categories are imitative, reiterative and citational. FGM offers this thesis not only by its cross-dressing protagonists but also putting Naci/ye in a second drag by disguising him as a wealthy, upper class, impotent shipowner to seduce Gülten. Thus, Marjorie Garber's argument that "class, gender , sexuality and even race and ethnicity—the determinate categories of analysis for modern and postmodern cultural critique—are themselves brought to crisis in dress codes and sumptuary regulation", is important in analyzing how cross-dressing marks and signifies the constructedness of all these categories. Garber claims that:

> Transvestism was located at the juncture of "class" and "gender", and increasingly through its agency gender and class were revealed to be commutable, if not equivalent. To transgress against one set of boundaries was to call into question the inviolability of both and of the set of social codes—already demonstrably under attack—by which such categories were policed and maintained. (1997 [1992], 32)

Thus it is clear that since Elizabethan times, cross-dressing has been a marker of culture in which identity categories are constructed in strict relation to each other, and drag has the disruptive possibility to denaturalize all of these identity categories that have materialized as natural. Butler, referring to Foucault's argument in *Discipline and Punish* that "the soul is the prison of the body", suggests that the soul is actually inscribed on the surface of the body: "[A]cts, gestures and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body" (Butler 1999[1990], 173). Thus the psychoanalytical conception of a gender core is not the effect of an ontological substance rather it is the historical and cultural reification of bodily significations. Butler claims that "drag fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity" (174).

However, as discussed earlier Butler distinguishes between drag performances of gay/lesbian subcultures and mainstream representations of cross-dressing. When the mainstream cinema is at stake, Butler almost sides with Laura Mulvey and Annete Kuhn, in that she attributes subversiveness only to what is considered as avant-garde, i.e. not for the general cinema audience. However in doing so, Butler does not take into account the camp affinities of some mainstream cultural productions that the queer gaze lovingly[8] subverts from within. If camp is the "survivalist strategy of making the homosexual experience within a homophobic cultural order" (Cleto 1999, 91) it is highly important to discover what these elements might be also in mainstream representations of drag since the protagonists disguise as a member of a different sex. They might be considered as challenging since they attract the attention of the same sex persons within film diegesis, opening up the possibility of same sex desire as was the case in pre-modern texts argued in

[8] This term is used by Lynne Joyrich in the article "Written On the Screen: Mediation and ımmersiın in *Far From Heaven"* in her discussion of Tod Haynes' Far From Heaven. I am grateful to use this quotation here by the inspiration of Cüneyt Çakırlar. Lynne Joyrich, 'Written on the Screen: Mediation and Immersion in Far From Heaven', Camera Obscura , vol. 19, no. 3 (2004), p. 210.

Chapter 2. Their cross-gender clothing and acting is not questioned by other characters in the film diegesis, rather they pass as women or men whose genitals are in concord with the gender role they perform. Nevertheless, cross-dressers themselves assume that this incongruity might be anticipated by the other characters in diegesis. In the first scene of FGM in which we see Naci/ye and Fikri/ye in women's clothes, Fikri/ye declares his discomfort within this drag:

Fikri/ye: I feel naked in these clothes. It's as if everyone is staring at me.

Naci/ye: …Who would look at you with such legs?[9]

Naci/ye implies that because Fikri/ye is biologically male, his body would not be attractive to men even if he is wearing women's costumes. However, in the next shot we see the rich business man *Horoz* Nuri staring lustfully to Fikriye's body, revealing the fact that the desirability of and scopophilic position of female anatomy as distinct from male anatomy is also a construction. Actually this scene will be reiterated in the next one where they first meet with Gülten and position her as a fetishistic object of masculine gaze. These consecutive scenes can be read to summarize the film's ambiguous approach to sex, gender and sexuality. On one hand, the film incorporates any threat of homosexual excess into the heterosexual melodramatic heterosexual modality between Naci and Gülten, confirming that there is an innate biological sex behind the appearances which also determines gender and sexuality, while on the other hand it opens up possibilities for queer identifications and pleasures in Fikri/ye's drag experience as this one precludes his male gender identity.

This situation is most apparent in the relationship between Horoz Nuri and Fikri/ye. On the night which Naci and Gülten meet at Horoz Nuri's mansion, Fikri/ye

[9] See Appendix B for the Turkish original of the text.

spends the night with *Horoz* Nuri, belly dancing. When Fikri/ye gives the good news to Naci/ye that they got engaged with *Horoz* Nuri, the following dialogue takes place:

Fikri/ye: I got engaged.

Naci/ye: Who is this lucky girl?

Fikri/ye: I am

Naci/ye: Don't try to fool me? Tell me, who is this lucky girl?

Fikri/ye: Nuri proposed to me. We are planning to make our wedding in June.

Naci/ye: Stop talking nonsense. You can't marry Nuri.

Fikri/ye: Why can't I? Nuri has married lots of times. I'll marry him too.

Naci/ye: Come on, you are probably sick. Go, lie down.

Fikri/ye: But we couldn't get on in only one issue. He wanted to be in Istanbul on our honeymoon. I insisted on Abant of course. Nevertheless he agreed.

Naci/ye: You have gone crazy. How can this happen?

Fikri/ye: Only one thing can prevent us from getting married. His mother! Bloody woman… Can she find a better bride than me? I even promised him to stop smoking.

Naci/ye: Are out of your mind? You will be in trouble. There is law in this country.

Fikri/ye: I thought about it also. I'll tell him after the wedding. We'll get divorced and I will get my alimony.[10]

Terrel Carver claims for the original version of this scene in SLIH that it disrupts the ideal of marriage institution since by this very dialogue the motivation underneath is

[10] See Appendix B for the Turkish original of the text.

revealed. He claims that “All of this obviously fights with sex, gender and heteronormativity, the tropes of heteronormative romantic love, which the audience must silently invoke, in order to make sense of the exchange as funny” (Carver 2009, 141-142). Thus, according to Carver this scene is a signifier of heterosexual dystopia, revealing the motivation underneath the heterosexual romance narrative—which is about property and social conformity. Since in FGM the scene is repeated with few modifications in dialogues, the Turkish remake can be said to function in the same direction. In this way, both the original and the remake might be interpreted as counter narratives of melodramatic modality in which heterosexual marriage is idealized as the site of true love and romance. Although at the end of the film, Gülten and Naci are united after the revelation of Naci’s true identity, Fikri/ye will stand at the verge of ambiguity that the film raises about heterosexual romance and “true” gender identity.

Camp Affinities in *Fıstık Gibi Maşallah*

Camp, as ambiguous and unstable a term as queer, has been a theoretical tool for cultural analysis of resistance within mass culture, which emerged basically from gay/lesbian subcultures. As Booth argues “camp functions politically to express ‘what’s basically serious to you in terms of fun and artifice . . . of “making fun out of” what you take seriously as opposed to making fun of it’” (Booth 1999, 66). Oscar Wilde, Andy Warhol’s pop art, the star Joan Crawford, Judy Garland, films of von Sternberg might be considered as referring to camp taste. However as Sontag claims “to talk about camp is to betray it”, it can be said that “camp is [the] love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration…Camp are things which, from a ‘serious’ point of view, are either bad art or kitsch” (Sontag 1999, 53-55). The characteristics of camp are “incongruity, theatricality, humor, irony and astheticism” (Newton 1999, 103; Babuscio 1999). Critics such as Newton and Babuscio appropriated camp as a “gay sensibility”, thus “defining a gay collective identity, its history and cultural tradition” essentializing camp as the ontology of being gay in the Western cultures. (Cleto, 1999, 89)

Nevertheless, camp, as the term queer, defies certain explanations since it is a way of perceiving things and persons that could vary from one subject to another. Thus the attempts to stabilize and categorize camp fails as Cleto quotes from Mark Finch, “the very category of gay culture is in itself a partial category, one ‘more specific than it pretends’, electing ‘a discursive system developed out of a metropolitan, white, middle-class and male gay community’ as representative of all gay experience” (Cleto 1999, 91).

One could add to this, that when defined as such, camp is also Western – American to be more precise—considering its relation with and appropriation within the first wave gay movement in the States before Stonewall. It is conceptualized as a survival strategy of closetedness, to pass as straight while sharing signs of same-sex desire with people who feel the same in an era of stigma. This specific historical and local aspect of camp is what makes it even harder to argue it in the Turkish context. However, camp also has a global circulation that works cross culturally as Cüneyt Çakırlar claims “one could find similar queer performative strategies of resisting, in perversely re-embodying, and the dominant symbolic in different contexts” (Çakırlar 2011, 365).

I suggest that FGM can be considered to have affinities with camp taste because of its parody of gender roles, incongruous sexual objects as well as the artificial exaggeration of performance in concord with the melodramatic modality of

Yeşilçam. First, I would like to point out to the cross-cultural circulation of camp practices. Cüneyt Çakırlar argues that camp could also be thought "as a concept that travels cross-culturally to the extent that it acts as a sexually perverse reclamation of history through a critical and aesthetic exploitation and appropriation of a nation's cultural capital high or low"(Çakırlar 2011, 366). In this chapter, I refer to camp as a performative reading practice, which through humor and gender parody works to subvert the hegemonic understandings of dominant culture. Subcultures, minorities or anti-normative spectatorship practices are co-existent in the consumption of mainstream images; thus the enabling incongruities of cross-dressing images should be elaborated to better think how this could be linked to queer production of images. In this study camp operates as the conceptual tool for irony, a cinesexual term which acknowledges that "cinema brings us the unbearable excesses of the simplest planes within an image" (Mackormack 2008, 1).

Gender variations and anti-straight sexualities were abjected from the domain of representation with the nationalist Turkish modernism which radically differentiated itself from the previous Ottoman through a significant epistemological break on gender categories and sexual economies. For instance cross-dressed *köçek* dancers were outlawed in the Tanzimat period as discussed in Chapter 2. *Köçeks* also were the object of male gaze and desire which blurred the boundaries of both gender and sexuality. "Köçeks were always pursued by those admirers who wanted to have sexual intercourse with them" (Erdoğan 2007, 73-74).Endrunlu Fazıl had portrayed some of these famous dancers in his book *Chenginame.* Male homosexuality was also a common practice of male sexuality which was also the the theme for poems and historic accounts. For instance a famous historian of the sixteenth century Mustafa Ali from Gelibolu (Gallipoli) had written:

> Nowadays, good-looking and good-tempered boys whose moustache and beard have not appeared yet are much more in favor than beautiful and charming women. When a man has a relationship with a woman, he has to keep her behind closed doors and should live this relationship in secret. But still he wouldn't refrain from going out with boys because boys can accompany him wherever he goes; whereas mistresses have to stay in the harems of the houses. (Erdoğan 2007, 86-88)

However, as Kandiyoti writes that starting with the Ottoman reform era and continuing through the Kemalist period, Turkish modernization reordered domestic lives of the citizenry as understood from the proliferation discourses on marriage, the family and appropriate gender roles (Kandiyoti 1997, 96). Thus the once common sexualities and gender presentations were abjected in modernity. As argued in the previous chapter, cross-dressing had been a historical and trans-cultural phenomenon that is used as one of the fundamental aspects of entertainment in pre-modern times. In *Karagöz* and *Orta Oyunu* there were common stock characters which represented stereotypes that defied any psychological interiority which also represented various gendered and sexual identifications. Although these performing arts have lost their efficiency since modernity, their stylistic elements stayed intact in Yeşilçam cinema as mentioned above.

The film critics gathered around New Cinema journal thus claimed that Yeşilçam was "underdeveloped and morbid" and it was composed of bad films producing "nothing but bad taste" (Arslan 2002, 187; Mutlu 2010, 418). They suggested that this popular cinema be replaced with European currents such as nouvelle vague or neo-realism which signified European art cinema (Arslan 187). Yeşilçam lacked in all its exaggeration and stereotyping what Western cinemas had, that is, the ability of representing the "truths" of Turkish people. However, as Yeşilçam did not produce this effect, what happened was more of a contract between the film and the audience who was accustomed to enjoy pleasures arising out of laughter and pathos.

Erdoğan suggests that Yeşilçam characters are like the puppets on the Karagöz shadow theatre, not allowing for or producing a thinking subject:

> [T]heir bodies are given over not to homogenous thinking subjects but to logos expressing itself through voices that were only slackly attached to bodies. Hence Yeşilçam is like the shadow-play master whose voice remains the same by way of the differences it produces. It might well be suggested that the voice in Yeşilçam is the voice of Yeşilçam. (Erdoğan 2002, 243)

Thus, Yeşilçam does not produce any subjectivity which is founded on stable essences that forms one's ontology; rather it is a cinema of the surface, artifice, exaggeration, theatricality, incongruity and humor. As Sontag suggests "[t]o perceive camp in objects and persons is to understand Being-as-Playing-a-Role. It is the farthest extension, in sensibility, of the metaphor of life as theater" (Sontag 1999, 56). In Yeşilçam, identity categories are represented as being manipulative and ones in which a person can oscillate between the binaries of rich and poor, rural/urban, Turkish/Indian, man /woman. These characteristics of Yeşilçam are what makes it manipulative for the queer gaze to allow for camp readings. Artificiality and exaggeration in performance and emotions turns Yeşilçam into a discourse of excess, where the repressed always returns back to its place in the form of bodily fluids or gestures or incongruities that enable moments of resistance. These features of Yeşilçam might be claimed to be subversively working against the Western logos which presupposes that identities are fixed and are the expression of a deeper, inner interiority.

However I would like to note here that my attempt is not to suggest that Yeşilçam is not an ideological tool that reproduces women's oppression, the ideal of heterosexual romanticism or the binary categories of sexed identities. Rather I aim to argue how one can find ways of resistance in such images that work within the ideological construction of subjectivities. Looking at FGM, from a temporal distance I propose that the presentation of masculinity and sexuality recalls what camp suggests as a critical tool. As Dyer claims that “camp is [the] weapon against mystique surrounding art, royalty and masculinity” (Dyer 1999, 113) I suggest that the excess of heterosexual masculinity becomes parodic in its cross-cultural content in FGM.

The scene in which Naci/ye kisses Gülten in the hotel room right after Naci breaks up with her on the phone, Bedia walks on them with Fikri/ye,and she is devastated to see the two girls kissing. The audience knows that Naci/ye is actually a boy, however characters in the diegesis, Gülten and Bedia are not aware of this fact. As Naci/ye kisses her, she closes her eyes and goes on with the kiss saying “Naci/ye!” I will apply Marinez’s argument for the original version of this scene here. She calls Naciye’s name because she has not recognized Naci in him, and she is surprised because she is kissed by a girl. “Yet the important thing is that she is surprised not only because another woman has kissed her, but also, perhaps, because she has enjoyed that kiss” (Marinez 150). As Marinez reads this scene in SLIH as “the emergent however temporary, of a repressed homoerotic impulse” in FGM something striking happens which does not happen in the original script (150). Bedia’s homophobic reaction to this kiss as she commands everyone out of the room, works as an initiator of Gülten’s rebellion against her saying “I’m leaving too! Don’t smoke, don’t drink, don’t look at men…I am fed up with you and your crew!”[11]

To perversely read this scene, through camp as a performative strategy, I argue that the excess and confusion of sexual object choice which drag evokes on the

[11] See Appendix B for the Turkish Original of this text.

surface of the screen and bodies – however temporary and artificial it might be as Gülten understands what is going on—enables a sense of rebellion and pride through lesbian erotics. This is a scene that the camp gaze could appropriate if read as a momentary redemption to the ideals of nationalist, patriarchal construction of gender and sexuality. Gülten rebels against the ideals of femininity which preclude women themselves as embodied in Bedia. This rebellion enables the queer gaze and women to find pleasures at this very act of coming out as a woman and as a (bi)sexual subject.

Horoz Nuri's hyper-masculinized character denaturalizes the very idea that one's sex/gender determines ones sexuality and desire. *Horoz* Nuri is represented as a vulgar, macho man who is rich but not refined and comes from the rural area. He has two guns working as two large phalluses which he uses to express his emotions. *Horoz* Nuri's usage of guns actually could be read as signifying "the national/ist accents of homophobic masculinity and militarism in Turkey" (Çakırlar 2009, 38). His nickname *Horoz* means cock, signifying also the phallus. Thus imbued with the signs of masculinity, he is turned in to a caricature of Turkish straight hyper-masculinity which is constructed as an ideological category that naturalizes Turkish nationalism and militarism. The subversive potential of the film thus emerges at the very end, when Naci, Gülten, Horoz Nuri and Fikri/ye get on the car to escape the mob who found them at the hotel. Although Fikri/ye puts his wig off and says they cannot marry because he also is a man, Nuri claims that "everybody can have such little defaults."[12] Naci/ye asks "what will happen now?" as we see the car proceed into the woods from behind. Despite of his excessive gender performance as a stereotype of heterosexual masculinity, *Horoz* Nuri's reaction against the revelation

[12] See Appendix B for the Turkish Original of this text.

of his same sex desire is not a homophobic rejection of that desire, rather an acceptance of this very possibility.

Although there was a very strict code of censorship in Turkish cinema which prohibited many contents, and caused producers to apply auto-censorship, the survival of this scene which is quite identical to the original one is highly important. Many scenes in remakes, as argued above were “Turkified” by translating the films into Turkish mores and behavioral codes. As Ahmet Gürata observes:

> “for example in *Mildred Pierce* (Michael Curtis 1945) Veda Pierce blackmails Mrs Forester by saying that she is carrying Ted’s baby. On the other hand in *Şoför Nabahat ve Kızı (*Nebahat the Taxi Driver and her Daughter, Süreyya Duru, 1964) her counterpart Hülya had to obey stricter rules. She warns her rich boyfriend that only after marriage they can have a sexual relationship”. (Gürata 2006, 248)

As evident in this example of how the remake of *Mildred Pierce* was transposed into Turkish context, it becomes more of an ambiguity how this clearly homoerotic scene made its way to the film without being censored by the government. Lesbian sexuality, was rarely represented before 1980s in films such as *Haremde Dört Kadın/For Women in Hamam* (Halit Refiğ, 1965), *Two Ships Side by Side/İki Gemi Yan Yana* (Atıf Yılmaz, 1963), *Istanbul, Give Me Your Hand/ Ver Elini İstanbul* (Aydın Arakon, 1962), however representation of male homosexuality was an unspoken taboo till the 1990s. At the level of representation, films concerning male same sex desire still meet strong public controversy especially when it comes to the circulation of these images on the TV. The same scene which was shown in the theatres of the 1960s was cut last year when it was released on TV. The scene was not considered to be threatening at the year of its release but it is considered inconvenient to release on TV today. The censorship codes of the government for cinema have been abandoned. However, the commission for censorship (RTÜK) exercises strict authority on TV programs.

Slavoj Zizek argues that, while Hollywood had obeyed the strict Hays Production Code[13] in 1950s America, at the level of the surface of the films, it also codified what is prohibited and thus "allow[s us] to indulge in dirty fantasies" (Zizek 2007, 83). Zizek contends that Hollywood needs this structure of inherent transgression in order to operate while making things seem at their proper place. Zizek claims from a Foucaldian perspective, that the censorship codes are not only restrictive, but they are also productive in the sense that the "codification and regulation…generate[s] the very excess whose direct depiction it forbade" (Zizek 84).

> We can see how the functioning of this fundamental prohibition is properly perverse, in so far as it unavoidably gets caught in the reflexive flip by means of which the very defense against prohibited sexual content generates an excessive all-pervasive sexualization—the role of censorship is much more ambiguous than it might appear…are we not claiming that the harsher is direct censorship, the more subversive are the unintended by-products generated by it? (85)

However Zizek argues that these by-products are not "genuinely" subversive for the "system of a symbolic domination". Rather they are "its built-in transgressions, its unacknowledged obscene support" (85). The last scene of FGM works to enable pleasures of a queer future that one can imagine at the level of fantasy. Once this scene is taken out, I argue that Zizek's argument is valid since it is true that the very prohibition on sexuality imbues every image with sexual excess. However the censorship that cut out the homoerotic scene rather signifies the homophobic construction of masculinity that cannot even tolerate that very excess which supports its existence. Then, in the film, drag works as a commentary on the surfaces of the bodies and on what is repressed. The repressed will return back as the ghost that

[13] The Motion Production Code which is also known as the Hays Production Code named after Hollywoods chief censor of the time Will H. Hays, was the set of moral codes that governed the production of Hollywood motion pictures. The code prevailed from 1930 to 1968.

hunts the ideology of the heterosexual desire economy which would pierce the naturalization of masculinity from within. What makes the scene threatening for the installation of heteronormativity is not the implication of *Horoz* Nuri's homosexual desire, rather it is the question posited by Naci/ye who also does not reject this desire, which opens up to a possible queer future, resignifying the heterosexual narrative.

Melodramatic Modality and Sexual Difference

The Yeşilçam melodramas that I will discuss in this section focus on the figure of the mannish woman which became a very popular figure starting with *Fosforlu Cevriye* (Aydın Arakon 1959) which was remade in 1969 by Nejat Saydam starring this time Türkan Şoray instead of Neriman Köksal. In films such as *Fosforlu Cevriye Oyuna Gelmez/ Fosforlu Cevriye Won't Be Deceived* (Aydın Arakon1962), *Şoför Nebahat/Nebahat the Driver* (Metin Erksan 1959-1960), *Şoför Nebahat ve Kızı/ Nebahat the Driver and Her Daughter* (Süreyya Duru 1964), *Erkek Fatma/Mannish Fatma* (Ülkü Erakalın 1969), *Erkek Fatma Evleniyor/ Mannish Fatma is Getting Married* (Abdurrahman Palay 1963) and *Kadın Hamlet/İntikam Meleği Female Hamlet/Angel of Vengeance* (Metin Erksan 1977) the figure of the mannish woman is central to the narrative plot.

Modernity, as argued in the previous section, reorganized domestic life for the new citizenry. How women would be placed in this new order had become a crucial issue for the new state in this era. Kandiyoti argues that, with unveiling and participating in the public sphere women had to "construct a set of new signals and codes that would enable her to function in the public realm without being importuned or molested" (1997, 104). Kinship idioms were strong vehicles for this kind of sexuality arrangement in cross-gender interactions. For example calling a woman *bacı* (sister) means not a biological sister but a symbolic sister in cross-gender interactions. Kandiyoti suggests that the unconventional figure of the mannish woman corresponds to this sexuality management, in which women can get a measure of freedom while staying chaste until they are restored into their proper position as women until she is dominated by a male who can outman them[14] (104).

While this reading of the figure of the mannish woman's ideological configurations is highly inspirational, my attempt will be to make a different analysis of these figures with a queer strategy in order to reappropriate them for the camp/queer gaze that might subvert gender norms and heterosexual ideal by locating them into the resistant practices of identification. Focusing mainly on *Erkek Fatma* and *Şoför Nebahat*, I will discuss the gender ambiguity of the cross-dressed protagonists within a framework of gender melancholia in the sense that Judith Butler has used the term. However, my goal is not to argue that these films and the masculinity of the women represented to the audience offer fully subversive possibilities, rather it is to performatively "rethink ideas of ideology, resistance and subversion" (Robertson 1999, 275). For this purpose, first, we need to take a detour in the genre of melodrama as modality and how it works in the Turkish context.

Melodramas hold an important place in the Yeşilçam tradition. Melodrama can be shortly described as a "critical category that emerges as a consequence of the identification of a range of films which use the family and the social position of women as their narrative focus" (Mercer& Shingler 2004, 2). The genre is marked by

[14] Gönül Dönmez-Colin also argues that for instance the manly woman figure embodied by Fatma Girik was an "asexual" woman which did not mean masculine but rather honest and straightforward like a man.

its exaggerated and excessive style. This basic and almost general definition of the genre localized with a certain stylistic influence of Egyptian, Indian and Hollywood cinemas in the Turkish context. These films, as noted in the previous section were mostly remakes and adaptations of the Hollywood films of the 1940s. According to Savaş Arslan "filmmakers in Turkey practiced a 'Turkified' filmmaking that is translated through mirroring, mimicking and transforming Western cinema" (2010, 75).

Another characteristic of melodrama or popular film in general is that the ideological conflicts and contradictions are rendered to the level of the individual (Abisel 1994, 188). Gledhill notes that this individualization takes place as an internalization of the social and the ideological at the level of the psychic. However this does not imply that the characters have an interior depth. Brooks notes that "It is delusive to seek an interior conflict, the 'psychology of melodrama', because melodrama exteriorizes conflict and psychic structure; producing instead what we might call the 'melodrama of psychology'" (Gledhill 1991, 210).

Melodrama's characteristic of exteriorization which produces the surface as the site of psychic interiority, thus being devoid of an interior depth, is also the general characteristics of Yeşilçam cinema. Butler contends that performative acts "produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body",and the screen of Yeşilçam films work as this skin that disrupts the inner/outer binary,and further engenders subjects through its play on the bodies and the text. Thus, this performative structure of Yeşilçam melodramas produces the surface as the emotive site that disrupts the reality effect with its exaggeration of performances. This is a significant feature of women's films in general as Linda

Williams argues that “melodramas are deemed excessive for their gender-and sex-linked pathos, for their naked displays of emotion” (Williams 1991, 3).[15]

With the rapid urbanization of the 1960s, melodramatic narrative focused on the conflicts between upper and lower classes in the urban space rather than same class relations that were previously depicted in the rural melodramas of the 1950s. Nezih Erdoğan suggests that “Yeşilçam exploits melodrama in articulating the desires aroused not only by class conflict but also by rural/urban and eastern/western oppositions” (Erdoğan 1998, 265). These narratives depicted urban upper classes as morally corrupt, superficial, spoiled and living a life of hedonistic pleasures (parties, sexuality and alcohol) while the lower classes or the rural people represented naiveté, innocence, loyalty, morality and sensibility. The world was divided in the binary of the good/ bad while “[s]exuality was reserved for bad women. The vamps and prostitutes could kiss, undress and make love, but innocent ‘family’ girls never took off their clothes and never went to bed” (Colin 2008, 143).

Due to industrialization and migration, a new female audience emerged in the big cities of Turkey. As Günaydın notes “In response to the increasing interest in film among women, a new type of cinema developed—so called ‘family cinema’, that is, melodrama—targeted this new group of migrated women spectators”(Günaydın 1996, 82). Thus, melodrama served mostly for the women spectators of lower classes who were gathered in matinees which were arranged exclusively for them. Serpil Kırel notes that these female only spheres were arranged to encourage women spectators to go the movies. In time, with the increasing number

[15] Williams argues that pornography, horror and melodrama could be considered under the extended rubric of melodrama since melodrama is defined by a stylistic and/or emotional excess in contrast to a more linear and progressive narrative of the realistic cinema. Thus many film scholars today are interested in this excessive mode of melodrama which resists normative narrative cinema.

of women filmgoers, producers started to make movies that considered women's spectatorial desires (Kırel 2005, 165). Bülent Oran has noted that "[w]hile films targeted lower classes in general; they tended to appeal women exclusively" (Kırel 165). Thus melodramatic modality has been central to filmic productions especially starting from 1960s. "[It] has been employed not only by the films categorized under the term 'melodrama' as a genre, but also other genres and narratives, such as comedies, thrillers and political films"(Kılıçbay and İncioğlu 2003, 239).

Yeşilçam melodramas addressing mostly women audiences narrated stories of family conflict or heterosexual romance which were usually based on the conflicts that stem from class differences and the rural/urban clash. Nezih Erdoğan suggests that "[t]he 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" (Erdoğan 1998, 266). These narratives worked to produce a sense of modernity that was different from the elitist reformists', emerging from the hybrid forms of aesthetics and storytelling practices which were abjected from the dominant stages of representation by melodramatic genre.

In earlier feminist film criticism melodrama "was seen as confirming white, masculine bourgeois ideology. Recent assessments of melodrama however analyze it as a mixture of pleasure, fantasy and ideology" (Kılıçbay and İncioğlu, 245). Christine Gledhill also argues that melodrama is considered as a feminine genre in recent feminist film criticism.

> where film theory saw in melodrama's exposure of masculinity's contradictions a threat to the unity of the (patriarchal) realist/narrative text, feminists found a genre distinguished by the large space it opened to female protagonist, the domestic sphere and socially mandated 'feminine concerns' .(Gledhill 1987, 10)

In Yeşilçam melodramas' female protagonists were depicted as having a "double-face", or a "split identity", that strays easily between identity positions from rural to urban, from vulgar to elegant also from masculine to feminine. Günaydın argues that in Yeşilçam melodramas women are represented as mutating with the help of a man who was previously identified with active (masculine) traits such as intelligence, competitiveness, strength, aggression and independence to passive (feminine) traits such as warmth, sweetness, masochism and modesty(Günaydın 1996, 87). Referring to Mulvey's analysis that the woman is the 'fetishised object' of male desire in the patriarchal order, displayed for the pleasure and gaze of the male audience, Günaydın argues that the woman is turned into a fetishistic icon. In order to escape from the castration anxiety that the lack of the female protagonist induces, male gaze turns the woman into a fetishistic object as a substitute for his disavowal of his own castration. Thus according to this analysis Yeşilçam melodramas function in two ways: First, to turn the woman into a fetishistic object to overcome the threat of castration for the male audience and second to replace her into her proper place within the patriarchal structure.

However this analysis of how the melodramatic fantasy worked to produce pleasures among spectators fails to recognize the resistant possibilities of melodramas by favoring the male heterosexual pleasure in the fetishised figure of the woman. In a scene of *Erkek Fatma Evleniyor* Neriman Köksal turns to the camera and addresses the female spectator, indicating that the spectators are mostly female hence they will be supporting her when she is arguing with her husband. Thus as this scene proposes, it is also a crucial question how women might have had pleasures in these images and how queerly they might still be enjoyed. Also, Yeşilçam melodramas cannot be neatly considered in terms of escapism on the side of the female spectators as Günaydın contends, since Yeşilçam melodramas evoked a sense of melancholia which I will try to construe its unconscious implications.

The new Turkish identity, in order to mark its difference from the previous Ottoman one, was constructed in contradiction with the latter's values, especially with the ones that concerned women's emancipation. Thus the difference between the traditional past and modern present was established by the discourses that defined what would be the status of women in the new order. Kandiyoti argues that:

> Cultural nationalism created a new discursive space by appropriating women's emancipation in the name of pre-Islamic Turkish egalitarianism and condemning certain aspects of Ottoman patriarchy (such as polygyny and the seclusion of women) as a corruption of original Turkish mores. The republic adopted this approach to women's emancipation as an item of official state ideology. (1997, 103)

This "state feminism" which was not led by a women's movement, but rather applied as the outcome of the republican technologies of gender, did not match with the division of (domestic) labor and sexual mores concerning women in the masculinist Muslim society . Women were still considered as worthy of respect by the presence of the males in their families (whether a father, an elder brother or a husband) and this caused serious problems in identity management of women. This meant that women's sexuality had to be under control by the men in their families otherwise they would be considered as 'loose' (Kandiyoti, 104). In *Şoför Nebahat* this situation is overtly depicted. After her father's death Nebahat wants to enter into the public sphere of work, however the absence of a figure of paternal authority to secure her body from any extra marital sexual contact causes the society to either try to control her sexuality or exploit it. Thus being a "modern" woman required women to manage their femininity and adopt sexual modesty. Kandiyoti suggests that *abla/bacı* (sister) would then indicate a symbolic sister who is sexually neutral which is best exemplified in *Şoför Nebahat*:

> In this connection, the theme of the sexually unavailable woman, neither a mother nor a sister but a symbolic sister, the *baci*, was quite strong in various forms of cultural and literary expression. To choose but one example, the central woman character in the film *Şoför Nebahat*…is portrayed in a highly unconventional role. She drives a cab, wears leather jackets and a cloth cap, and mingles with the boys. But she is pure as the driven snow, and none would dare show her disrespect without incurring the wrath of her cab-driving brothers. This portrayal corresponds to that of the *erkek kadin*, the "manly" woman, who does not have to be"butch" or unfeminine but simply unremittingly chaste. That is, until she meets her true love, who transforms her into what she was always, destined to be—a truly feminine woman, finally dominated by a male who can outman her. This, of course, removes her from her place as one of the boys and restores her to her proper station. I find this a telling parable of modern womanhood in Turkey because it unwittingly reveals the terms under which women may attain a measure of freedom and unconventionality in the social roles they enact. (Kandiyoti, 104)

According to this analysis, masculinity in women is a tool for gaining a measure of freedom by managing their sexuality in the patriarchal order until the heterosexual marriage takes place to restore the woman into her proper position of femininity. However, I argue that the figure of the mannish woman represented in Yeşilçam has significant differences from that of the patriarchal construction of the republican image of the chaste sister. While it is true that manliness refers to the culturally appreciated terms associated with masculinity such as chastity, honesty and pride, taking this notion of manliness a step further and to represent it as a gender bender figure, might raise ambivalent affections on the side of spectators. Colin argues that "[a]lthough the film is about Nebahat's struggles in the world of men and her revolt against the established structures of the society, the implication is that in her subconscious she harbors a secret desire to be male" (Colin 2008, 145). Colin also remarks that the figure of the cross-dressing, gender-bender figure of the mannish or *lumpen woman* soon became a fetish among women spectators as long as it was not a manifestation of transvestism or transsexuality (144). This figure repeated in a significant number of films and was attached to the star personas of a number of female stars such as Neriman Köksal, Sezer Sezin and most significantly Fatma Girik who performed tomboy chatacters.

What then made these images so appealing to women by the time of their release and why might they be still remarkable for the queer eye even today? Can we make a reading that moves beyond the heteronormative production of sexual difference, taking these images as a reference point? Savaş Arslan in an article on the trash films of Yeşilçam, asserts that it should not be ignored that the “film, presented to heterogenous audience mass, [is] a text which enables spectators to perceive it in relation to their own experiences or to produce a complicated pleasure mechanism” (Arslan 2001, 198). The ambiguous pleasures drawn from the figure of the mannish woman or male drag by the disadvantaged groups (namely women, gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people) in the heterosexist and patriarchal culture could raise possibilities of polymorphous identifications that transcend gender binaries in the fantasy realm.

Williams argues “in the melodramatic woman’s weepies feminine subject positions appear to be constructed which achieve a modicum of power and pleasure within the given limits of patriarchal constraints of women” (Williams 1991, 8). Thus being aware of the interdictions of mainstream melodramas in their patriarchal construction, she also recognizes the measure of agency that women find in these images. Moreover, power as Foucault argues “comes from everywhere” (Foucault 1979, 93) thus the hegemonic power of heteronormativity and patriarchy is not only intrinsic to mainstream representations. Rather they are even incorporated by each and every ego in the construction of subject positions. Thus if we acknowledge the possibilities of resistance emerging within those power relations –which are engendered by power as being “permanent, repetitious, inert and self-reproducing” (93)—how are we to move beyond the ideological implications of conventional cinema through a different reading of perverse pleasures posited by the uneven representation of gender roles in Yeşilçam?

Cross-dressing in Melodrama:
Gender Melancholia, Masquerade and Sexual Indifference

One of the headlines of 1967 edition of *Ses* (voice) magazine is “She became a man at last”. Next to the headline there is a black and white photograph of Hülya Koçyiğit in male drag, who was one of the greatest actresses and beauty icons of Yeşilçam. Koçyiğit wearing a leather jacket, a *casquette*, a tie and thin moustaches, holding a cigarette in her hand, looks charming and glamorous as a quotation from her interview is placed on the photo saying: “How nice a thing is masculinity”[16]. The article indicates that there had been female actresses who appeared in male drag however this is the first time Koçyiğit performs masculinity.

Gönül Dönmez-Colin suggests that the trademarks of the mannish women were “macho muscle power, vulgar jests, foul language and dress code of black leather jacket and *casquette* of the male sub-culture” and the popularity of this figure “ seems rather odd for the conservative masculinist Muslim society of 1960s Turkey” (2008,144). However as seen in the magazine article, there was a cultural fascination with the figure of the actress in drag. Koçyiğit claims in the interview:

[16] “Erkeklik ne Güzel Şeymiş” quoted from the interview with Hülya Koçyiğit on her performance in the film *Deli Fişek* (Aram Gülyüz 1967)

> When a person wears trousers she becomes more self confident. She does not only want to beat the armed women but also the men. At night, nobody stares behind you; no body stalks you or harasses you. Nobody says ‘why is she on the streets at late hours?’After all, what a sweet thing it is to be a man. I wish I was born as one”[17]. (Koçyiğit 1967, 28)

The actress interprets her performance of masculinity as a way of undermining the gender hierarchy that oppresses women, especially in the public sphere. Her wish to be born as male, as I interpret, is neither an implication of transsexuality nor a sacrifice of her femininity but rather it is a desire to be emancipated from the cultural constraints that the category of woman exercises on the bodies assigned with the female sex. Thus, as in parallel with the feminist problematizations of the gendered binaries of the public/private spheres, Koçyiğit’s wish could be read as a wish for sexual indifference rather than a wish to “give up her femininity” in order to be emancipated. However the director of the film Aram Gülyüz responds to this statement by saying: “If you were a man, we would strive to find a woman actress. Therefore never be a man!” This intervention of the male director is a clear statement of the tension between the meaning makers. For the patriarchal order to operate, the category of the woman as the site of sexual difference, prior to herself, has to be in circulation, embodied in the images of the iconic actresses. Nevertheless, the same order prepares the circumstances that enable its very own subversion and resignification in subcultures.

Among Metin Erksan’s films *Şoför Nebahat* is considered one of his most unremarkable and unsuccessful films. While there was a cultural fascination with both male to female and female to male drag performances of the celebrity actors/actresses of the time, film critics of New Cinema derogated the female masculinity that partly threw issues of gender asymmetry into question. This figure

[17] See Appendix B for the Turkish original of this text.

was despised by these film critics for being commercial, meaningless and superficial. Nijat Özön, considering the film as an outcome of the commercial success of *Fosforlu Cevriye*[18], criticized it for being a mixture of drama and comedy with an ending of Cinderalla tale rather than focusing on the real problems of a woman in a society in which working women are not welcomed. (Özön 2003, 162). However I argue that, these figures which were not found adequate in addressing the social circumstances of women's oppression, they problematized gender itself unintentionally.

Nebahat, tells the story of a young woman who after her father's sudden death has to take up his work as a taxi driver in order to pay the car's debt. In the beginning of the film, before Nebahat is informed about her father's death, we learn that she is engaged with a man whom she overtly despises just to lighten the heavy economic burden of her father's. This asceticism is intrinsic to Yeşilçam melodramas. Women as daughters or mothers and sometimes as lovers are driven to this kind of asceticism in order to achieve an idealized morality which disavows desire altogether. Nebahat's will to work as a taxi driver is obstructed by her prospective mother-in-law, Raziye, who thinks that women that work will evidently become prostitutes and that this will harm their reputation. Moreover Raziye despises taxi driving as a proletarian profession that is not suitable for her son, Seyfi, who has been educated and is trying to advance his social status by becoming a bank employee. However he is not marrying Nebahat and giving her the economic relief she has been yearning for, because he is not wealthy either. Thus, Nebahat despite of all the obstacles that Seyfi and Raziye pose starts working as a taxi-driver. However in the masculinist society the professions are also rigidly gendered and segregated.

---

[18] In this melodrama/action Neriman Köksal performed a woman who is a sharp shooter, rides horses, fights with men, uses slang words. She even escapes from the police to find her father's real murderer. She performed a character associated with masculinity and activeness.

Nebahat, facing a series of troubles caused by men because of her gender in the first day of her taxi driving experience, starts performing masculinity in order to overthrow the social stigma. The masculine figure of Nebahat as well as in *Fosforlu Cevriye* and *Erkek Fatma*, was also at odds with the general representation of women in melodramas/women's films. [19] Mostly in women's films, especially in weepies, the gender role and codes of dressing highlighted femininity as fully fragile. However, *Nebahat* cannot be considered as a weepie, it is still at odds with the general melodramatic powerless female figures. As Nebahat adopts masculinity, her position defined as passivity and powerlessness is inverted and even her physical power is enhanced.

As in *Fosforlu Cevriye,* the father dies as we enter Nebahat's narrative. This image of lack of a father/leader can be considered as stemming from the ambivalence that the republican model of modernization conduced. Kemalist revolution "which marked a change from monarchy to republic was 'a revolution of values' in more than changing the social structure, it attempted to change the symbolic system of the society, namely the culture within which Islam played a fundamental role"(Mutlu 2010, 419). The Ottoman patriarch who represented the old order of fixity was overthrown and a new model of modern men was established as the more loving, caring father of nuclear family. However this raised an ambivalence that triggered nostalgia. This nostalgia, as Parla has argued, was best seen in Tanzimat novels, through the metaphor of fatherless home "where the novelist himself took on the role of paternal guidance vis-à-vis his disoriented society" (Kandiyoti 1997, 100). However this argument is substantial in order to read the nationalistic implications of

[19] Melodramas were also called woman's films since they narrated women's stories and adressed a female spectator. Colin argues that 1950s and 60s were times when these films dominated the industry and as a result the star system was born in 1960s which typecast four female stars: Türkan Şoray, Hülya Koçyiğit, Filiz Akın and Fatma Girik

the phenomenon of fatherlessness as being devoid of a leader, I want to leave this aside in order to make a different reading that concerns gender, spectatorship and pleasure through the Oedipal construction of gender and heterosexual desire.

In *Erkek Fatma* the father is already absent from the scenario. Fatma is a tomboy who is content and joyful in her gender bender figure, as powerful and articulate as the men in her *mahalle* (neighborhood). She mingles with boys, usually ends up in the police station because she beats them if they try to despise her because of her gender. She is into every activity that is considered as rebellious for a proper female role however it is stressed also that she is a very chaste girl. While the father is altogether absent from the scene of representation, her closeness to her mother who washes the laundry of a rich family is significant. Her pathos starts whenever the male protagonist appears in the narrative, placing her in the culturally proper place under the rubric of woman. According to Mary Ann Doane "[p]athos closely allies itself with the delineation of a lack of social power and effectivity characteristic of the cultural positioning of children and women (2004, 5). After they make love, they get married. However, Murat's (Ahmet Uz) upper class mother wants to end this marriage because Fatma is a lower class girl. She sends her son to Europe, manipulates the letters he sends her causing Fatma to leave the husband's mansion as a result of a series of misunderstandings.

Being deprived of her power as a tomboy in order to reach adult sexuality and to be properly gendered, Fatma is forced to melancholy and suffering. After Fatma leaves the house, she learns that her mother-in-law has lost all of her fortune and even that she is about to loose her house. When Fatma learns this, she sacrifices her body for the sake of the other and starts working as a dancer in a *gazino* (night club) to pay for her mother-in-laws debt. As soon as the mother-in-law finds out Fatma's sacrifice, she regrets what she has done to Fatma and enables her son and Fatma to reunite.

In the film whenever the heterosexual intercourse takes place, Fatma leaves her masculine persona and masquerades[20] a passive, silent, domestic femininity in the service of the patriarchal marriage and her exploitative mother-in-law. She is in a way castrated, deprived of her pleasure of her androgenity. Famous film director Atıf Yılmaz has claimed that the female heroines of Yeşilçam:

> lacked a psyche and they could never become characters. They represented certain masks similar to the masks worn in many traditions of Eastern art, such as the Kabuki theatre of Japan. The same can also be said about the period…For instance, if you look at the women characters of the period, Fatma Girik plays the 'manly woman'; Filiz Akın is the educated bourgeois girl; Hülya Koçyiğit represents the oppressed woman of our society; Türkan Şoray is the woman with sexuality who is also oppressed. Each of these types as if created from a mask. (Colin 2006, 143)

Yılmaz's recourse to the metaphor of femininity as a mask[21] is quite striking in that it evokes Mary Ann Doane's theory of the masquerade since she claims that "[w]omanliness is a mask which can be worn or removed" (66). "The masquerade doubles representation; it is constituted by a hyperbolization of the accoutrements of femininity" (Doane 66). Doane argues to masquerade as a spectatorship practice is to resist the patriarchal construction of femininity. The feminine masquerade "produces 'a certain distance between oneself and one's image' a distance [that is] 'necessary for an adequate reading of the image" (Lauretis 1994, 107). Robertson draws

---

[20] According to Marry Ann Doane female spectators could undermine the credibility of the feminine images by a 'double mimesis or 'parodic' mimicry. "Parodic mimicry, Doane claims, allows one to disengage from the roles and gestures of a seemingly naturalized femininity… Doane roots her notion of 'double mimesis' in the concept of the 'feminine masquerade' (Robertson 1999, 272).

[21]Actually, melodrama in general lacked the psychological interiority and depth of characters. Thomas Elsaesser argues that "melodramas have a myth making function in so far as their significance lies in the structure, and articulation of the action, not in psychologically motivated correspondence with individualized experience". See Elsaesser, *Tales of Sound and Fury*)

attention to the link between gender parody and masquerade by arguing that "the masquerade mimics a constructed identity in order to conceal that there is nothing behind the mask, it simulates femininity to dissimulate the absence of a real or essential feminine identity" (1999, 273). Feminine masquerade and gender parody, one rooted in double mimesis, the other in drag, "doesn't differ in structure"; "gender parody…self-consciously theatricalizes masquerade's construction of gender identities" (Robertson, 274). The masks of femininity represented in Yeşilçam thus enables this process of masquerade to be performed through drag.

The link between the masquerade and drag is highly important since I argue that the "masks of femininity" that enables a certain distance from these images makes them appropriable for the queer gaze. Although Mary Ann Doane has attempted to theorize the term as a resistant form of female spectatorship, it might very well be adopted by the camp/queer gaze. Robertson argues:

> since camp has been primarily conceived of as a gay male subcultural practice, its articulation with the concept of female spectatorship will enable us to explore the degree to which the female camp spectator shares her liminal status with another alienated group and also to explore what kind of subcultural resistances are available for women". (Robertson 1999, 275)

Laura Mulvey's spectatorship theory in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, is criticized for only being concerned with male spectatorship practices as the "bearer-of-the-look", and female spectatorship as the "masochistic position of identifying with the female subject who is either a scopophilic fetish in the narrative or a brutalized character on screen" (Munoz 1999, 27-28). She later attempted to theorize female spectatorship in terms of cross-gender identification to explain how women could enjoy such images. Mulvey giving reference to the pre-Oedipal stage in which all children enjoyed the masculine libido, contended that the female spectator turned into a transvestite who was restless in her borrowed clothes (Mulvey 1981). Mulvey argues that the split female identity which oscillates between masculine/feminine enjoys activeness and powerfulness as a result of a regression to the lost memories of the phallic (pre-Oedipal) period. However this temporary switching of the roles is also a trigger for the pathos of the feminine, in that the female spectator knows that it is an impossibility to enjoy the position of activeness in the phallocentric imaginary. As Munoz argues "[i]mplicit in Mulvey's argument is an understanding of any identification across gender as pathologically masochistic" (1999, 27).

But why cross-gender identification should end in pathology, or why the pre-Oedipal phase must be considered in terms of a masculine identification? To respond to this question, I would like to stress Butler's theory of gender melancholia and its link to the genre of melodrama in order to stress how these films might be camped. The Oedipal stage where the child acquires masculine or feminine positions of identification becomes crucial in the ego formation and the construction of desire. As Freud argues "the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego" (Freud 1923, 26), Butler adds to this statement that "we might well claim that the bodily ego is at once a gendered ego" (1995, 166). Butler argues that "a melancholic identification is central to that process whereby the gendered character of the ego is assumed" (166). Freud contended that when one has to let go the object of love, the attachment to that object is incorporated in the ego in the form of identification (167). As the child enters into the Oedipal stage to acquire masculinity or femininity the s/he has to give up certain attachments to her/his once loved objects as a condition of acquiring compulsory heterosexuality. Butler suggests:

> the positions of masculine and feminine which Freud understood as the effects of laborious and uncertain accomplishment, are established in part through prohibitions that *demand the loss* of certain sexual attachments and demand as well as that those losses not be avowed and not be

> grieved. If the assumption of femininity and the assumption of masculinity proceed through the accomplishment of an always tenuous heterosexuality, we might understand the force of this accomplishment as the mandating of the abandonment of homosexual attachments or perhaps more trenchantly, the preemption of the possibility of homosexual attachment, a certain foreclosure of possibility that produces a domain of homosexuality understood as unlivable passion and ungrievable loss. (Butler 168)

Butler contends gender is an accomplishment “achieved and stabilized in tandem with heterosexuality” and thus “the threats to heterosexuality become the threats to gender itself” (168). Thus, homosexuality panics gender too and to become a girl, one should be “subject to a prohibition that bars the mother as an object of desire and installs that barred object…as a melancholic identification”.

What does this analysis offer for a reading that acknowledges the resistant possibility that the figure of the mannish woman entailed since it became a fetish among female spectators? Butler relates gender melancholia to the practice of gender performativity as she contends that the drag performance –as well as gender itself— is an “acting out” of the ungrieved/unacknowledged loss of the prohibited object of desire. Since I take the figure of the mannish woman as a practice of male drag which points to the performative nature of gender, I suggest that the pathos of the melodramatic mannish woman might be read as an “acting out” of gender melancholia.

Butler suggests that given the fact that not all drag kings/queens are homosexual[22] “cross-gendered identification is not the paradigm for thinking about homosexuality”:

> Drag[…] allegorizes heterosexual melancholy, the melancholy by which a masculine gender is formed from the refusal to grieve the masculine as a possibility of love; a feminine gender is formed (taken on, assumed) through the incorporative fantasy by which the feminine is excluded as a

[22] As a matter of fact, Butler notes that most of the drag performers are straight.Judith Butler “Melancholy of Gender-Refused Identificaition”, 1995.

> possible object of love, an exclusion never grieved but "preserved" through the heightening of feminine identification itself. In this sense, the "truest" lesbian melancholic is the strictly straight woman and the "truest" gay melancholic is the straight man. (177)

Thus for Butler, the absence of the grief of the homosexual attachment of the once desired object, constitutes gender as melancholic which produces "a culture of heterosexual melancholy" (178). If we consider the gender linked pathos of melodrama/woman's film as emerging from "primal sentiments of love and loss" (Williams 2009, 173), it might be argued that the melancholia of melodrama stems from this unacknowledged grief of intimacy to the mother's body, projected onto the narrative of impossible/heterosexual love.

Although criticized here, I argue that Mulvey has a point when considering the female spectator's masculine identification as a regression to the pre-Oedipal phase. However my reading of the pleasures derived from the female masculinity represented in these films does not presuppose the female spectator as the fixed site of sexual difference who will fail cross-gender identification. Rather, as I suggested through Hülya Koçyiğit's commentary on her drag performance, this is a wish for sexual indifference. In both films, the plot line is thus resonant to the Oedipal scenario where the child enters the symbolic by acquiring a gender identity in either side of the binary division as an effect of the compulsory hesterosexuality. This is a clear break from the pre-Oedipal stage where "[a]ccording to Freud, the pre-Oedipal child has no awareness of sexual difference… It does not yet recognize the historical and cultural taboos that prevent women for example, from finding pleasure in what are often considered culturally to be 'masculine' activities" (Champagne, 2002). The pre-Oedipal phase that is on the surface of the film body via the absence of the father and the tomboy protagonist, fetishized by the female gaze evokes the memory of a once lived sexual fluidity and the attachments to the loved ones foreclosed by the acquisition of femininity.

Thus to read this ungrieved/unacknowledged same sex desire mediated through masquerade and drag, which “offer a concept of distinciation that echoes the Brechtian concept of estrangement” (Robertson 1999, 276)—which Nezih Erdoğan has argued for being resonant with Yeşilçam—might offer a concept of queer pleasure. The female spectator might find pleasures in the self-recognition of once lost attachments and by “distancing herself from her own image by making fun of, and out of that image without losing sight of the real power that image has over her” (Robertson 1999, 277). In this way camp gaze both confirms and subverts the ideological construction of the feminine “by camp’s simultaneous pleasures of alienation and absorption [which] refuse simplistic categories of dominant-versus-resistant readings (Robertson 1999, 278).

In this chapter, I have tried to perform a camp reading of Yeşilçam films that deal with cross-dressing narratives. Drag challenges the notion of the heterosexual object choice as well as it problematizes some aspects of gendered identity. Gender incongruity and the melodromatic tomboy offer camp readings of these films that might enable their resignification by queer spectatorship. In the next chapter I will dwell on the camp resignification of the performatives /spectacles of shame which becomes the prominent affect in films’ dealing with the fascination/anxiety that transgendered embodiment provokes in mainstream representations.

CHAPTER 4

PERFORMATIVES/SPECTACLES OF SHAME:
TRANSGENDERISM AND THE DOMAIN OF ABJECTION

"*I know I'm not a man…And I've come to the conclusion that I'm probably not a woman, either…The trouble is, we're living in a world that insists we be one or the other*"

Kate Bornstein,

If gender is not real, how real can its oppression be?

Susan Stryker

With the proliferation of the discourses concerning sexuality and gender, transgendered bodies also started to become the site of cultural fascination as well as anxiety in the 1970s. The period was marked by a certain crisis of masculinity, which could not hold onto its power any more. Also the debated sex reassignment surgeries of the transgendered subjects had opened up a terrain of ambivalent reactions from the public. The emergence of transgendered and queer singers were both met with ambivalent discourses from the audiences. In this chapter I will try to present a reading of the films *Köçek* and *Yüz Karası* through the performatives of shame to delineate how the transgendered protagonists are abjected through processes of shame and try to point out to the camp possibilities that might refigure and transform these processes.

Yeşilçam and *Arabesk*

Starting from the 1970s Yeşilçam cinema took a shift in which the women's films were mostly displaced by narratives focusing on masculinity. Through the midst of the decade, female audiences slowly abjured from the theaters. Watching films in matinees arranged for exclusively women, had opened up a partial public space for freedom, intimacy and solidarity against the patriarchal structure that conditioned women's oppression. Nilgün Abisel notes that most of the illiterate subjects were composed of women thus film going was an enchantment for this population (Abisel 1994, 128).However, in the 1970s male gender identity was in crisis which also led the rising popularity of the arabesk music and musical films which in turn catalyzed the replacement of female filmgoers with lower class male audiences.

Umut Tümay Arslan observes that the films focusing on masculinity might be read as being due to the social changes that mark the era. 1970s were marked by a resolution of the past which had promised peace, security and stability (Arslan 2005, 12). The two coup d'états that took place in 1960 and 1971, swelling the urban population with migration and poverty, and the homogenizing nationalist state ideology which did not acknowledge any form of citizenship other than being Turkish, could be claimed to catalyze the instability of the period.

Arslan argues that "while these films operate to quell the collective anxiety that dominate 1970s with a powerful savior-male figure, they also reveal a male gender identity crisis with a fear of losing masculinity concurrently" (Arslan 2005, 21). Along with these anxieties concerning the loss of masculinity; gender and sexuality became highly debated issues in the public sphere through the end of

1970s. Sexual re-assignment surgeries were a focus of interest in the media. Hermaphroditism, mostly associated with homosexuality at the time and sexual deviance was a topic of interest in newspapers. Also the myth of Hermaphroditus, was quite a popular literary topic in the media since the myth was contended to take place at Bardakçı, a village in Bodrum at the south coast of Turkey. Bardakçı was also the place where the legendary queer Turkish singer, Zeki Müren due to his health problems had chosen to live with his long term partner. His choice of location was interpreted as a conscious choice that was in concord with the myth and Zeki Müren's sexual ambiguity.

Looking at the discourses on gender and sexuality, with the burgeoning of queer singers and their popularity in the entertainment business, one can read the fear and anxiety over the loss of strictly categorized hetero-patriarchal masculinity. *Arabesk* films, which exclusively focused on this type of gender crisis, had replaced Yeşilçam melodramas by the 1980s. The sexual ambiguity of *arabesk* singers such as Zeki Müren, Turkey's most famous living transgendered singer Bülent Ersoy, Serbülent Sultan, Talha Özmen and many others were a matter of debate in tabloid journalism as well as an issue of politics. Bülent Ersoy's declaration in 1980 (who was assumed to be a closeted homosexual) that "he" was actually a woman, opened up a terrain of ambivalent responses from the public oscillating between adulation and anathema.

Köçek (Nejat Saydam 1975) will be discussed first in this chapter which narrates the story of the intersexed belly-dancer Caniko/Raziye. *Köçek* was produced in such a historical-cultural context in which masculinity was seen as being under a threat of loss and the sexual ambiguities (discussed in Chapter 2) which were intrinsic to the Ottoman culture were surfaced. Also, starting from the midst of 1970s erotic films were produced due to the economic crisis in Yeşilçam film industry in which transgendered actresses also took part. These films can also be read as the outcome of productive discourses on sexuality which had been repressed in modernity as well as the economic crisis. Thus, given this information, *Köçek* might be interpreted as a means to negotiate and overcome the cultural anxiety of sexual ambiguity; however it certainly enables much more ambivalent readings.

The most crucial issue about Yeşilçam and *arabesk* is that "[they] are used as synonymous concepts that represent most negative aspects of Turkey's cultural life" (Arslan 2005, 33). They are both considered as the corruption of authentic Turkish aesthetic forms which target lower classes with their production of bad taste. On the other hand, *arabesk* musical films, however intrinsic to Yeşilçam's cinematic forms, depart from them with their absolute cynicism. Martin Stokes argues that *arabesk* "comes to be synonymous with all of the pathological symptoms of Istanbul's rapid urbanization. This also includes individual depression and suicide" (Stokes 1992, 110). In arabesk there is pathos and fatalism, the passive acceptance of the subject's bad fate. Powerlessness against a cruel, brutal urban life is the key concept in most of the films However, the protagonist does not rebel against the structures that enable her/his oppression, rather "arabesk presents political and economic power as facts with no explanation other than fate" (Stokes 1992, 10).

Arabesk can be argued to be in strict relation to gender since there is always the recurrent implication that the protagonist cannot live up to the gender ideals that the heterosexual, modern urban life presses on the skins. *Arabesk* is a cry, an outburst of such an impossibility of keeping up with the ideals of the gendered citizenship. Similar to the arguments made for Yeşilçam cinema, *arabesk* as a genre was criticized for being a product of the degeneration of the high art forms. For the modernists this was believed to be the consequence of an “inadequate direction from above” (Stokes 1992, 99)

Films starring Bülent Ersoy, contested her transgender identity within this structural form of musical films. Musical films starring Bülent Ersoy in the turn of the 1980s contain biographical elements of Bülent Ersoy’s public persona, dealing with issues such as homosexuality and transsexuality through the protagonist’s real life. Nevertheless these films have certain ideological discourses that produce the domain of abjection to overcome the anxieties aroused by Bülent Ersoy’s sexual ambiguity and her powerful iconic image. *Şöhretin Sonu/Yüz Karası*; *End of Fame/ Shame* (Orhan Aksoy 1981) will be discussed in this chapter as both producing this domain of “unintelligible” and “uninhabitable” zones of cultural life as well as enabling ambivalent identifications through the camp performance of Bülent Ersoy.

Performatives of Shame and Representation of Intersexuality in *Köçek*

Gulyabani[23]*: It lives in the mountains. It is highly brutal. It attacks the man whom it does not recognize. It haunts especially tourists but it is afraid of the guns very much. It is neither female nor male. They are hermaphrodites. They like pears as bears.*[24]

Suavi Sualp, Milliyet Sunday Promotion 1964

The corrective sex surgery that Christine Jorgensen underwent in 1952 made a tremendous impact and was largely placed in the Western media including Turkish press. There is a significant proliferation of discourses on corrective surgeries in parallel with the cultural anxiety that the visibility of transgender embodiment triggered in this era. Interviews made with doctors were published in newspapers to aver if such a thing as “sex change” could be achieved to turn a biological male into

[23] *Gulyabani* (ghoul) is an Anatolian mythological creature.
[24] See Appendix B for the Turkish original of this text.

a “true female”, or a biological female into a “true male”. Correspondingly, one of the anxieties of the time was due to the absence of practice in legal and medical surveillance procedures which could cause marriages to take place between “inappropriately” gendered people. In 1954, series of interviews were made with the time’s celebrated gynecologist Tevfik Remzi Kazancıgil, who claimed that all the assertions concerning the manipulability of the human sex was “rubbish”. According to Kazancıgil it was the presence of one’s reproductive organs along with appropriate genitelia that defines one’s “true” sex.

The only condition that Kazancıgil acknowledged was the status of the hermaphrodite which he identifies as “neither male nor female but poor creatures who convey the signs of both sexes” (Milliyet 1954, 6). He asserts that they operate on hermaphrodites to assign the genetically dominant sex, but his indication is that “these creatures” could only “fake” a state of being male or female on the surface since they could not procreate. The violence of his words are difficult to undermine however they reveal the performative force of these utterances in the Butlerian sense which produce “a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet ‘subjects’ but who form the constitutive outside of the domain of the subject” (Butler 1993, 3).

In a context in which intersexuality is medically and culturally conceptualized whether as a tragedy, monstrosity or sexual perversion, *Köçek* is quite striking in the way that it both affirms these discourses while opening up possibilities for alternative readings. The film is considered as distinctive from its counterparts by film critics since it deals with the sex/gender issues overtly for the first time in Yeşilçam cinema through intersexuality. [25] Gürata suggests that in 1970s, sex re-assignment surgeries

[25] Because the term hermaphrodite carries with it the over signification of mythological and fetishistic implications which “dehumanize and stigmatize the living and real individual to

were a debated issue in accordance with the emergence of transsexual singers in Turkish art music (Gürata, *Woman as Symptom of Man*). As I will discuss in the following section, Bülent Ersoy was one of the most popular figures among these singers whose performance was banned along with other transgendered singers after 1980 military coup d'état.

Köçek tells the story of the intersexed, gypsy Caniko/Raziye who identifies himself with masculinity and lives as a male in the subcultural environment of Sulukule. Caniko has an alacrity for dancing, however his ambiguous secondary sex characteristics[26] such as facial hair or thin muscular prospect or the presence of breasts cause people to question his sex, whether he is male or female. His desire for belly dancing makes his gender more of a matter of curiosity for the other males in the environment, since belly dancing is associated with women or feminized man. The film can be considered to be composed of two parts, divided with the radical sex change operation of Caniko which turns him into an ideal of femininity as Raziye.

Caniko's gender ambiguity is often contested by other males in the film. Freud contends that "when you meet a human being, the first distinction you make is 'male or female' and you are accustomed to make the distinction with unhesitating certainty" (Freud 1933, 113). The encounter with the other needs a recognition and interpellation of the encountered subject. As Butler suggests the "I" only comes into being through being called, named, interpellated…and this discursive constitution

---

whom the word is applied"(Harper 2007, 3); activists mostly use the term "intersex" which is also a medical (thus pathologizing) term which signifies ambiguous genitals or the manifestation of a range of internal and external configurations (3)of sexual characteristics which more broadly includes the varieties.

[26] Secondary sex characteristics are when taken together "signs that others read to guess at our sex" such as skin texture, body fat distribution, patterns of hair growth or relative overall body size

takes place prior to the "I"" (Butler 1993, 225). Thus the social recognition of the subject, "precedes and conditions the formation of the subject" (225-226). Caniko's sexual ambiguity thus becomes a matter of social recognition, which is bound to the citation of a preceding law. However Butler also acknowledges the impossibility of "fully inhabiting the name by which one's social identity is inaugurated and mobilized" thus subject formation is instable and incomplete (226). Then the question Adnan (Mahmut Hekimoğlu) asks Caniko both marks Caniko's identity as in the margins of recognition as well as it points to its destabilizaiton. This question becomes crucial throughout the film since it refers to the performative that is the precondition of being a subject, being a "lovable" human. This sexual ambiguity which persists till the second half of the film, challenges as I will argue, the very conditions of being a lovable subject, of becoming a desirable object and the normative constellations of sex/gender within the heterosexual matrix.

Football is imbued with sexual metaphors in the film. As Caniko scores, the goalkeeper Adnan asks "How can you score? A broken man like you?"[27] Caniko replies "I have pierced so many buckets such as you! Broken goalkeeper…" After the match, Caniko asks Adnan why he is not putting his clothes on and learns that his clothes are left at the house where he was about to have the extra marital affair. Caniko comments: "So the match in the chaste family's stadium is left half finished." As this dialogue also shows football is given as a metaphor of sexuality. The football scene underscores the relation of the subject/object positions in a sexual intercourse questioning the very idea of hetero-patriarchal sexuality. As Caniko is the active scorer, whose maleness is aberrantly feminized and Adnan is the womanizer who becomes the passive object as he fails to keep the goal, there is an homoerotic

[27] See Appendix B for the Turkish original of this text.

attraction between the two males, who both cannot keep up to the ideals of an oppressive masculinity.

After the match Caniko, Caniko's best friend Piço (Bastard) and Adnan together go to a *meyhane* (local bar). As Caniko starts belly dancing, the villains gazing at him appellate Caniko as "köçek" which outrages him. I argue that the very interpellation of "köçek" works here as the interpellation of the word "queer" once used to work for shaming the subject it adresses. Judith Butler claims:

> 'queer' has operated as one linguistic practice whose purpose has been the shaming of the subject it names or rather the producing of a subject through that shaming interpellation" "Queer" derives its force precisely through the repeated invocation by which it has become linked to accusation, pathologization, insult (1996, 226).

Thus "köçek" is used in this scene in a similar way the word queer had been used as a performative. As Butler contends a performative within speech act theory is "the discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names" (Butler 1993, 13). Performativity is the "power of discourse to produce effects through reiteration" (1993, 20). Butler argues that for a performative to "provisionally" succeed, it must echo a prior action and "accumulate the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior authoritative set of practices" (227). Given the historical background of the term *köçek* in Chapter 2 and how it has been resignified as an ignominious activity for men as a result of the modernization project, the performative force of *köçek* becomes clearer. In a following scene we see Caniko in front of the mirror talking to him: "Look at that face. I look like more of a girl than a boy…I'll cut myself."[28] The reflection of Caniko situates the audience in the place of the norm. What Caniko sees as "something nameless, freakish, something between the norms" (Butler 2006, 190) is a reflective one that calls the audience into the place

[28] See Appendix B for the Turkish original of this text.

of norm, and invokes the idea that “the norms have become the means by which he sees, the frame for his own seeing, his way of seeing himself” (190).

Sara Ahmed contends that in shame, the subject exposes the self to her/his self as a failure “through the gaze of the ideal other” (Ahmed 106). I argue that in the previous scene the other is represented as the brutal, villainy masculinity while in this mirror scene the ideal other is Caniko’s reflection in the mirror. Shame needs a witness in order to produce its effect however the body of the other need not be always present in the scene. It might be the gaze of the symbolic other that one feels to have failed to live up to its norms and thus be ashamed of what one is. In this scene, the reflection of Caniko’s self as the site of judgment thus opens up an ambivalent self-reflexive moment of criticism for the spectator. Who performs the performatives of shame? In other words, these two consecutive scenes unintentionally call into question the legitimacy of the symbolic other as the villains and the norms speak from the same place in order to abject the ambiguously gendered body of Caniko.

In another scene, a belly dancer starts dancing in the middle of the saloon while everybody is gazing at the performer. However, this situation upsets Caniko, because he desires to be the one who is gazed upon (Gürata). This scene might be read as a challenge to Mulvey’s theory of scopophilic spectatorship in which the male gender is the active recipient of the gaze while the female gender is the passive object. Caniko is content in his masculinity however his masculinity is an alternative one which does not want to be the bearer of the look, not always. Caniko, as a male, wants to belly dance, wants to be looked upon, and wants to be desired by other men. Also Caniko is the active bearer of the look when he gazes at Adnan, making him his object of desire. In the second half of the film, in which Caniko by a violent intervention is turned into a female, this fluidity of Caniko/Raziye's comes to prominence being in changeable positions of acitivity/passivity.

Caniko is kidnapped by Acenta Rıza's men, and forced to belly dance in a *gazino* in female clothes because they believe that he is actually a woman. However, when the villains attempt to rape Caniko, his genitals are revealed and they are shocked to see that he actually carries the phallus which they could not associate with him. Since Caniko's performance of masculinity is an alternative one that does not conform to the norm, the performative "I am not a girl" does not pass since it does not echo or cite a past law that recognizes his masculinity. There isn't such a norm, such a law. The villains' recognition of the phallus as male genitals however is not enough to secure the humanness of Caniko, now his ambiguity arouses disgust and hate which ends up in his brutalization. They stab a knife into Caniko's genitals as an act of hate and disgust. Butler suggests:

> When we ask what the conditions of intelligibility are by which the human emerges, by which the human is recognized, by which some subject becomes the subject of human love, we are asking about the conditions of intelligibility composed of norms, of practices, that have become presuppositional, without which we cannot think the human at all…And it is not just that there are laws that govern our intelligibility, but ways of knowing, modes of truth, that forcibly define intelligibility. (Butler 2006, 183)

Caniko appears as the unhuman, the monster, who lives as the site of unintelligibility, as the subject whose humanness is thrown into question. Hence, when Caniko is brought to the hospital, the doctor who operates on him decides what to do with this body, as this is not yet a subject, rather an object of medical surveillance which has the authority to test and decide which gender is to be assigned to this abject subjectivity. The doctor avers he will operate the reconstructive surgery to assign him the female sex: "To release him from this pain and return him to a normal life is a duty of humanity for us."[29] Thus although Caniko identifies with the male gender, he is assigned with the female sex which is claimed to be more convenient for Caniko biologically. The doctor's attitude apropos Caniko's gender is resonant to what surgeon John Money claimed to be true. Butler writes that Money argued "for the ease with which a female body can be surgically constructed, as if femininity were always little more than a surgical construction, an elimination, a cutting away" (Butler 2006, 187).

However, there is a clear break on the representation of the authoritative brutality. While the film represents the rapists as villains, as cruel men; the doctor is represented as a father figure whose creative power enabled by modern medicine is appreciated. He is compassionate as a father would be to his daughter and this compassion conceals the brutality of this very action, i.e., treating the body as a mere object of medical intervention, without considering the agency of the person being operated. Nevertheless, Caniko does not easily accept this gender forced upon him. The doctor explains Caniko that his sex has been re-assigned as a girl; however Caniko is outraged each time the doctor calls him "a girl". There is no place for sexual ambiguity in modern medicine since modern medicine is also a cultural institution accustomed to produce the effect of a "natural" heterosexuality founded on the stark binaries of female and male sexes. Holmes contends:

> The medical metaphors employed in descriptions of sexuality and sexual anatomy based upon a presupposition of male/female dimorphism, tend to favor heterosexuality and reproduction as the natural mode of organism and threaten to produce particularly damaging means of interpreting the gendered self vis-à-vis the sexed body. (Holmes 2008, 29)

[29] See Appendix B for the Turkish original of this text.

As Butler argues “[g]ender norms operate by requiring the embodiment of certain ideals of femininity and masculinity, ones that are almost always related to the idealization of the heterosexual bond” (Holmes 2009, 75). In order to provide the heterosexual romance that the melodramatic modality requires, Caniko is changed into Raziye, revealing the iconic figure of Müjde Ar as a result who is the famous sex symbol of the time. Thus the doctor’s performative utterance “You are a girl” “anticipates the eventual arrival of the sanction, ‘I pronounce you man and wife’” (75) which would be an unhappy performative if Caniko stayed as male. Hence, the ambiguity should be overcomed by the film narrative in order to provide the heteronormative conclusion.

Caniko does not affirm this female identity until he is proposed to be a belly dancer. Caniko returns back to Sulukule, this time as a dancer in the touristic dance house of Naciye. The pronoun changes here, since he is persuaded to live under the appellation *Raziye* which means submissive and is derivated from the male name *Razı*. Caniko could not live up to the ideal of masculinity; however as Raziye she seems quite a success in this new identity.

However things proceed ambiguously. The couple’s unconformity with gender roles becomes apparent on the island scene, “when he and Raziye adopt the conventional roles of society and in an epic way they play them” (Jeremy Steel, *Kocek: a Field of Games*). They both perform the stereotypes that the society has assigned for them, trying to trick each other. Adnan as well as Naciye masquerade a hyperbolic gender that distances the audience from its claim of hetero-patriarchal naturalness.

Adnan does not recognize that Raziye was formerly Caniko and tries to trick Raziye by playing a stereotypical performance of gender. Adnan masquerades an active, protective maleness to trick and scare Raziye that they are in an island of cannibals. Raziye on the other hand, being aware of his trickery, masquerades a passive, powerless femininity who believes in everything artlessly that the male declares. Thus masquerade here works as a critical tool for the "alienation from the normative gender and sex roles assigned to them by straight culture" (Robertson 1999, 280). Raziye's performance as male was a failure however her feminine performance is now a masquerade which "mimics a constructed identity in order to conceal that there is nothing behind the mask; it simulates femininity to dissimulate the absence of a real or essential femininity" (273).

Meanwhile, Naciye comes to the island looking after Raziye, claiming that Adnan has kidnapped her to abuse. When she and other girls from Sulukule arrive at the island they hear Adnan scream. The boy driving the boat says: "Look, the person who is being raped calls for help".[30] "But this is a man's voice. What if…" replies Naciye with a bewildered tone. However, Caniko/Raziye had undergone a surgical sex re-assignment surgery, Naciye still suspects that masculinity has persisted in Raziye and she might be the abuser rather than the abused. This brief sequence signifies that there is still the repressed idea that Raziye's identification with masculinity is not reducible to an operation or the presence/absence of the phallus. The film represses the idea that gender is not a biological fact, rather a social construct, and a free floating artifice. Nevertheless, the film's narrative tries to suppress this knowledge; Naciye's reaction opens up a moment of ambivalence.

[30] See Appendix B for the Turkish original of the text.

Adnan falls eventually in love with Raziye. Although suspecting that she might be Caniko, he represses this idea. The impossibility of overtly admitting the homoerotic bound they had in the first half of the film is overcomed by turning Caniko into Raziye, and Adnan can this time admit that he is in love with Caniko/Raziye without arousing homosexual panic. However when they are about to get married, Acente Rıza calls Raziye "köçek" and says: "Were you about to sleep with this man as a male?"[31] Adnan's mother faints and Adnan slaps Raziye calling her a "liar". Raziye starts crying and escapes from the wedding hall, to the bridge to commit suicide. The interpellation "köçek" again performs to construct a domain of abjection through the shaming of the subject. Sara Ahmed claims that "shame impresses upon the skin, as an intense feeling of the subject 'being against itself'" (2004, 103). "In shame I feel myself to be bad, and hence expel the badness; I have to expel myself from myself" (104). This might, Ahmed contends, if prolonged approximate the subject to self-annihilation.

At this very moment of shaming the self, something "extravagant" happens. As Adnan learns "the truth" from the doctor who operated on Raziye, he runs to save her. The rainbow comes up at this moment, evoking the myth that if one passes underneath it, their sexes will change. However Naciye tries to warn them not to pass under it, we see Raziye and Adnan have switched the roles. Raziye becomes Caniko and Adnan becomes the bride in the gown and they get married. As they are about to have sex in the bedroom, Raziye as Caniko and Adnan in lingerie, Caniko/Raziye cries "This can't happen. We both should die." At this moment Caniko wakes up and we understand that this entire "extravaganza" was nothing more than a "bad dream". However the narrative closure seems to normalize and stabilize gender and sexuality;

[31] See Appendix B for the Turkish original of this text.

this scene also evokes the provocative idea that it is a parody of the whole film and Caniko/Raziye's gender keeps its ambiguity (Arslan, *Destroyed Self and Sexual Identity: The Case of Kocek*). The repressed idea that Caniko/Raziye is sexually ambiguous and might oscillate between femininity and masculinity still persists. Although the heterosexual matrix cannot compensate such fluidity, camp gaze is always provoked to such thinking.

Shame/Performativity and Camp Theatricality in *Şöhretin Sonu/Yüz Karası*

Şöhretin Sonu/Yüz Karası, End of Fame/Shame stars Bülent Ersoy, who is named as the *Diva* of Turkish *arabesk* music and is the most famous living male-to-female transgendered singer in show business in Turkey. Bülent Ersoy who is flamboyant and extravagant in her style, has lived the process of her sexual transformation after she became famous out in the public in the 1980s. She first appeared as an effeminate male singer who was often contrasted to the famous formerly Turkish classical singer Zeki Müren who was named as the Sun of Art or the Pasha by the people. The primary reason for this comparison was about the way these two singers became icons with their distinctive singing styles as well as their anti-normative gender presentation.

Zeki Müren, whose queerness was evident in his style, remained closeted until his death. His camp style which was a combination of Elvis Priestley and Libarace, signified his queerness, however he replied every question concerning his sexuality with slippery answers that casted away these questions. Although, Bülent Ersoy seemed to follow the same path of sexual ambiguity as he appeared on the stages in 1970s, he took a crucial shift as he declared his transgendered identity and started to appear in women's clothes on stages in the turn of 1980s. Martin Stokes argues that although Zeki Müren's gender and sexual ambiguity had been subjected to criticism, it "has never been directed at the singer as a figure of outrage, shame, deviance or any other sort of moral outsidership" (Stokes 2003, 311). However, one could not contend the same for Bülent Ersoy.

Before just months from the brutal military coup d'état of 1980, Bülent Ersoy declared her transsexuality and asked to be referred as a woman. Her appearance in the forty ninth İzmir Fair (which is organized as a cultural event that brings together many celebrities to perform) in female appearance was met with an severe reaction from the governor of İzmir of the time, İhsan Alyanak who asserted that Ersoy was overbalancing the people of İzmir:

> Even I feel queer when watching her/him…I don't want to see an artist in the fiftieth fair such as Bülent Ersoy which will correspond to Atatürk's one hundredth birthday…If Bülent Ersoy who is indefinable as neither man or woman comes here next year in this shape, I will not let her/him into the fair… I will let neither Bülent Ersoy nor who wants to be like her/him in this shape into İzmir. S/he should make a choice. S/he should become a full woman or man, later s/he can come and work in the fair.[32] (Milliyet 1980)

As this declaration implies, the appearance of Ersoy who is known as a biological male but who appears in female attire, evokes the anxieties that gender is nothing more than a performance which threatens to disturb the well established categories of heteronormative ideology. Concomitant with the bombasts about her identity, the musical films in which she appeared also started to deal with the issues concerning sexuality and gender. According to Agah Özgüç *Beddua/Curse* (Osman Seden 1980) starring Bülent Ersoy was the first film in Turkey's film history that dealt with the issue of male homosexuality overtly (Özgüç, 2006). The film implicitly dealt with

[32] See Appendix B for the original turkish text.

the issues of gender, while implying that Ersoy is a homosexual due to his childhood violation and the homophobic reaction he evokes in his father.

The second film, *Şöhretin Sonu* (Orhan Aksoy) which was produced in 1981, has more biographic information about Bülent Ersoy's life. The film mostly reflects the debates going around Ersoy's sexual ambiguity and her sex re-assignment surgery at the time. As Martin Stokes contends arabesk singers' "biographies combine with their coverage in the press and the stories, told in the films—in which the singers retain their 'real' names to form a fictionalized biography that is essentially bound up with the experience of the music" (1992, 114). In the film Bülent Ersoy is a celebrity singer who is going through an identity crisis as a result of her ambiguous gender. Although at the time of the film's production Ersoy had already declared that she is "more woman than a woman with a little too much", and it was publicly known that she was going through sex re-assignment operations, the film implies that she is not clear whether she is a man or a woman. Bülent goes to a shrink (Giovanni Scognomillo) in order to recover from her distress because of her gender identity.

The film focuses on the alienation and corruption of Bülent Ersoy because of her aggressive and spoiled acts. The implication is that she might be going through this crisis as a result of her fame. Bülent Ersoy, as in her real life is a conservatory graduate in the film who is excluded by her family because of her gender identity. In concord with her personal history, Bülent Ersoy has a female fiancée Aslı (Serpil Çakmak), whose presence is taken to be the signifier of her unclarity about her gender identity. In an interview in 1980 that she claimed "to be more woman than a woman" she also mentioned about her female fiancée whom she had had sex and even her fiancée became pregnant as a result of their intercourse. Although Ersoy defines this relationship as an experience of masculinity, this is actually a different act concerning her sexuality rather than her gender identity. As a consequence of the heterosexual matrix which prescribes the normative thinking that sex/gender and sexuality might follow from each other, the lesbian eortics of a tansgendered woman is rendered unthinkable.

The film reproduces the discourses on the anxiety that this specific ambiguity of Ersoy aroused in public. On a concert in Maxim (the most popular *gazino* at the time) in 1980, Bülent Ersoy engaged in a fight with her orchestrate chef on stage, in which the audience reacted against Ersoy shouting “You are a man”. Ersoy replied “You are men!” and left the stage. In the same year, Bülent Ersoy was taken to the police station by the moral affairs department, where she was made to sign a contract that she will wear “normal” clothes on stage and will not be engaged in unsightly activities. She was also sent to prison two times consecutively, first for insulting a judge coming to her house for damage assessment and second for creating trouble in a night club and breaking a journalist’s camera who wanted to take a picture of her. All these scandalous events affected the film’s plot which operates as a shaming tool for Bülent Ersoy’s anti-normative gender identity and excessive behavior in public.

In the film, Bülent Ersoy is abandoned by everyone around her. First, Doğan who is the chef of her orchestrate resigns because of Bülent Ersoy’s affection for him, later her manager Nihat resigns from his work echoing the official ideology’s contention that “s/he should act like a man, array her private life and avoid spreading ugly rumors around her name to live an honorable life”. Murat, one of her best friends from the conservatory, who is also in love with Aslı, tries to talk Bülent into giving up her relationship with Aslı. Murat calls Bülent “a pervert, a maniac”, “the shame of the nation”. This is the climax sequence of the film in which the song

Shame is extravagantly performed by Ersoy which gives the film its name. This is a typical aesthetic trait that most arabesk films share in common. The song's title gives the film its name and in the climax of all the corruption and tragedy of the protagonist, the song is performed in an emotional excess. Later Bülent leaves Aslı, coming to the conclusion that their relationship is impossible, contending that they should be together with Murat. Afterwards, Bülent goes to her parent's house that she had not seen for years. Her father throws her out of the house saying he is ashamed to have a son like Bülent, that Bülent is not a human; rather he is the shame of humanity and society. Bülent, devastated as a result of all these destructions, goes to the club where Murat works and becomes over-drunk. She comes across Doğan who had claimed in a previous encounter that he did not want people to look at him the way they are looking at Bülent and thus did not want to see her ever again. Doğan, sitting with his fiancée refuses to come to Bülent's table, which makes Bülent furious. Bülent flounces to their table, implicating they had a sexual intimacy before he got engaged to his fiancée. The fiancée calls her a pervert, which causes Bülent to have a nervous breakdown and smash everything around. As a result Bülent is arrested and put into prison.

In the conclusion of the film Bülent Ersoy is trialed and acquitted however the judge gives a private advice to Ersoy as a figure of compassionate father, which appears in most Turkish films as a figure who speaks the dominant ideology's discourses whether as a doctor as in *Köçek*, or a policeman or a judge as in this film. He starts his words "Now, I will talk to you not as a judge but as a major". He contends that an artist is the property of the society thus has responsibilities towards the people who have enabled her fame and wealth. He claims she should be careful about how she acts in her private life and behave subservient to the people. Bülent Ersoy thanks the judge for his “valuable” advice and promises to keep them for life.

The film thus reflects the ideological discourses that abjected Bülent Ersoy’s identity through tabloid press and politics, by judging, banning, maligning her. The film ends with a newspaper headline which quotes Ersoy saying: “I apologize from Turkish public” showing Bülent Ersoy in male costumes. Bülent Ersoy’s stage appearance was banned by the military government according to a code that prohibits the appearance of sexually ambiguous artists to perform in the same year of the film’s release. Many transgendered and gender variant singers were thus deprived of their rights to work. Arabesk was also banned from the state television along with Ersoy’s appearance. Ersoy had to live long years in exile, or had to perform sitting as a customer if she was to sing in an event. She struggled about eight years till she could get a female ID, and one year after the film’s release she committed suicide staying in coma for days due to a depression caused by the slanders that she was the shame of the nation.

The film in concord with the content of the genre of arabesk music and films, is a play of abundant sentiments oscillating between shame and pathos. While the protagonist is maligned and declared shameful because of the excess of her gendered and obscene behavior, her abasement gives way to empathy through pathos. However, there is a certain attitude in the film that Bülent Ersoy had it coming in accordance with the national ideology of the time. Zeki Müren, after his death in 1996 was declared as the “model citizen” whereas Bülent Ersoy’s declaration of her transgendered identity made her “the shame of the nation”. Stokes argues that Zeki Müren’s “efforts to keep the truth of his sexual choices and preferences private, and to resist prurient journalistic inquiry conform to the liberal logic in which civility demands the reasoned and civil maintenance of a line between public and private behavior" (Stokes, 68). On the contrary, as the film implies, Bülent Ersoy could not live up to this form of citizenship by declaring her identity thus transgressing the line between public and private which intoxicates the national ideal of citizenship which was thought as "nothing more than coerced obedience to an authoritarian state at that time" (Stokes 68-69). Thus her transgendered body and private life which was in public view was bringing shame to the nation by her deviance from the gender and sexual norms. Sara Ahmed contends that:

> shame works to secure the (hetero)normative order and "shame is 'brought onto' the nation by illegitimate others (who fail to reproduce its form, or even its offspring) such as queer others or asylum seekers. Such others are shaming proxy; they do not approximate the form of the good citizen. As citizens, they are shaming and unreproductive: they cannot reproduce the national ideal. (Ahmed 2008, 108)

Thus Bülent Ersoy has shamed the nation by failing to live up to its gender and sexual ideals, by lacking civility in that she could not separate the public from the private. Ersoy's apology than works as a means of reconcilement, a speech act that she demands her place within the nation and ideal subjecthood. Ahmed argues "the transference of bad feeling to the subject in shame is only temporary, as the 'transference' can become evidence of the restoration of an identity of which can be proud" (109,110). Apology works performatively in that it seeks forgiveness for a shameful past and promises for a prideful future as an "ideal citizen". Nevertheless, Bülent Ersoy's demand to be rescued from the abjected sphere of cultural unintelligibility failed at that time as she was banned from the stages till 1989. However, today Bülent Ersoy is named as the Diva of Turkish music; her status of being the ideal citizen is constantly contested whenever she makes a demand that is not in concord with the nationalistic, militaristic ends of Turkish state.

The film, shames Bülent Ersoy through her sexual ambiguity as an attempt to "consolidate the boundaries that are threatened" (Chanter 2007, 2) by her gender presentation. As Butler claims "the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection" which in consequence "produces a constitutive outside to the subject an abjected outside (Butler 1993, 3). She contends that subject formation "requires identification with the normative phantasm of sex and this identification takes place through a repudiation which produces a domain of abjection" (3). This also means that "identification with the abjection of sex will be persistently disavowed (3). Thus Ersoy's sexual ambiguity becomes this site of repudiation which haunts the boundaries of subjectivity, of being a "human" by creating the possibility of their disruption and rearticulation.

Beyond its ideological imperatives that define the boundaries of being an intelligible human or citizen what does the performatives of shame perform in the film? To put the question in another way how do the performatives of shaming Bülent Ersoy and her extravagant performance affect a queer community that consumes this film? Eve Sedgwick argues that shame should be considered as "integral and residual in the processes by which identity itself is formed" (Sedgwick 2009, 59). She claims that shame is not a "toxic part" of a human/group identity that can be "excised" but rather a "crucial component in all identity formation (Kulick and Klein 2009, 321). Shame is intrinsic to human identity in that it is not about human action rather it is about what one is. Sedgwick notes that "[shame] is the place where the question of identity arises most originarily and most relationally" (Sedgwick 2009, 51).

Sedgwick through a reading of Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*[33] considers that the author "revels" in his relation to his past, rather than "merg[ing] with the potentially shaming or shamed figurations of its younger self, younger fictions, younger heroes" (Sedgwick 54). Sedgwick notes that his attempt is to "love them…inspite of shame and, more remarkably, through it (54). Thus according to Sedgwick, James "succeeds in transforming shame into a self-affirmative healing energy" (Yeh, 12). Therefore when a person or a group struggles to dismiss shame once and for all, this endeavor "works", however it misses something. If shame is intrinsic to human identity which is "at the origin of impulse to the performative" (Sedgwick 2009, 60) it is quite creative in the name of politics to rethink what shame does and performs in order to see that performatives of shame "are available for the work of metamorphosis, reframing, refiguration, transfiguration of affective and symbolic loading and deformation" (60).

What she proposes is thus to rethink the notion of camp performativity in relation to shame rather than parody to open up new configurations of relationality and politics. After all, as Sedgwick underlines, the "performative identity vernaculars that seem most recognizably "flushed…with shame consciousness and shame creativity do cluster intimately around lesbian and gay worldly spaces" (60). Camp rethought in terms of shame/perfomativity thus "may get us a lot further (…) than the notion of parody will and more too than will any opposition between 'depth' and 'surface'" (61).

The film's tragedy and pathos fails in its seriousness for the present audience. Since for camping things one needs the "process of aging and

[33] The collection is composed of new prefaces he wrought for the revised New York edition of his most important novels and stories to date.

deterioration [that] provides the necessary detachment" (Sontag, 60); the audience of the present might not be engulfed by the closeness of the imagery. The failed seriousness of the film with its exaggeration of performance, taste, elegance and luxury as well as emotions gives the film its artificial characteristics which in return enables camp identifications with the film. Gender incongruity, which is a characteristic of things to be enjoyed as camp is a central theme in the film, a trait that Stokes argues for the arabesk films in which "one cannot in the moral calculus of the musical film, act morally and gender appropriately (2003, 321-22). The film"proposes itself seriously, but cannot be taken altogether seriously because it is 'too much' (Sontag 1999, 59). One can thus be in a critical distance from the film, because there is a certain temporal and spatial distance to the image. This enables a performative spectatorship practice which becomes enjoyable rather than frustrating with the transformative humor that acknowledges shame as a queer feeling. Nevertheless Sedgwick does not go on to futher elaborate on this creative relation that links camp and shame/performativity. I would like to speculate a few words on how this relationality might be rethought considering Ersoy's performance in *Şöhretin Sonu* and the camp reworking of her image in Ming Wong's camp video art.

Refigurations of Shame in *Biji Diva*

Singapore born artist Ming Wong, who takes up pieces from film classics and performs all the parts himself, presented his first live performance *Biji Diva* which is inspired by the life, music and films of Bülent Ersoy on June 2011 in Berlin as part of the *In Transit* Performing Arts Festival. [34] He and his mother May, have also re-enacted Ersoy's life in four Karaoke videos. In the performance May have performed the older Diva where Ming performed the young Diva joined by his live band, "Bülent Wongsoy". Taking one of these exhibition videos as an example of how "shame…explains how a subject can be moved from suffering to action" (Kulick and Klein 2009, 320), I will try to suggest a reading that interprets shame's resignification through camp performativity by reworking on it with humor.

The video starts with a photograph that shows Ersoy who is issued an arrest warrant for her obscene behavior on stage in September 1980 by the Izmir prosecution office, claiming that she has showed her breasts to the audience as she performed on the International Izmir Fair. In the black and white photograph Ersoy is arrested by five armed soldiers, walking in her silver grey scarf and big sun-glasses. She is right at the center of the photograph, taller and glamorous than everything around her. This image is reenacted by Wong in drag as Ersoy, and the soldiers are performed by two queer performers who are also in drag as armed soldiers while the theme song of the film *Şöhretin Sonu*, *Shame*, is playing as the soundtrack. Some lines from the song are such:

> Some of us in the corners /Some of us in the limelight/ We suffer from this pain /Each of us somewhere/ You would clamor like me if you had fallen into a trouble like this/ while destiny was written angels have cried in the sky/ This wound in me is a doomsday wound/ They are calling my fate shameful.[35]

While walking with the soldiers, the people in Bülent Ersoy drag increase one by one. At last six Ersoy's and the soldiers, arrive in a disco, with a stage and a large

[34] See the website for further information.
http://www.hkw.eu/en/programm/2011/in_transit_2011/veranstaltungen_53858/Veranstaltungsdetail_58163.php
[35] See Appendix for the Turkish Original of this text.

poster of Türkan Şoray, where one of Ersoy's later songs *Sefam Olsun/I'm Having Fun (*(released in 1993) is playing as the soundtrack. Contrary to the suffering, tearful and rebellious tone of the former song, the latter is a humorous one that defends a life of hedonism saying:

> A nipper in one hand, and a mirror on the other /Do I give a damn about the world/ Everday in another party, everday in another heart/ I am having a hell of a good time/ I'm having fun.[36]

The soldiers eventually turn into Ersoy too. Eight Ersoy's with fans in their hands (an accessory which Ersoy is associated with) start choreographing Ersoy's famous dance routines. The title of the work of the artist *Biji Diva*, meaning long live Diva in Kurdish, is also inspired by a banner which a political group called Young Civilians had demonstrated in a trial in 2008 to support Diva. She was accused of "alienating people from conscription" for her words against the militaristic ideology on the TV show called *Pop Star Alaturka which* is the Turkish version *of Pop Idol.* That episode of the show had been devoted to the soldiers who were killed in an operation made in Northern Iraq. Ersoy claimed if she could reproduce, she would never send her son to die in a pre-scripted war as such. Her declaration was approbated by Kurdish people, championed in Kurdish TV channel Roj TV. Even some of the mayors attempted to give her name to some streets in Kurdish territory. On the other hand her declaration gained strong public controversy on the side of Turkish nationalists and she was sued to serve three years in prison for alienating the public from military service. Although she was acquitted, the prosecutor Ali Çakır appellated the case, claiming that Ersoy's words cannot be considered as an act of freedom of speech since a person who is medically incapable of bearing children, can only mean to provoke Turkish mothers with such words.

[36] See Appendix B for the Turkish original of this text.

Ersoy again had failed to live up the ideal of model citizenship and her transgenderism became an issue of defamation. The law invoked that she could never become a perfect or true woman who is capable of reproduction. Since according to the hetero-patriarchal order, one's humanity is thrown into question if one is not properly gendered, the insults against Ersoy targeted her transgender identity. Then given the past and present examples of shaming Bülent Ersoy how this shame can be put into transformational energy? Michael Warner, against the proliferation of pride discourses on queerness, argues that the question should be about what we can do with our shame rather than to get rid of it (Crimp 2009, 71). And the best way is to pin it to someone else as Warner argues (71). Shame is a heterogeneous feeling which isolates the subject in shame from the community but which also puts the subject in motion for collective action. In the video, the multiplication of Ersoy's walking with soldiers while *Shame* playing as the soundtrack hence does not refer to a homogenizing queer identity, rather different identities take up the shame Ersoy is going through in their heterogeneity. Warner suggests:

> Queer scenes are the true salons des refuses, where the most heterogenous people are brought into great intimacy by their common experience of being despised and rejected in a world of norms that they now recognize as false morality. (Crimp 2009, 72)

Thus the performance, aligning Bülent Ersoy's past transgression with her present transgression against the law and refiguring it with theatricality and humor enacts a healing and transformative power. Camp performativity which theatricalizes Bülent Ersoy's public image by transgendered and queer performers opens up a possibility of alternative intimacy with Ersoy's past and present. I interpret this as the loving endeavor to resignify the shaming of the transgendered Diva through the queer/transgender community's own identification with shame rather than a mere parody of the star's earlier persona. Given the fact that the persona of the Diva is enacted by queer performers along with queer artist Wong, the video evokes Sedgwick's contention that shame is the ultimate queer affect which resides in the link between "performativity—and performativity" (2009, 52). This means, as Douglas Crimp explains quoting from Butler "Performativity 1: "the notion of performance in defining instance theatrical" and Performativity 2: that of 'speech-act theory and deconstruction' in which we find a 'necessarily aberrant relation' between a performative utterance and its meaning (Crimp 2009, 70).

Sedgwick argues that shame is isolating as well as it is collective since it "floods" the witnesses. As Crimp argues when one takes the shame of another, one does not "simply adopt the other's identity" one "adopts the other's vulnerability to being shamed" (71). Thus shame/performativity works here both performatively and ethically as Crimp would name it. Ersoy's shame "floods" her audience as well as the performers in Ersoy drag. The theatricality of shame and suffering is then turned into a theatricality of camp humor which transforms shame's isolating power into collective joy.

As the video shows, Ersoy's abundance of emotions and suffering can be put into transformational, creative energy by camp reenactments of that imagery. Queer cultures, which are formed by this constituent affect, are thus rendered capable of resignifying and recontextualizing shame, breaking that very feeling from its heteronormative context, which aims to oppress and degrade queer being as such. If shame is integral to queer identity formation, acknowledging shame, as Sedgwick claims, might also deconstruct identity in much more creative ways that are not yet imagined.

In this chapter I have tried to discuss how performatives of shame produce spectacles of abjection in dealing with transgender phenomena. However, texts produce incongruities within themselves and these ambivalent moments open up spaces for manipulative readings for the queer gaze. As Ming Wong's camp video mimes, these images are open to refiguration and resignification, to performatively parody their shaming intent in a transnational context. In the next chapter, I will try to explore the queer production in relation to local and the transnational through transgender representation in mainstream cinema. As Ming Wong's work camps the local transgendered singers image in a global context, in the next chapter, I will attempt to read the hybrid forms of camp performativity that merge the local and the global in relation to queer time and space in Kutluğ Ataman's *Lola+Bilidikid*.

CHAPTER 5

TRANSGENDER GAZE, TIME AND SPACE: TRANSNATIONALITY AND IDENTITY IN KUTLUĞ ATAMAN'S *LOLA +BILIDIKID*

The Urban Space and Transgender Embodiment

Imprisoning, torturing and killing many people, the coup d'état of September 1980, also had banished transgender appearances of many artists from stages and the media as indicated in the previous chapter. Transsexual sex workers had even met with harsher practices then their famous counterparts. They were imprisoned, tortured, banned from work and even expelled from the city of Istanbul. Nevertheless the late 1980s were also productive in the name of identity politics. The era was marked by the emergence of new social and identity movements due to the abolishing of leftist movements with militarist brutality. Feminists, liberal left, anti-militarists, Kurdish rights groups as well as gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and their sexual and political identities became increasingly visible. (Öktem 2008, 2).

Nurdan Gürbilek notes that the 1980s were marked by the overlap of two kinds of hegemonic power. One of them was the oppressive and coercive military regime which obstructed every attempt to claim identities and desires, while on the other hand there was a productive power which "incited" discourses on the repressed issues which Gürbilek calls as the "return of the repressed" (Gürbilek 1992, 13-14). As she contends the 1980s were a time which can be described with two terms such as "repression of discourse" and "bursting of discourse" (21).

Sexuality had been incited to discourse; sexual orientations and identities were classified such as homosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality etc. However Gürbilek notes that this incitement to discourse was not accompanied by an analyzing and classifying scientific knowledge which Foucault pointed to be the case for Western modernization in *The History of Sexuality*. Rather what happened in the 1980s in Turkey was the articulation of the private issues in public—especially issues about sexuality—within a discourse of liberation and individualization unattached to an authority which had the will to know (Gürbilek 22).

Gürbilek notes that different identity positions could be articulated starting from the second half of the 1980s and there was a blossoming of visibility of sub cultures (102-103). Also different sexualities and gender identities became publicly visible especially in the case of transgendered sex workers in Istanbul. However state coercion was exercised brutally on these most visible bodies. While television programs hosted by journalists such as Ertürk Yöndem and Uğur Dündar targeted homosexuality and transsexuality as sickness and perversion, the military regime displaced homosexual and transsexual sex workers from their residences in Abanoz Street in Tarlabaşı, [37] Beyoğlu in the 1980s. "Contemporary witnesses remember transsexuals being dragged onto trains and trying to escape by jumping off the carriages bound for Eskişehir, a town in west-central Anatolia" (Öktem, 2). Some of

[37] Tarlabaşı is a district in Beyoğlu where people from different ethnic, sexual and professional backgrounds live together such as Kurds, Gypsies, transgendered people, sex workers, students, outlaws etc. The district has been the target of the gentrification projects since the 1980s and today these projects and attempts have been intensified.

them were labeled so that they could not enter the city for at least five years[38] while their heads were shaved by force.

Later in the 1990s, Kandiyoti points to the media attention that male-to-female transsexuals had received. She notes that this phenomenon “appears to have caught the public imagination and evoked an almost voyeuristic curiosity” (Kandiyoti 1998, 21). Nevertheless, the public and state coercion was intact. Transgendered sex workers had moved to Pürtelaş Street and Bozkurt Street in Beyoğlu where they were once again forced to leave by coercion. At last they had arrived to Ülker Street where they lived in community and solidarity forming different kinds of kinship relations that did not comply with the heterosexual model based on biological connectedness. However during the Habitat II[39] conference which took place in 1996 in Istanbul, Beyoğlu police raided twenty four houses in which transgendered women lived and worked. These houses were emptied by force. Some of the houses were burned, the doors were cracked and transgendered women had to escape leaving all their assets behind to be rescued from the torture they were about to face in the police offices (Selek 2007). Some of them were tortured and their long hair was shaved in order to deprive them from a very substantial signifier of femininity and beauty.

---

[38] See the interview made with Belgin Çelik by Başak Kocadost and Bawer Çakır, a transsexual activist for a more detailed information on the violence subjected to trangendered and homosexual individuals in that era.

[39] United Nations Conference on Human Settlements took place in Istanbul on 3-14 June, which was arranged for the purposes of “adequate shelter for all” and “sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world. The purpose of the conference was to sustain adequate shelter for all, that every people deserved to live in healthy and productive environment (see the website http://www.un.org/Conferences/habitat/). However, Istanbul was “cleaned off” its disposable habitants during the conference brutally. Stray dogs were killed, homeless children were taken away and the houses of the transgendered sex workers were burnt down.

In such an environment where transgender phenomenon became more visible, as both a matter of public fascination as well as anxiety, it also became more visible also in the cinema of Turkey. Transgenderism was neither represented in terms of a “painful disorder” or a “shameful act” signifying perversion, nor as an instrument of entertainment in these films. Rather transgender embodiment became part of the urban landscape with other cultural outcasts living in liminal lives of abjection and death. Also the official abolition of the censorship laws in 1989 was another reason for this proliferation. Colin suggests this led “a large number of films experimented more openly with previously taboo sexual projects” (Colin 2008, 158).

A number of films that dealt exclusively or inclusively with transgenderism were produced. *Dönersen Islık Çal*/*Whistle If You Return* (Orhan Oğuz 1992) tells the story of an intimate friendship between a transsexual prostitute and a dwarf barman; *Gece Melek ve Bizim Çocuklar*/*Night, Angel and Our Boys* (Atıf Yılmaz 1993) tells the story of the intimacy between female and transgendered prostitutes working in night clubs as well as male hustlers in the back streets of Beyoğlu. In Ağır Roman/ Cholera Street (Mustafa Altıoklar 1997), the well known uncloseted gay Turkish poet Küçük İskender plays the role of a transvestite who is the best friend of the protagonist (Okan Bayülgen). The significant resonance of these films is that they all associate transgenderism with the abjected spheres of metropolitan life. Transgendered bodies, along with the other metropolitan outcasts live in the back streets of the urban space in night time, form friendships that replace heterosexual family bounds. While their reconstruction of time, space and intimate relations subvert the heteronormative taxonomies of living, they also take the risk of being brutalized.

Nevertheless, transgender phenomena cannot be simply explained in terms of the local considering the resembling practices transgendered people share in many contexts(for instance forms of abjection and practices of living together and resistance) especially when connected to metropolitan life. Also the economies of reconstructive and plastic surgeries as well as the transgender icons enable a cross-meeting of global and local structures of life for transgendered people. As Kandiyoti suggests:

> The transnational nature of transsexual networks is apparent on many levels. The search for sex-change surgery takes transsexuals from the Philippines to Istanbul, where operations are cheaper, while more affluent Turkish transsexuals travel to London as their preferred destination. Those who are able to find jobs in European clubs are thoroughly cosmopolitan. News about new clubs, better surgeons, television programs and magazines travels fast. Role models for fame and achievement include local idols like Bulent Ersoy but also extend to the West as in the case of the fashion model Tula, who is held up as the epitome of success. There is a sense in which the dreams and materialistic aspirations of some for a fast-track to fame and fortune capture the cultural mood of post-1980s Turkey to an uncanny degree, while others include themselves in a broader search for identity and legitimacy that reaches beyond Turkey. The fact that Demet Demir was recently offered an award by the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission confirms this latter tendency. (24)

The time and space that the transgender/queer communities occupy in the urban life, and the hetero-patriarchal, nationalist violence directed to such being in these spaces and temporalities transgress local specificities. I tried to point out to the transcultural resignification of Bülent Esoy’s persona as a transgendered star in my cross reading of *Yüz Karası* and Ming Wong’s *Biji Diva* in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I will make a close reading of Kutluğ Ataman’s *Lola+Bilidikid* (1999) which is specific in that it represents the transgender identity, in its transgression of gender norms as well as national boundaries. The film was shot in Berlin, where Bülent Ersoy lived in exile for years and Wong’s video and performance was exhibited.

Berlin thus becomes a significant city to in a cross-cultural analysis of Turkish queer community, that *Lola+Bilidikid* deals with insightfully.

Transnationality and Transgenderism in Lola+Bilidikid

Kutluğ Ataman had been subjected to military violence himself, during the 1980 coup went to exile and studied cinema in Sorbonne and UCLA (Clark, 560). After shooting his first feature *Karanlık Sular*/*The Serpents Tale* in 1994 which is an experimental thriller, he started to be engaged with video installations and is well known as a transnational artist who explores the boundaries between fiction and reality through the genre of documentary. Ataman, shot *Lola+Bilidikid* in Berlin, which narrates the story of queer Turkish diasporic life composed of macho hustlers, drag queens and transgendered women on one side and traditional family relations on the other. However, the film cannot be considered as a disporic film since Ataman, before shooting the film had never been a resident in the city. Nevertheless he has claimed to be interested in the city after the rise of the racist attacks against the Turkish community in the late 1990s Germany. Following the film's release, Kutluğ Ataman received death threats from homophobes in Turkey which "partly fueled the director's decision to flee to London" (Hamm-Ehsani 2008, 371) probably for the reason he is the first to depict queer life of Turkish men so promiscuously.

Ataman's film significantly departs from diasporic/national cinemas that dealt with the issues of Turkish diasporic life. It also departs from the Turkish films that deal with the representation of male-to-female transgenderism such as *Dönersen Islık Çal* and *Gece, Melek ve Bizim Çocuklar*. Deniz Göktürk asserts that some of the diasporic films produced by Turkish migrant directors lack humor and depict immigrants as victims who cannot get into any interaction with German culture. (Göktürk 1999, 7). On the other hand, films dealing with transgenderism also lack the possibility of challenging issues of ethnicity, class and sexuality. *Lola+Bilidikid* through transgenderism and male homosexuality radically deals with the issues of history ,time, space, ethnicity and class within a transnational context that operates to destruct the binaries of global/local, male/female, German/Turkish, past/present, heterosexual/homosexual and put into question the very stereotypical assumptions on cultural or ethnic others. Moreover, film's pastiche of popular Turkish, German and Hollywood cinemas, and hybrid usage of feminine and masculine genres makes the film available for queer readings.

Wilson and Dissanayake assert that in a world of globalized capital and media, "it is no longer adequate to map the globe into binary zones of center and periphery (1996, 2). As I argued in the previous chapters; concepts and subcultural practices of resistance might be resonant in different contexts especially in an era marked by blurring boundaries of global/local binaries of geography. Moreover subcultural practices of resistance might work in resonant ways in different contexts as Çakırlar contends "one could find similar queer performative strategies of resisting, of perversely re-embodying, the dominant symbolic in different contexts" (Çakırlar 2011, 8). In this section I will try to analyze the performative resignification of heteronormative time, space and embodiment through transgendered bodies in a transnational context of the filmic medium of *Lola+Bilidikid*.

Transgenderism and transnationality intersect in the ways in which they both exceed the boundaries of nationality, gender and sexuality at the same time. Hamid Naficy contends that "it is necessary to leave home to enter the spaces of liminality and transnationality" (Naficy 2003, 208). For Naficy to be in transnationality means being in a state of "transhumanity" (208), where binaries such as self/other, female/male, inside/outside, homeland/hostland are blurred and "must continually be negotiated" (211).To be in transnationality, writes Naficy, is to be in "a contentious state of syntactic impurity, intertexuality, even imperfection" (208).

Deniz Göktürk argues that migration "creates a transnational 'third space'", in which a productive space is produced to challenge "our traditional patterns of classifying culture" and to show the inadequateness of defining culture in terms of nationality or ethnicity (Göktürk 1999, 4). This conceptualization of the transnational "third space" evokes Marjorie Garber's contention that transvestism is a "third", not in the sense that it is a third sex but rather it is the place of cultural instability where the binaries of male/female, gay/straight and sex/gender are contested (Garber 1992, 133). The interconnectedness of the two terms makes Christopher Clark's reading of *Lola+ Bilidkid* more prominent in terms of "transness", considering the film's destabilization of "cultural, sexual and historical" binarisms (Clark 2006, 557). Clark uses the term "transculturation" alongside with "transnationality" which he depicts as" emphasi[zing] the reciprocity of cultural exchange, even in the face of radical imbalances of power" (557). He notes that *Lola+Bilidikid* "is exceptional in the way it exemplifies the transnational potential of migrant and diaspora cinema" (560) as well as it recourses to another vector of "transness" which is the vector of gender and sexuality (557).

Lola+Bilidikid focuses on the coming of age/coming out story of a seventeen year old Turkish boy Murat, who in discovering his sexuality also discovers the hidden family secrets centered around his lost elder brother who is also gay, and became a drag queen called as Lola (Gandi Mukli). Murat's quest for his sexual identity turns into a quest for Lola, and as soon as he finds him, Lola disappears altogether from the scene by a brutal murder which is supposed to be committed by the neo-Nazi group composed of Walter, Rudy and Henryk who are also Murat's school mates. The murder of Lola catalyzes Murat to find out the hidden truths behind family secrets and to rebel against his hyper masculine, macho brother Osman (Hasan Ali Mete) who became the patriarch of the family after his father's death.

Lola performs within a group of Turkish male to female drag queens called the "Die Gastarbeiterinnen" whose stage act "combines gender drag with ethnic drag and shows the collusion of the two orders" (Webber 2008, 197). The group composed of Sehrazat (Celal Perk), Kalipso (Mesut Özdemir) and Lola (Gandi Mukli) parodies the stereotypical gender roles of Turkish femininity through the veil and subordination to the male gaze and pleasure on stage. The drag act, as Butler contends "which plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed" works performatively to subvert the normative assumptions on sex and gender (Butler 1999[1990], 175). Ataman also represents his transgendered characters in a way that subverts transvestite/transsexual binaries, giving place to gender variations within transgender community. For instance, while Kalipso stands in closer relation to transsexuality, Lola is content with performing drag only for the stage, while Sehrazat appears only one time in full drag off the stage.

The film opens with the image of the monument of "Siegessaule", the winged angle of victory, which signifies the Nazi era as well as the past military victories of Germany. Andrew Webber suggests that by placing the monument into a gay cruising scene the monument is "re-appropriated as a figure of aegis over the nocturnal cruising grounds around the column which has been counter-colonized by the Berlin gay scene"(Weber 2008, 199). In the shadow of the "re-appropriated" imperialist icon, we see Murat (Baki Davrak) proceed into the dark woods with hesitant and terrified eyes, where there is lightening and mystery supported by the shaky framing of the hand-held camera. This scene is cut to the night club scene in which we see "Die Gastarbeiterinnen" perform a canto. While they are on stage Lola's boyfriend Bilidikid lets a German man to perform oral sex on him in the toilet of the club. When Bilidikid does not get the amount of money he expects, he beats the man and they are all thrown out of the club.

Parks and toilets of metro stations, clubs as well as the Olympic Stadium which is full of ideological connotations of the Nazi era, hold a significant place in the film which works in ambivalent ways. While they constitute spaces of subcultural promiscuous lives as the domain of abjected spaces of cultural liminality, they also subvert the heteronormative taxonomies of space and time which are organized around the institution of family, heterosexuality and capitalist reproduction. Lola+*Bilidikid* mostly takes place in the night time, in back streets and wastelands. Toilets become the spaces for prostitution and anonymous sex and the urban space becomes the site for queer embodiment. However, the aesthetics of horror film, also underlines the threat for such inhabitance in these queer spaces and temporalities which might also be the site of brutal acts against sexual minorities.

The toilet scene in the Olympic stadium holds a significant place as it marks the films attitude against past and present as well as queer temporality and spatiality. It is important to underline that the queer community composed of Lola and her friends (as well as Murat) are constantly being harassed by the neo-Nazi group as well as the homophobes in the Turkish community. In one scene, Murat and his school mates are taken on a trip to the Olympic stadium, in which the 1936 Olympic

Games took place and which is considered as the foremost contemporary Nazi architecture in Berlin (Baer 2008, 4). While Murat is isolated in the bus, the teacher reluctantly tells the history of the Stadium, without referring to the name of Hitler or Nazism, while the neo-Nazi trio indifferently sleeps at the back of the school bus. As they arrive at the Stadium, they run up to the Olympic torch where they are followed by Murat. As Murat wants to join them he is insulted and rejected by Rudy. The voice on the speaker tells them to get off form the torch as Walter makes his way to the men's room where he is followed by Murat.

Murat stalking Walter enters a stall and after a moment of hesitation Walter enters too and closes the door. The couple starts kissing passionately, and then Murat goes down on Walter to perform oral sex on him. Nevertheless the door gets cracked by Rudy and Henryk, Walter takes sides with them as they enter and start beating Murat. In the end Walter urinates on Murat while they assault him saying: "Run to your kebabs and tell them what we did with you." "His Turkish brothers will really fuck him in the ass… He wants that too – the sow, the fag." Clark notes that this scene "not only depicts homophobic and racist violence but embeds it in a historical context; the setting of the Olympic stadium functions to posit affinities between National Socialist ideology and the ethnic and sexual hate crimes of today" (Clark 568).

The Olympic stadium's references to the Nazi era's hygienic forms of bodily impurity and perfection is disrupted by Ataman's usage of the dirty toilets painted in graffiti and the homosexual encounter which positions Walter and Murat equally and intimately in the same frame. Nicholas Baer writes that:

> "by staging a scene of homosexual intimacy between Murat and Walter – whose white skin, blond hair, and blue eyes are prototypical Aryan features – in Berlin's Olympic Stadium, Ataman breaks with Nazi racial politics, displays the performativity of Walter's macho identity, and

> resignifies – and even queers – the space of the Olympic Stadium. And indeed, since the Olympic Stadium is overdetermined not only in German history, but also in German film history, Ataman's use of this space marks a symbolic intervention in both realms. (2008,5)

Clark argues that Ataman constructs a vision of Berlin landscape which "is both familiar and distorted" (Clark 564). Mostly traveling around Kreuzberg, Ataman also indulges into the wastelands of Rummlesberg in East Berlin too shoot Lola's harassment scenes, "an area notorious for neo-Nazi activity" and thus "construct[s] a geographic allegory" (564). Also the scene in which İskender (Murat Yılmaz)—one of the macho hustlers in the queer group of Turks—and Frederich (Michael Garber) fall onto the architectural model of the city while arguing in Frederich's bedroom supports the idea of such allegory. They embrace each other, laughing, their bodies overlaying on the city miniature from East to West. Clark writes "The shot symbolically represents a queerness that transcends and transgresses boundaries of geography, ethnicity, age and class". (564)

Ataman's success in avoiding reductive binaries when recoursing to the link between the history of fascism and the hate crimes of the present becomes evident in that he tries to undermine the racist and homophobic pasts and presents of both German and Turkish communities in order to construct an enabling queer future that transgresses boundaries. Ataman, while evoking the unspoken past of the National Socialist era (thus evoking the memory of the Holocaust) through the Olympic stadium, and the harassments of racist and homophobic neo-Nazi's, he also evokes the genocidal history of the Turkish past in the figure of Frederich von Seeckt. Karin Hamm-Ehsani argues that "the film's many references and elusions to historical places, events, and figures suggest an interconnectedness of the protagonist's processes of identity construction on one hand, and past, present and future history on the other" (Hamm-Ehsani 2008, 368). In this sense Frederich von Seeckt, the German architecture who falls in love with İskender, evokes the figure of German General Hans Frederich von Seeckt, whose name is historically connected to Armenian genocide at the hands of the Turkish army during the World War 1 (376). Von Seeckt had become the Chief of Staff to the Turkish army in 1917 "when the atrocities against the Armenians had already begun…von Seeckt then actively helped the ringleaders responsible for the genocide of the Armenians" (376). The General was also "instrumental in the formation of the SS units in the 1920s and the reemergence of the Wehrmacht in the 1930s" when he returned to Germany (376).

Thus Ataman, both evokes the racist pasts of the two nations, while reconciling the future through queer love, crossing boundaries of ethnicity, class, sexuality and gender at the same time in the figure of von Seeckt. However this construction of queer future is not a "naïve" utopian vision as Clark calls it, rather Ataman also acknowledges the coexistence of the danger of the alternative spaces and temporalities for the ethnic and sexual minorities who are "denied access to Berlin's 'neue Mitte'" (Clark 564). Murat succumbing to his brother Osman's oppressions that he should have sex with a woman "to become a man", escapes from home and starts waiting for Lola in Hella's little coffee shop where he meets Bilidikid. Bilidikid incites Murat to prostitution in the subterranean toilet. Clark claims that this scene is the closest one to documentary realism in the film, since this men's room at Hermanplatz "was long known as a site for anonymous sex, both commercial and 'non-profit'" (Clark 569). The man's room again with its graffiti walls, shelters sex work outside state control as well as anonymous sex outside the confines of heterosexual sexuality. As a meeting point of gay men from diverse ethnicities and classes, the man's room becomes the site of a subversive sexual practice against the hygienic, heteronormative reproductive economies within family institution and the private sphere.

The names in the film hold a significant place referring to Hollywood and German cinemas, as well as to myths and mythological figures. Lola's performance as Webber suggests, is a reworking of the Lola figures in von Sternberg's *The Blue Angel* or Fassbinder's *Lola,* which are associated with the tradition of female masquerade (Webber 2008, 196). Von Sternberg's Lola was performed by Marlene Dietrich who is considered as one of the camp icons of cinema, with her androgynous gender performance. Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter 2, Dietrich had performances of cross-dressing, which attaches Ataman's Lola to her drag performance through camp performativity.

Jack Babuscio asserts that what makes von Sternberg's films camp, is "the perception of an underlying emotional autobiography—a disguise of self obsessions by means of the artificial" (Babuscio 1999, 130). The camp characteristics of both von Sternberg's and Fassbinder's of Lola figures—who gain a measure of power and agency of their lives within the confines of their patriarchal commodification—is performatively camped to resignify the socially attested roles of the feminine by challenging gender and ethnic norms, as well as challenging the spectatorship theories that inscribed the heterosexual formula of the female object/male gaze binarisms by Ataman's Lola (Webber 196). Lola in double drag of both femininity and ethnicity performs for the gaze of the diegetic and extra diegetic queer audience and the straight audience alike. Her relation to Bilidikid, who is the epitome of hetero-patriarchal vulgar masculinity of Western genre, operates to set an incongruity that challenges the relation between gender and sexuality. Webber argues:

> The cabaret film meets the Western, and, thus, two gendered models of spectacular performance, the one female, enclosed and static, the other male, open and dynamic, are set against each other. And out of this engagement, the binary logic of gender difference upon which they rely is put into question. While cabaret can feature in Westerns as a distraction for the male gaze within and upon the films, offering a hyperbolically feminized supplement to the hyperbolically homosocial world of the genre, feminine frills for masculine thrills, here a queered version of that gender model is established. (2008, 196)

Sehrazat and Kalipso also resignify the mythological constructions of femininity and beauty both Western and Eastern epitomes of beauty. The former takes her name from the heroine of the Persian myth of *One thousand and One nights* and the latter takes her name form the Greek mythology, the nymph Calypso who in Homer's *Odyssey*, keeps Odysseus hostage. Calypso's etymologic meaning comes from "kalypto" in Greek meaning "to cover", "to conceal", "to hide" which also refers to the practice of sexual disguise in female drag. Through transgendered embodiment, also the myth of essential gender and beauty are contested and destabilized with these references in Ataman's film.

In one scene, Kalipso is leaving her apartment in the Turkish block in Kreuzberg (the neighborhood populated mostly by Turks) where she lived disguising her transgender identity to avoid transphobic violence and discrimination. Lola and Sehrazat, who are waiting for Kalipso to come down, are shocked to see her as she appears on the window in full female drag. As Kalipso says referring to herself: "This woman leaves the stage this way" Sehrazad answers: "This woman is going get us killed in here". Kalipso bumps into one of her neighbors on the stairs who cannot recognize her in female drag. The neighbor woman misinterprets her gender identity and thinks that Kalipso had disguised as a man while she was female. As a result she damns her and spits on her. Kalipso claims that she had to disguise as a man in order to keep her "virginity, pride, honor, amour proper and reputation". She aligns and performs a set of clichés of femininity that are constantly articulated in Yeşilçam films, and subverts the idea of gender norms considered as innate through camp theatricality. This scene might also be read to camp a set of Yeşilçam discourses on male disguise (as argued in Chapter 3) which provides women to manage their sexuality in the patriarchal order of Turkish culture.

In an interview Kutluğ Ataman contends that identity is an artifact which can be manipulated, played with, amplified with or masked, if one is aware of its artificiality (Honigman&Ataman, 82). Webber argues that in concord with the director's perception of identity, *Lola+Bilidikid* "resignifies" identity through the mode of melodrama. As I argue this mode of melodrama is inspired as a pastiche of American, German as well as Turkish of melodramatic modality. Yeşilçam melodramas and the figure of Türkan Şoray become prominent in the scene which Sehrazat tells Murat that Lola was raped by Osman. She tells him that Lola, who could not endure this situation anymore, one day, came out of the closet by wearing a wig in front of her patriarchal family. Sehrazat thinks Lola has behaved in this way because of "the stupidity of adolescence and the Türkan Şoray spirit in all of us". This reference to the most famous actress of Yeşilçam, Türkan Şoray (see Chapter 3) reveals the camp identification of queer subjects with mainstream female actresses and filmic genres. Sehrazat is actually referring to the famous discourse of Yeşilçam, in which "if a female protagonist is raped, she will claim that her assailant has taken her body but 'never her soul'" (Rogoff 11) which is also the name of Ataman's video installation "Never my Soul". Sehrazat's contention articulates how the melodramatic star is artificially incorporated by the queer subject as a means to come out, to take action, to turn the position of the victim upside down. Camp theatricality works to put vulnerability into transformative energy.

The pastiche of melodrama—which is considered as a feminine genre (see Chapter 2)—is put to transnational function in the film. The genre is destabilized through transnationality and hybridization of other popular genres. Clark suggests that “Ataman effectively echoes the content of the film—queer sexualities and transcultured identities—at the level of the genre, queerly challenging the audience’s expectations of genre conformity” (Clark 563). Thus the drag performances and transgender embodiment in *Lola+Bilikid* opens up an ambivalent space of identification and resignification through camp performativity. Webber contends that “Ataman’s project is to resignify the generic specifications of melodrama, to transfer the women’s film into a form where the women who wear wigs may or may not be biologically female, where gender is open to more mobile forms of reconstruction”(Weber 198).

In Ataman’s film identity is revealed as the performative phenomenon, which is not static rather it is dynamic. The film underlines performativity both as gender performativity via drag which “reveals [gender’s] imitative structure”, and speech acts which produce normative effects which also have the possibility resignification. Drag suggesta an openness to resignification and recontextualization” (Butler, 1999[1990], 177).The film represents gender and sexuality in its variety, and works as a critique of the normative construction of gender identity while challenging these set of norms through drag and same-sex activities. As Clark contends, Lola, Bili and Murat represent different facets of homosexual embodiment. Bili, represents the traditional view of male sexuality intrinsic to Ottoman culture as discussed in the first chapter. He does not consider himself as gay unless he is the one who is the penetrator, the sexually active party. He says to Lola “We cannot live like these German fags” and insists that Lola should have a sex-change operation so that they can get married back in Turkey, where they can open a bar at the coast and make big wedding. Bili is highly homophobic as he says to Lola that he cannot even see his friends because of his relationship with Lola and asks her to have the operation.

Lola on the other hand, refers to herself mostly in the feminine however she drags only for her stage performances. Her gender performance is linked to the Ottoman tradition of *köçek* and *zenne* (see Chapter 1), and she considers the operation only because Bili forces to do her so. However, Lola is well aware of the impossible happiness of the (hetero) normative future fantasy of Bili. In one scene, Lola narrates this fantasy of Bili in the form of a fairy tale in order to tell him that this future perception cannot end in the “and they lived happily ever after” formulation since Lola will not be the man that Bili had fallen in love if they comply to the heterosexual norms.

Through the end of the film, Murat’s quest for Lola turns into a self-exploration. He does not stand in either side of these poles represented by Lola or Bili, rather his homosexuality is a more egalitarian modern model. However it is important to note that, the film does not indulge into the reductive binarisms of Western/traditional, i.e., progressive/outdated modes of queer identities, rather it points to their embeddedness. What is criticized in the film is the hetero-patriarchal, misogynistic, homophobic construction of masculinity in either side of the German and Turkish/Turkish queer communities. After all İskender, seeming as macho and homophobic as Bili (whose vulgar behavior signifies his homophobia) admits that he is in love with Frederich which in return enables a queer future that does not exclude traditional masculinity rather offers a more reconciliatory performance of masculinity for Iskender.

Lola after her break up with Bili, walks in the wasteland alone as the queer basher neo-Nazi's trap her. She runs and escapes them by throwing herself in front of a taxi however the scene is cut here, disallowing us to see what happens afterwards. The next morning, we see her dead body is thrown into the river Spree, where a child bends down and asks: "Are you a mermaid?" The figure of the mermaid is significant in that it refers to the transgender identity as well as the history of transgender political activism in Turkey. After the violent police raids (in collaboration with householders and nationalist youth in the neighborhood) that took place in Ülker Sokak in 1996 against transgendered sex workers, transgendered activists had formed an organization called *Deniz Kızları* (Mermaids) which did not last long (Selek 2007[2001], 257). Through this information, one could read this scene as a connotation of violent transphobic state violence in collaboration with nationalist masculine violence directed at transgendered subjects in Turkey.

Bili, assuming the neo-Nazi group has killed Lola, seeks for revenge and wants Murat to disguise as Lola in order to trick the group. This time, Murat instead of the victimized Lola, runs for trapping the neo-Nazi's in Lola's disguise. Bili castrates Rudy who is jammed in a hole while chasing Murat—an act he once told Lola that he would perform on her if she did not have the operation. In the end of the scene, Murat helps Walter to escape from Bili's vengeance whereas Bili kills the other two while he is also shot to death. Murat, resignifies Lola's experience of being the victimized party of the Turkish family and the neo-Nazi queerphobia by rescuing Walter from Bili and they hide in the men's room. The significant place of anonymous sex now becomes the shelter for the two to escape death and hate. Nicholas Baer maintains that "[in] contrast to the scene at the Olympic Stadium (as well as the film's numerous scenes in bathroom stalls in which German men perform oral sex on Turkish-German hustlers), this latter scene lacks a marked vertical hierarchization between the German and Turkish-German characters” (Baer 8).

In this scene Murat learns the fact that Osman had killed Lola. In Lola’s disguise and with the same wig that Lola revealed herself to her family, Murat storms into the kitchen to confront Osman. Their mother Fatma hears their quarrel and learns that Osman killed Lola. She slaps him in the face and rushes to the street, throwing her scarf on the ground. Murat runs after Fatma, grabs the scarf on the floor and embraces her. The screen fades out, in the form of a classical melodrama where the conflict seems to be resolved in the form of a Western melodramatic, as well as diasporic progress narrative which signifies the overthrowing of the patriarchal oppression on Muslim women by removing the scarf. However this would be a reductive ending and a conflicting discourse considering Ataman’s view of identity. In order to escape this reductive logic of Western progress narrative, Clark suggests that the “barely audible, that is almost subliminal” voice which says “Nein”, as Fatma throws the scarf, can be interpreted as “*the voice of the film itself*, not collapsible to directorial intent yet consistent with the film’s critical trajectory, a rejection of either/or logic that would celebrate the abandonment of tradition as the path to liberation” (Clark 2006, 570).

Moreover, the film does not end by this transformative performance of Murat which resignifies the victimized melancholic drag queen and liberates the mother from masculine oppression, rather the film opens up to a more enabling future as we hear Kalipso’s voice in the faded screen saying: “Farewell Berlin. Go to hell!” The screen fades into a taxi cab, where Sehrazat and Kalipso sitting at the back seat, flirt with the Turkish taxi driver. Sehrazat, in contrast to Kalipso who have appeared in full female drag throughout the film, is in drag for the first time in the day time without fear. The taxi driver, who seems to perform a traditional masculinity, is not—in contrast to Osman who was also a cab driver–queerphobic and frankly compliments Sehrazat for being a beautiful lady. The cab drives through the Siegessaule, this time in the day light, framing the queered space of Berlin, as well as the ethnic and sexual identities of the characters. Hamm-Ehsani suggests that "Victory column reinforces the sense of a positive outlook into a future when social boundaries and divisions that were constructed by negative notions of "otherness" and strangeness can finally be overcome" (375).

The film in its transness challenges and subverts a set of binarisms which enables "to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space" (Halberstam 2005, 2). Halberstam contends that the subcultural others "namely, ravers, club kids, HIV-positive barebackers, rent boys, sex workers, homeless people, drug dealers and the unemployed", (some of them which are represented in the film,) "who live (deliberately, accidentally, or of necessity) during the hours when others sleep and in the spaces (physical, metaphysical, and economic) that others have abandoned, and in terms of the ways they might work in the domains that other people assign to privacy and family" queer the heteronormative and capitalist production of time and space (10). And as such these spaces and temporality "are also limned by risks they are willing to take", as Lola did (10).

If queer space and time meant danger and death for Lola, it means a future of possibility, intimacy and resignification for Sehrazad, Kalipso, İskender,Frederich, Walter Murat. At the end of the film, Sehrazad and Kalipso remain as the happy queer couple, whom in their friendship and critical distance to hetero-patriarchal embodiment of macho masculinity; propose a different view of the Victory monument and the future. "The transgender body" writes Halberstam, "functions in relation to time and space as a rich site for fantasies of futurity and anachronism" as in the film traditional and modern forms of embodiment, rather than standing in dichotomic bifurcation, stand in relation to each other concurrently.

Ataman's film, produced within the forms of conventional mainstream cinema, gives mainstream audience an "access to transgender gaze" which cannot live in "heteronormative time" (Halberstam 2005). Underscoring nationalist, homophobic violence at work in both German and Turkish-German communities, the film evokes a range of history of violence on both sides, working transnationally to deal with issues of gender, ethnicity and class. I contend that transgender embodiment and transgender gaze which is accessed by the mainstream audience through Ataman's film, ends with Foucault's understanding of "friendship as a way of life", which he defines to be the threatening force of homosexuality rather than the sexual act itself. Foucault suggests that this model of relationality which is a form of relationship and a way of life that can "be shared among individuals of different age, status and social activity" outside heteronormative institutions, would subvert heteronormative impositions (Foucault 1980, 137-138). Lola and Bilidikid disappear in *Lola+Bilikid* while İskender, Frederich, Walter, Murat, Kalipso and Sehrazat survive in order to enable a future that promises "friendship as a way of life".

Ataman's Lola+Bilidikid is an example of camp production which pastiches, mocks, surfaces and resignifies the construction of normative institutions. Transgender embodiment becomes the place of possibility that disrupts the normative categories of sex/gender and sexuality as well as class, ethnicity, age and nationality. Time and space are queered via transgender embodiment and same sex-love, and the film opens up to a future of possibility while underscoring the reality of heteronormative life that victimizes transgendered subjects. The transnational content of Ataman's film, shows the possible circulation of queer strategies of resistance vis-à-vis images which I tried to apply to local examples.Camp performativity works to challenge the spectatorhip practices as well as production of images within mainstream cinema to queer the mass-culture from within. The proliferation of films on trnagender embodiment and global camp production shows that the heteronormativity of mass culture is being pierced from within.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In this study I tried to explore through a socio-historical reading transgender phenomena in cinema in Turkey as well as the shifting gender and sexuality paradigms of Turkish society with the repression and emergence of transgender visibility. Many people whom I told my thesis subject were surprised and asked if there were any representation of transgendered bodies in cinema in Turkey. As this study has shown, even Yeşilçam had dealt with the issue of gender parody. Cross-dressing and the figure of "mannish woman" have been popular issues in cinema. As I elaborated in Chapter 1, I used the term transgender, referring to any representation of anti-normative gender practices that blurs the boundaries of normative, gendered subjectivity. Thus cross-dressing, one of the oldest forms of entertainment became prominent in the first two chapters.

Performance and performativity have been crucial within regarding to mainstream representations of transgender phenomena throughout this study. Sedgwick and Parker argue that deliberate performances pertaining to the stage have been expelled from Austin's theory of performativity of speech acts for they are "hollow or void", constituting the "etiolations" of language (Parker and Sedgwick 1995, 3). As they indicate, Derrida has argued against this exclusion by pointing out to the common structure of both worldly and theatrical performatives which is "a generalized iterability, a pervasive theatricality" (4). What is more striking and neglected by both Austin and Derrida is however, the polymorphous meaning of etiology which is attributed to the stage utterances. "The excluded theatrical is hereby linked with the perverted, the artificial, the unnatural, the abnormal, the decadent, the effete, the diseased" (5). Thus, this definition of the "etiology of the performative" as the theatrical as Parker and Sedgwick argue, is linked to the figure of the Gay 1890s of Oscar Wilde, through which they point out to the euphemism's linkage to what is camp, queer or perverted. This intrinsically perverse aspect of performance and performativity whether practiced by queer spectatorship or authorship has been the crucial theoretical quest in analyzing transgender images in this study.

In the second chapter, I gave an account of the cross-cultural characteristics of cross-dressing practices and their relation to performance. Due to the prohibitions on women's appearance on stage in the Ottoman culture in the sixteenth century, men cross-dressed to act female parts. Cross-dressing practices were often met with social controversy from the puritans in the society indicating the "category crisis" that the gender ambivalence caused in these cultures. Also in Ottoman culture the figure of *köçek* boys was a matter of sexual attraction. Starting with the *Tanzimat* reforms, which were attempts to modernize the empire, homoeroticism and gender ambiguity which had been intrinsic to Ottoman culture were repressed in the subconscious of the new nation. However, the popularity of cross-dressing practices in Yeşilçam starting from 1960s indicates that the repressed always returns, however in different forms. In the third chapter I tried to give an account of the ways in which main-stream representations of cross-dressing was debated in feminist and queer film criticism. Later, I tried to perform a camp reading of *Fıstık Gibi Maşallah, Şoför Nebahat* and *Erkek Fatma* in their relation to conventional genres of comedy and melodrama. My analysis showed that cross-dressing and gender bender figures blurred the normative function of these filmic genres. Using camp as a performative reading strategy, I pointed out to the queer erotics and identifications that these filmic texts and their reception might enable. Gender parody and melancholia became critical tools for interpreting the ways in which the incongruity and loss of sexual object choices might offer possibilities to resignify the heteronormative intent in the production of such images.

1970s were a period of gender crisis and cultural instability. Within such a cultural milieu, the themes addressing female spectators also shifted. Yeşilçam became the context in which masculine gender crisis was surfaced and negotiated. Also discourses on sexuality and the once repressed gender identifications proliferated in the tabloid press as well as in Yeşilçam cinema. *Arabesk* as a musical and filmic genre emerged and marked the late 1970s. Musical films starring *arabesk* singers mainly focused on the distress of masculinity in an urbanized, alienated world. In the light of these arguments about the period, in Chapter 4, I have tried to read transgender embodiment in *Köçek* and *Yüz Karası* through the performatives of shame which I consider to be the mutual critical/conceptual tool for both films. The meta discourse of these films assigns the space of cultural abjection for the transgendered subjects. Nevertheless in Köçek, gender ambiguity of the protagonist conduces ambivalent readings within the text, seducing homoerotic responses which challenge the heteronormative management of intersexuality.

Taking Sedgwick's argument for shame as the constitutive affect of queer identity, I have tried to discuss the ways in which shame could be performatively put into transformative energy in *Yüz Karası*. For this purpose I performed a reading of Ming Wong's camp video work, which resignfies Bülent Ersoy's shamed image through Turkish queer community's heterogeneous identification with her image in a transnational context. Transnational resignification of transgendered images becomes an important task for this study since through concepts and strategies of queer spectatorship; I aimed to point to the blurring binaries of the global and the local as well.

Taking the Western concept of "camp" and applying it as a reading strategy to the local representations of transgender embodiment, I arrived at a point in which queer strategies and imagery circulate in a transnational context. In Chapter 5, first, I have discussed the emergence of the LGBT politics and transgender visibility in its relation to urban space in the post coup d'état period of the 1990s. Later I performed a reading of Kutluğ Ataman's *Lola+Bilidikid* which draws on the relation of transgender embodiment and urban life in a transnational context. I consider *Lola* as an example of queer authorship, in which the filmic medium becomes the vehicle to queer the mainstream from within. *Lola* camps the conventional genre expectations and challenges a set of binaries concerning gender, class, ethnicity and age through transgender and queer embodiment. The film, performatively subverts the normative conceptions of time and space, while also blurring the boundaries between national/transnational cinemas.

In this study I tried to argue that even heterocentrist texts can be queerly experienced by spectators inhabiting different identity positions and relationality vis-à-vis transgender imagery. In doing so, my aim was to show how the local and the global could merge into each other when speaking on strategies of resistant identifications with popular culture. Thus I used camp as a performative strategy in resignfying the heterocentrist images to reappropriate them for the queer gaze. Ming Wong's camp performance of the local Diva, and Ataman's transnational *Lola* which camps popular cinemas of both the local and the global, shows how transgender/queer embodiment might be thought in much more transgressive ways that even exceeds the locality of such being. Considering this relation of camp and transgenderism the future is open to subversive reclamations of the mainstream cinema that would approach queer and straight spectators, which will challenge normative assumptions on sex/gender and sexuality.

APPENDICES

A: Filmography

Ağır Roman. Dir. Mustafa Altıoklar. Perf. Okan Bayülgen, Müjde Ar, Mustafa Uğurlu, Savaş Dinçel, Küçük İskender. Ses, Özen, Belge; 1996. Film.

Belalı Torun. Dir. Memduh Ün. Perf. Fatma Girik, Ayhan Işık, Hulusi Kentmen, Bedia Muvahhit. Uğur, 1962. Film.

Biji Diva. Dirs. Ming Wong, Olgu Demir. 2011. Video Clip.

Calamity Jane. Dir. David Butler. Perf. Doris Day, Howard Keel. Warner Bros, 1953. Film

Dönersen Islık Çal. Dir. Orhan Oğuz. Perf. Mevlüt Demiryay, Fikret Kuşkan, Derya Alabora, Menderes Samancılar. Uğur,1992. Film.

Erkek Fatma. Dir. Ülkü Erakalın. Perf. Fatma Girik, Ahmet Uz, Ayfer Feray, Avni Dilligil. Pesen, 1969. Film.

Erkek Fatma Evleniyor. Dir. Abdurrahman Palay. Perf. Abdurrahman Palay, Neriman Köksal. Acar, 1963. Film.

Female Trouble. Dir. John Waters. Perf. Divine, David Lochary ,Mary Vivian Pearce. Dreamland, 1974. Film.

Fıstık Gibi Maşallah. Dir. Hulki Saner. Perf. Sadri Alışık, İzzet Günay, Türkan Şoray, Vahi Öz, Mualla Süer. Erman, 1964. Film.

Fosforlu Cevriye. Dir. Aydın Arakon. Perf. Neriman Köksal, Orhan Günşıray. Acar, 1959. Film.

Fosforlu Oyuna Gelmez. Dir. Aydın Arakon. Perf. Neriman Köksal, Fatma Girik, Orhan Günşıray. Acar, 1962. Film.

Gece, Melek ve Bizim Çocuklar. Dir. Atıf Yılmaz. Perf. Derya Arbaş, Deniz Türkali, Uzay Heparı, Deniz Atamtürk. Yeşilçam, 1993. Film.

Haremde Dört Kadın. Dir. Halit Refiğ. Perf. Cüneyt Arkın, Tanju Gürsu, Nilüfer Aydan, Pervin Par. Birsel, 1965. Film.

İki Gemi Yan Yana. Dir. Atıf Yılmaz. Perf. Orhan Günşıray, Filiz Akın, Suzan Avcı. Ören, 1963.

Kadın Hamlet/İntikam Meleği. Dir. Metin Erksan. Perf. Farma Girik, Sevda Ferda, Reaha Yurdakul, Ahmet Sezerel. Uğur, 1976. Film.

Köçek. Dir. Nejat Saydam. Perf. Müjde Ar, Mahmut Hekimoğlu, İlhan Daner, Nisa Serezli. Acar, 1975. Film.

Lola. Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Barbara Suhowa, Arwin Mueller Stahl, Mario Adorf. Rialto, Trio, Westdeutscher Redfunk;1981. Film.

Lola+Bilidikid. Dir. Kutluğ Ataman. Perf. Gandi Mukli, Baki Davrak, Erdal Yıldız, Inge Keller, Michael Gerber, Murat Yılmaz, Hasan Ali Mete, Hakan Tandoğan, Cihangir Gümüştürkmen, Celal Perk. Boje Buck, West Deutscher Rundfunk, Zero; 1999. Film.

Morocco. Dir. Josef von Strenberg. Perf. Marlene Dietrich, Gary Cooper. Paramount, 1930.

Paris is Burning. Dir. Jennie Livingston. Perf. Carmen and Brooke, André Christian, Dorian Carey. Mirimax, Offwhite Productions, Prestige; 1990. Film.

Pink Flamingos. Dir. John Waters. Perf. Divine, David Lochary, Mary Vivian Pearce. Dreamland, 1972. Film.

Queen Christina. Dir. Rouben Mamoulian. Perf. Greta Garbo, John Gilbert. MGM, 1933. Film.

Sylvia Scarlett. Dir. George Cukor. Perf. Katherine Hepburn, Cary Grant. RKO Radio, 1935. Film.

Şabaniye. Dir. Kartal Tibet. Perf. Kemal Sunal, Adile Naşit, Erdal Özyağcılar, Çidem Tunç, Aliye Rona. Film.

Some Like Ih Hot. Dir.Billy Wilder. Perf. Tony Curtis, Jack Lemmon, Marlyn Monroe. Ashton Productions, The Mirisch Corporation;1959. Film.

Şoför Nebahat. Dir. Metin Erksan. Perf. Sezer Sezin, Kenan Pars, Sami Hazinses. Duru, 1959-1960. Film.

Şoför Nebahat ve Kızı. Dir. Süreyya Duru. Perf. Sezer Sezin, Filiz Akın, Cüneyt Arkın, Kenan Pars. Acar, 1964. Film.

Şöhretin Sonu/Yüz Karası. Dir. Orhan Aksoy. Perf. Bülent Ersoy, Serpil Çakmaklı, Ekrem Bora, Yusuf Sezgin. Erler, 1981.VHS

The Blue Angel. Dir. Josef von Sternberg. Perf. Marlene Dietrich, Emil Jannings. UFA, 1930. Film.

Tootsie. Dir. Sydney Pollack. Perf. Dustin Hoffman, Jessica Lange, Terri Garre. Columbia, Mirage, Punch; 1982. Film.

Victor/Victoria. Dir.Blake Edwards. Perf. Julie Andrews, James Garner, Robert Preston. Artista, Blake Edwards, Lardbroke; 1982. Film.

B: Turkish Texts

P.46-47 Fikri/ye: Bu elbiselerle kendimi çıplak hissediyorum. Sanki herkes bana bakıyormuş gibi geliyor.

Naci/ye: Hadi yürü ulan. O senin hüsnü kuruntun. Herkes sana bakıyormuş. Ulan bu bacaklarla sana kim bakar be?

P.48 Fikri/ye: Ben nişanlandım.

Naci/ye: Kim bu talihli kız?

Fikri/ye: Ben […] Nuri bana evlenme teklif etti. Düğünümüzü de Haziran'da yapmayı düşünüyoruz.

Naci/ye: Saçmalama be. Sen Nuri'yle nasıl evlenirsin?

Fikri/ye: Niye olmasın? Nuri kaç defa evlenmiş. Ben de evlenirim.

Naci/ye: Sen hastasın galiba, git de yatağına yat.

Fikri/ye: Yalnız bir hususta anlaşamadık. O balayını İstanbul'da geçirmek istedi. Ben de Abant'ta ısrar ettim tabi. Ama gene de kabul etti.

Naci/ye: Sen çıldırmışsın be. Böyle şey olur mu ulan?

Fikri/ye: Evlenmemize bir tek şey mani olabilir…

Naci/ye: Ha şunu bileydin.

Fikri/ye: Annesi… Hain kaynana… Ama pek de ümitsiz değilim. Benden iyi gelin mi bulacak? Sigarayı bırakmayı da vaad ettim kör olasıcıya.

Naci/ye: Sen aklını mı kaçırdın ulan? Başına iş açarsın iş. Bu melekette kanun var, nizam var.

Fikri/ye: Amaan! Onu da düşündüm. Nikâhtan sonra söylerim, boşanırız. Ben de çatır çatır nafakamı alırım.

P.54 Gülten: Gidiyorum. Ben de gidiyorum. Yok, sigara içme, yok içki içme, yok erkeklere bakma. Orkestrandan da senden baktım. Gidiyorum.

P.55 Horoz Nuri: O kadar kusur kadı kızında da olur.

P. 67 Oh, erkek olmak ne güzel şeymiş! Pantolon giyince insanın kendine olan güveni artıyor. Tabancalı kadınları değil, erkekleri bile dövmek istiyor. Geceleri kimse size dönüp bakmıyor, arkasından takip edip laf atmıyor. "Gece yarısı niçin sokakta dolaşıyor?" demiyor. Hâsılı, erkeklik ne tatlı şeymiş. Keşke erkek olarak dünyaya gelseydim.

P. 82 Gulyabani: Dağlarda olur… Çok vahşidir. Tanımadığı adama derhal saldırır… Bilhassa turistlere musallattır. Fakat silahtan çok korkar. Dişisi erkeği olmaz. Hünsadırlar. Ayı gibi armudu çok severler.

P.85 Adnan: Bana sen gol atabilir misin be? Erkek bozuntusu?

Caniko: Senin gibi kovaları çok delik deşik etmişizdir. Kaleci bozuntusu

Caniko: Desene namuslu ailenin stadyumundaki maç yarım kaldı ha?

P.86 Caniko: Şu surata bak be…Erkekten çok kıza benziyor. Tuh bana be.

Kendi kendimi haşat edicem be. Tuh sana be Caniko.

P.88 Doctor: Senelerce erkeklikle kadınlık arası çırpınmış durmuş zavallı…Onu

bu azaptan kurtarıp normal yaşantısına döndürmemiz bir insanlık borcudur bizim için.

P. 94 Kadın mı erkek mi belli olmayan Bülent Ersoy'u bu haliyle geldiği takdirde önümüzdeki fuara kesinlikle sokmam […]Bülent Ersoy'u izlerken ben bile bir tuhaf oluyorum[…]Atatürk'ün 100. Doğum yıldönümüne rastlayan 50.fuar'da Bülent Ersoy benzeri bir sanatçı görmek istemiyorum. Bu haliyle ne Bülent Ersoy'u, ne de ona benzemek isteyenleri İzmir'e sokmam. Tercihini yapsın, bir an once ya tam anlamıyla kadın olsun ya da erkek olsun, gelsin fuarda çalışsın.

P. 103 Kimimiz köşelerde

Kimimiz dillerde

Çekeriz bu derdi hebirmiz bir yerde

Sen de feryad ederdin düşsen böyle bir derde

Felek yazarken kaderimi melekler ağlamış göklerde

Bendeki bu yara mahşer yarası

Kaderime diyorlar yüz karası.

P.104 Bir elimde cımbız bir elimde ayna umurumda mı ki bu dünya?

Hergün başka bir alemde, her gün başka bir gönülde

Günümü gün ediyorum sefam olsun oh oh

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abisel, Nilgün. *Türk Sineması Üzerine Yazılar*. Ankara: İmge, 1994.

Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion.* Edinburgh UP, 2004.

Andrews, Walter G., Kalpaklı, Mehmet. *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society*. Durham & London: Duke UP, 2005.

Arslan, Savaş. *Cinema in Turkey: A New Critical History.* New York: Oxford, 2011.

---. "Türk Tapon Filmlerini Oyun Olarak Okuma Denemesi." *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler*. Ed. Deniz Derman. İstanbul: Bağlam, 2001. 185-203

Arslan, Umut Tümay. *Bu Kâbuslar Neden Cemil?: Yeşilçam'da Erkeklik ve Mazlumluk.* İstanbul: Metis, 2005.

---. *Mazi Kabrinin Hortlakları: Türklük Melankoli ve Sinema*. İstanbul: Metis, 2010.

Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words. Oxford & New York: Oxford, 1975.*

Babuscio, Jack. "The Cinema of Camp (aka Camp and the Gay Sensibility.)" *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*. Ed. Fabio Cleto. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999.88-109

Baer, Nicholas. "Points of Entanglement: The Overdetermination of German space and Identity in *Lola+Bilidikid* and *Walk on Water*." *Transit* 4/1 (2008):1-26.

Booth, Mark. " 'Campe-toi!': On the Origins and Definitions of Camp." *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*. Ed. Fabio Cleto. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999. 88-109

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, London: Routledge, 1999 [1990].

---. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex".* New York & London: Routledge, 1993.

---. "Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexualty." *Transgender Studies Reader*. Eds. Susan Stryker, and Stephen Whittle, *The.* New York & London: Routledge, 2006.

---. "Melancholy Gender-Refused Identification" *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*.5/2 (1995): 165-180

Büker, Seçil., Uluyağcı, Canan. *Yeşilçam'da Bir Sultan*. İstanbul: Afa, 1993

Bornstein, Kate. *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us.* New York: Vintage, Books, 1995.

Carver, Terrell. “Sex, Gender and Heteronormativity: Seeing ‘Some Like It Hot’ as a Heterosexual Dystopia.” *Contemporary Political Theory*, 8/2 (2009): 125-151

Chanter, Tina. The P*icture of Abjection Film. Fetish and the Nature of Difference.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008.

Clark, Christopher. “Transculturation, *Transe*Sexuality, and Turkish Germany: Kutluğ Ataman’s *Lola und Bilidikid*” *German Life and Letters* 59/4 (2006): 555-572.

Cleto, Fabio. “Flaunting the Closet: Introduction.” *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*. Ed. Fabio Cleto. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999. 88-109

Crimp, Douglas. “Mario Montez, For Shame.” *Gay Shame*. Eds. David M. Halperin & Valerie Traub. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009. 63-76

Cowie, Elizabeth. “Images of women and Filmic Identification.” *Gender & Media.* Eds. Nevena Dakovic, Deniz Derman, Karen Ross. Ankara: Med-Campus Project # A126 Publications Mediation, 1996. 35-60

Çakırlar, Cüneyt. “Queer Art of Parallaxed Document: The visual discourse of docudrag in Kutluğ Ataman’s *Never My Soul*!” *Screen.* 52/3(2011): 358-375

---. “Queer Art of Sodomitical Sabotage, Queer Ethics of Surfaces: Embodying Militarism and Masculinity in Erinç Seymen’s Portrait of a Pasha.” *Nowiswere: Contemporary Art Magazine*.5 (2009): 38-43 (Retrieved from http://www.nowiswere.com/issue-five).

Dean, Tim. *Beyond Sexuality*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Doane, Mary Ann.“Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator.” *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*. Ed. Amelia Jones. London & New York: Routlage, 2005. 60-71

---. “Pathos and Pathology: The Cinema of Todd Haynes.” *Camera Obscura*. 19/3 (2004): 1- 21

Doty, Alexander. *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture,* Minneapolis & London: Universty of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Dönmez-Colin, Gönül. *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging*. London: Reaktion, 2008.

---. *Cinemas of the Other: A Personal Journey With Film- Markers From The Middle East and Central Asia*. Bristol: Intellect, 2006.

Dyer, Richard. “It’s Being So Camp as Kepps Us Going.” *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*. Ed. Fabio Cleto. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999. 88-109

Elsaesser, Thomas. “Tales of Sound and Fury.” Film Genre Reader II. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. University of Texas Press, 1995. 350-358

Erdoğan, Nezih. “Narratives of resistance: National Identity and Ambivalence in the Turkish Melodrama Between 1965 and 1975.” *Screen,* 39/3 (1998): 259-271

---. “Mute Bodies, “Disembodied Voices: Notes on Sound and in Turkish Popular Cinema.” *Screen,* 43/3 (2002):233-249

Erdoğan, Sema Nilgün. *Sexual Life in Ottoman Society*. İstanbul: Dönence, 2007.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality V. I.* Great Britain: Penguin, 1981.

---. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage, 1979.

Garber, Marjorie. *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Gledhill, Christine. “Signs of Melodrama.” *Stardom: Industry of Desire*. Ed. Christine Gledhill. London in New York: Routledge, 207-232

Günaydın, Serhat. “Double- Faced Women in Turkish Melodrama and the Split Structure of the Political, Economic and Social System in Turkey.” .” *Gender & Media*. Eds. Nevena Dakovic, Deniz Derman, Karen Ross. Ankara: Med-Campus Project # A126 Publications Mediation, 1996. 78-93

Gürata, Ahmet. Translating Modernity: Remakes in Turkish Cinema.” *Asian Cinemas: A Reader and guide*. Eds. Dimitris Eleftheriotis, Gary Needham. Hawai: University of Hawai Press, 2006. 242-254

---. *Woman as Symptom of Man: A Study of Kocek.* www.art.bilkent.edu.tr/studies/ahmet1.html (accessed in20.05.2011)

Gürbilek, Nurdan. *Vitrinde Yaşamak: 1980'lerin Kültürel İklimi.* İstanbul: Metis, 2009.

Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity*. Durham & London: Duke University, 1998.

---. *In a Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York & London: New UP, 2005.

Hamm-Ehsani, Karin. “Intersections: Issues of National, Ethnic and Sexual Identity in Kutluğ Ataman's Berlin Film *Lola und Bilidikid*.” *Seminar* 44/3 (2008): 366-381

Harper, Catherine. *Intersex*. Oxford & New York: Berg, 2007.

Holmes, Morgan. *Intersex: A Perilous Difference*. Susquehanna UP, 2008.

Janssen, Thijs. “Transvestites and Transsexuals in Turkey” *Sexuality and Eroticism Among Males in Muslim Societies.* Eds. Arno Schmitt and Jehoeda Sofer. Binghamton: Haworth, 1992. 83-92

Karlyn, Kathleen Rowe. “Comedy, Melodrama, and Gender: Theorizing the Genres of Laughter.” *Screening Genders*. Eds. Krin Gabbard and William Luhr. New Jersey: Rutgers, 2008. 155-168

Kulick, Don., Klein, Charles. “Scandalous Acts: The Politics of Shame among Brazilian

Travesti Prostitutes” *Gay Shame*. Eds. David M. Halperin and Valerie Traub. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Kandiyoti, Deniz. “Gendering the Modern! On Missing Dimensions in the Study of Turkish

Modernity Rethinking Modern and National Identity in Turkey.” Eds. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba. University of Chicago Press, 1997.

---. “Transsexuals and the Urban Landscape in Istanbul.” *Middle East Report,* 206 (1998): 20-25

Kılıçbay, Barış., İncirlioğlu, Emine Onaran. “Interrupted Happiness: Class Boundaries and the ‘Impossible Love’ in Turkish Melodrama.” *Ephemera*. 3/3 (2003): 236-249

Kırel, Serpil. *Yeşilçam Öykü Sineması*. İstanbul: Babil, 2005

Kuhn, Annette. “Sexual Disguise and Cinema.” *The Women Companion to International Film*. Ed. Annette Kuhn and Susannah Radstone. Berkeley Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994. 48-72

Lauretis, Teresa De. *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1994.

MacCormack, Patricia. *Cinesexuality*. Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008.

Mercer, Uohn., Shingler, Martin. *Melodrama: Genre, Style, Sensibility*. London: Wallflower, 2004.

Mulvey, Laura.” Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *Screen,* 16 (1975): 6-18

Munoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics.* London: Minneapolis, 1999.

Mutlu, Dilek Kaya. “Yerli Melodramlar ve Ruhsal Boşalım.” *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler.* Ed. Deniz Derman. İstanbul: Bağlam, 2001. 111-123

Naficy, Hamid. “Phobic Spaces and Liminal Panic: Independent Transnational Film Genre” *Global/Local: Cultural Prodection and the transnational Imaginary* Eds. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake. Durham and London: Duke UP.1996, 119-144.

Newton, Esther. “Role Models.” *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*. Ed. Fabio Cleto. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999. 88-109.

Öktem, Kerem. “Another Struggle: Sexual Identity Politics in Unsettled Turkey.”

Özgüç, Agâh. *Türlerle Türk sineması: Dönemler/ Modalar/ Tiplemeler*. İstanbul: Dünya, 2005.

---.. *Türk Sinemasında Cinselliğin Tarihi*. İstanbul PMP, 2000.

Özön, Nijat. *Türk Sineması Tarihi (Dünden Bugüne)*. Ankara: Vipart, 2003Parla, Jale. *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri*. İstanbul: İletişim, 1993.

Parker, Andrew, Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Introduction: Performativity and Performance." *Performativity and Performance*. Eds. Andrew Parker, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. New York, London: Routledge, 1995

Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. Florence, KY:Routledge, 1993.

Phillips, John. *Transgender on Screen.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Rogoff, Irit. "De-Regulation: With the Work of Kutluğ Ataman." *Third Text* 23/2 (2009) : 165-179.

Robertson, Pamela. "What Makes the Feminist Camp?" *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*. Ed. Fabio Cleto. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999. 88-109

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Close.* Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990.

---. "Shame, Theatricality, and Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*" *Gay Shame*. Eds. David M. Halperin&Valerie Traub Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Selek, Pınar. *Maskeler Süvariler Gacılar*. İstanbul: İstiklal Kitabevi, 2007.

Serano, Julia. *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman On Sexism and the Scapegoating of Feminity,* Berkeley: Seal 2007.

Smorol, Sarah. "Women Actors and Male Performativity in Early Hollywood." *Queers in American Popular Culture Volume 2.* Ed. Jim Elledge California: ABC-CLIO, 2010

Sontag, Susan. "Notes on 'Camp.'" *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject.* Ed. Fabio Cleto. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999. 53-66

Sponsler, Claire. , Clark, Robert L.A. "Queer Play: The Cultural Work of Crossdressing in Medieval Drama." *New Literary History.* 28/2 (1997): 319-344

Stokes, Martin. *The Arabesk Debate: Music and Musicians in Modern Turkey.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Stryker, Susan. *Transgender History.* Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008.

Sullivan, Nikki. *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. New York: New York UP, 2007.

Teksoy, Rekin. *Turkish Cinema.* İstanbul: Oğlak, 2008.

Webber, Andrew. “Berlin is Running: Olympic Memories and Queer Performances” Ed. Robin Griffiths. *Queer Cinema in Europe.* Bristol, Chicago: Intellect, 2008, 195-206.

Williams, Linda. “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess.” *Film Quarterly,* 44/4 (1991): 2- 13

---. “Melancholy Melodrama: Almodovarian Grief and Lost Homosexual Attachments” *All About Almodovar: A Passion for Cinema*. Eds. Brad Epps And Despina Kakoudaki, University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

Wilson, Rob., Dissanayake, Wimal. “Tracking the Global/Local.” *Global Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*. Eds. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake. Durham & London: Duke UP, 1996. 1-20

Ze’evi, Dror. *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Zilfi, Madeline C. *Women and Slovery in the Late Ottoman Empire: the Design of Difference.* New York: Cambridge UP, 2010

Zizek, Slavoj. *How to Read: Lacan.* New York & London W. W Norton & Company, 2007.

Magazines and Newspaper Articles

“Meğer Erkeklik Ne Güzel Şeymiş.” *Ses* 46/11 November 1967:28

Olacayto. “Erkek Olan Striptease Yıldızı Dolly İlk Filmini Türkiye’de Çevirecek.” *Ses* 13/26 March 1966

Alışık, Sadri, Günay, İzzet. “Gören Maşallah Desin.” *Ses* 22/1970

Sualp, Suavi. “Gece Okumayınız,” *Milliyet*. 2 February 1964:10

Deniz, Ümit. “Doktorlarımız Cinsiyet Değiştirme İçin Ne Diyor?” *Milliyet*. 17 March 1954:6

“Bülent Ersoy’u Gelecek Yıl İzmir’e Sokmam” Milliyet, 10 October 10980.