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**Turkish Passions: Gendered Stereotyping and Postcolonial
Fetish in Pierre Loti's *Aziyadé* and Antonio Gala's *La Pasión
Turca***

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Abstract

The paper compares two novels, Pierre Loti's *Aziyadé* and Antonio Gala's *La Pasión Turca*, from the perspective of the (post)colonial stereotype, and, more specifically, Bhabha's concept of the stereotype as fetish. Both novels feature a Western European protagonist who seeks adventure in a heavily Orientalised Istanbul, and who embark upon an ultimately disastrous affair with a Turkish character; the childlike yet erotic harem girl Aziyadé and the attractive, aggressive yet ultimately powerless tour-guide Yamam respectively. In this sense, the characters of Aziyadé and Yamam are both heavily based on Orientalist stereotypes, and, in their ambiguity, can be understood in terms of the stereotype as fetish. However, it is arguably not only the Western protagonists' obsession with the exoticised Other that leads to their destruction; Loti and Desi's self-identification with the fetishized Oriental Other, as Khrishnan (2012) proposes, also has a destabilising influence on their identity, ultimately contributing to their downfall.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, Stereotype, Loti, Gala, Fetish.

Türk Tutkuları: Pierre Loti'nin *Aziyadé*'sinde ve Antonio Gala'nın *La Pasi3n Turca*'sında Cinsiyete Dayalı Steryotip ve S3m3rge Sonrası Fetiř

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Abstract

Bu makale, iki romanı, Pierre Loti'nin *Aziyadé* ve Antonio Gala'nın *La Pasion Turca*'sını, (post)-kolonyal steryotip perspektifinden, daha somut olarak, Bhabha'nın fetiř olarak steryotip konsepti ile karřılařtırıyor. Her iki romanda, Batı Avrupalı roman karakterleri katı bir řekilde Doęululařtırılmıř İstanbul'da macera aramaktadır ve T3rk bir karakterle yıkıcı bir ařk iliřkisine giriřmektedir: ocuksu fakat erotik harem kızı olan Aزيyadé; ekici ve agresif ancak g3s3z bir tur rehberi olan Yamam. Bu baęlamda, Aزيyadé ve Yamam karakterleri genellikle oryantalist basmakalıplara dayanıp, ikilemleri iinde steryotip olarak fetiř aısından anlařılabilir. Bununla birlikte, yıkımlarına sebep olan yalnızca Batılı kahramanların egzotikleřmiř 3teki ile olan saplantıları deęil, aynı zamanda fetiř haline getirilmiř Oryantal 3teki ile 3zdeřleřmeleri, Krishnan'ın (2012) 3ne s3rd3ę3 gibi, kimliklerinde dengelerini bozan bir etkiye sahip olup, ve nihayetinde 3k3řlerine katkıda bulunmaktadır.

ASnahtar S3zc3kler: S3m3rge sonrası, Steryotip, Loti, Gala, Fetiř.

This paper aims to compare two novels set in Istanbul, Pierre Loti's *Aziyadé* (1879), and Antonio Gala's *La Pasión Turca* (1993), from the perspective of the (post)colonial stereotype and, more specifically, Bhabha's conception of the stereotype as fetish. Despite the almost hundred-year gap between their publication, and the different genders and nationalities of their protagonists, the two novels share many similarities. Both novels are written in the form of journals, both involve protagonists who, bored with a seemingly monotonous, over-regulated life in Western Europe, seek passion, excitement and adventure in an exotic, heavily Orientalised Istanbul. In this context, both protagonists embark on passionate, obsessive and ultimately destructive affairs with Turkish characters, Desideria Olivan, the female protagonist of *La Pasión Turca*, with the violent, erotic tour-guide cum drug-dealer Yamam and Pierre Loti,¹ the protagonist of *Aziyadé*, with the mysterious, exotic slave-girl Aziyadé.²

In this context, it is argued that the characters of Yamam and Aziyadé, although seemingly very different, can both be understood in terms of Bhabha's concept of the stereotype as fetish. Both characters are heavily stereotypical and 'Orientalised'. However, in line with Bhabha's theory, these stereotypes are seemingly contradictory in nature, and involve a complex mixture of desire and despal; Yamam, for instance, is depicted as simultaneously a sexual object of desire, dangerous, violent and weak, while Aziyadé is not only passive and meek but also sexually licentious and passionate.

While Bhabha argues that the stereotype as fetish allows the Western subject to construct an identity based on superiority and difference from the fetishised Oriental Other, Krishnan (2011) puts forward that the ambiguity at the heart of the fetishised stereotype can also lead to an attempt, on the part of the Western subject, to *identify* with the Eastern Other, an identity that is at risk of collapsing into abjection. As argued in the final part of this paper, both Loti and Desideria veer between identification with and rejection of the Eastern Other, an ambiguity which eventually contributes to their downfall and death.

1 The (Post) Colonial Stereotype: From Said to Bhabha

According to Said, Europe has long defined its identity in contrast to a primarily Middle Eastern 'Other'. This image of the Orient is, however, largely created in the Western imagination rather than being grounded in reality. As Said argues, the Orient is "the place of Europe's oldest and richest colonies, the source

¹ Pierre Loti is the name both of the author and of the protagonist of *Aziyadé*. While the author, whose real name was Julien Viaud, was French, however, the character Loti is an English naval officer.

² The character of Aziyadé was based on a real lover of Loti's, Hakidjé, whom Loti attempted to bring to France after their affair threatened her safety (de Burgh 2005, 55).

of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant and one of its oldest and most recurring images of the Other.”³

While Said defines Orientalism in the context of French and British colonisation of the Middle East and India, he emphasises that Orientalist attitudes have much deeper roots. As Said argues, then: “The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences.”⁴ Thus, as Orientalism essentially originates out of the need to establish the Other, the self-image of European cultures as rational, morally upstanding and progressive was developed in contrast to an East which was depicted as backward, depraved, immoral and irrational. Orientalist representations of the Western ‘Self’ and the Eastern ‘Other’, then, are diametrically opposed; as Said notes, “the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.”⁵ In Orientalist discourse, then, Europe is described as;

...essentially rational, developed, humane, superior, authentic, active, creative, and masculine, while the Orient (the East, the “other”) (a sort of surrogate, underground version of the West or the “self”) is [...] irrational, aberrant, backward, crude, despotic, inferior, inauthentic, passive, feminine, and sexually corrupt⁶

While Bhabha in large part concurs with Said’s thesis, he does in fact take issue with several aspects of ‘Orientalism’. For Bhabha, as for Said, “The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonised as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and establish systems of administration and instruction.”⁷ However, for Bhabha, this aim is never fully met; he emphasises the existence of ambivalence at the heart of colonial discourse. On the one hand, he argues that the colonised subject is construed as radically Other, beyond the comprehension of Western culture and civilisation. On the other hand, the discourse of colonialism attempts to domesticate and ‘civilise’ this perceived radical difference; in a contradictory fashion, then, the colonised subject is also perceived as knowable and open to Westernisation.

³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*. (London: Penguin, 1995), 1

⁴ Ibid., 1

⁵ Ibid., 1

⁶ Alexander Lyon Macfie, *Orientalism: A Reader*. (London: Pearson Education, 2002), 86-87

⁷ Homi Bhabha, “The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism” in *The Location of Culture* (Oxon: Routledge, 1994), 70

The stereotype, in this context, serves to make the colonised subject more comprehensible to the colonisers, but also to maintain a sense of difference between the colonisers and colonised: in this case, stereotyping “facilitates colonial relations” in that it ‘sets up a discursive form of racial and cultural opposition in terms of which colonial power is exercised.’⁸ In this sense, the stereotype is a means through which the metropolitan subject attempts to assert his superiority through masking his inadequacy.⁹ However, due to its ambiguity “the stereotype is never fully stable, never ... fully confirmed”, and thus needs to be constantly repeated.¹⁰ For Bhabha, then, this constant repetition of stereotypes, as well as their often terrifying nature, is symptomatic of the ambiguity at the centre of colonial discourse:

...the same old stories of the Negro's animality, the Coolie's inscrutability or the stupidity of the Irish must be told (compulsively) again and afresh, and are differently gratifying and terrifying each time ... Nor would it be possible, without the attribution of ambivalence to relations of power/knowledge, to calculate the traumatic impact of the return of the oppressed-those terrifying stereotypes of savagery, cannibalism, lust, and anarchy which are the signal points of identification and alienation, scenes of fear and desire, in colonial texts.¹¹

Thus, according to Bhabha, we find both derision and desire in stereotypical discourse; the stereotype may therefore be understood in terms of the *fetish*. In this way, the (post)colonial fetish, like the Freudian fetish, is a simultaneous disavowal and acceptance of difference, in this case, differences of race and culture;

Fetishism is always a ‘play’ or vacillation between the archaic affirmation of wholeness/similarity - in Freud's terms: ‘All men have penises’; in ours ‘All men have the same skin/race/ culture’ - and the anxiety associated with lack and difference - again, for Freud ‘Some do not have penises’; for us ‘Some do not have the same skin/race/ culture’¹²

⁸ Ibid., 112

⁹ Madhu Krishnan, “Abjection and the Fetish: Reconsidering the Construction of the Postcolonial Exotic in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48 no.1, (2012).

¹⁰ Derek Hook, *A Critical Psychology of the Postcolonial: The Mind of Apartheid* (New York: Routledge: 2012), 13

¹¹ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 112

¹² Ibid., 107

In this sense, what is fetishised is always both loved and despised, explaining “the wide range of the stereotype, from the loyal servant to Satan, from the loved to the hated.”¹³ In Bhabha’s view, then, this multiple belief structure of fetishism is actually embraced and made use of in colonial discourse;

The black is both savage (cannibal) and yet the most obedient and dignified of servants (the bearer of food); he is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child; he is mystical, primitive, simple-minded and yet the most worldly and accomplished liar, and manipulator of social forces. In each case what is being dramatized is a separation ...¹⁴

The stereotype as fetish, then, serves to underscore the identity of the Western subject as fundamentally superior through (temporarily) keeping ambivalence at bay. However, as Krishnan argues in her discussion of exoticism, it may also lead to the Western subject’s identification with the fetishised object, a precarious position that threatens abjection through his “dependence on the negative image which legitimizes his own, positive self.”¹⁵ This leads to abjection in that it results in “a complete implosion of the subject into the ambiguity of the object whose boundaries it may no longer perceive, illuminating the always prior foundation of his own subjective capacities.”¹⁶ In this sense, then, the division between ‘subject’ and ‘object’ loses its clarity; as Kristeva argues, they “push each other away, confront each other, collapse, and start again – inseparable, contaminated, condemned, at the boundary of what is assimilable, thinkable: abject.”¹⁷

2 Stereotype as Fetish in *La Pasión Turca* and *Aziyadé*

Both novels are set in a heavily Orientalised, exotic and chaotic Istanbul, which contrasts with a Western Europe which is depicted as stifling, over-regulated and colourless. According to Gundermann, the West in *Aziyadé* is constructed as “the symbolic realm after (Lacanian) castration, the regulated and mediated domain that has removed the subject from the imaginary, unmediated

¹³ Ibid., 113

¹⁴ Ibid., 82

¹⁵ Krishnan, “Abjection and the Fetish: Reconsidering the Construction of the Postcolonial Exotic in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*”, 29

¹⁶ Ibid., 30

¹⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. (New York: Columbia University Press: 1982), 18

self-identity that the Orient symbolizes.”¹⁸ Describing England to his Turkish friend Achmet, the protagonist Loti emphasises that;

Everything is pale there, and all colours are dim ... All houses are square and exactly alike; the only prospect is one's neighbour's wall, and often that flatness is suffocating ... Everyone wears a uniform, a grey overcoat. Everything has been planned for, is regulated; there are laws about everything and rules for everybody.¹⁹

Similarly, at the beginning of *La Pasión Turca*, the Spanish protagonist Desideria is trapped in a passionless marriage to a man, Ramiro, whom she finds boring, does not satisfy her sexually and lives what she insinuates is a drab bourgeois life full of routine and pretension:

The relentless monotony which would eventually swallow me up fell on me straight away. Ramiro and I went to mass at half past eight or nine ... at the end of each day he made the sign of the cross on my forehead – ‘Sweet dreams’ – before giving me a fraternal kiss.²⁰

For both characters, Istanbul at first appears as an exotic, Orientalist fantasy.²¹ Looking out of her hotel window after arriving in Istanbul, for example, Desi is enchanted by the view across the Golden Horn, a view which for her is full of exotic minarets and painted in the soft, feminine colours of the Orient.²² For Fraticelli, Desi's stereotypical, heavily Orientalised impressions of Istanbul can be explained by her intellectual limitations, which render her incapable of creating her own, original images of the city, leading her to recreate those she has already encountered in other authors.²³

In contrast to the peaceful image of Istanbul described above, Desi experiences the Grand Baazar, where, later in the novel, she helps her lover

¹⁸ Christian Gundermann, “Orientalism, Homophobia, Masochism: Transfers between Pierre Loti's *Aziyadé* and Gilles Deleuze's “Coldness and Cruelty”, *Diacritics* 24 no. 2/3, (1994): 162

¹⁹ Pierre Loti, *Aziyadé*. translated by Marjorie Laurie. (Hants: Kri Paperbacks, 1989 [1927]), 198

²⁰ Antonio Gala, *La Pasión Turca*. (Barcelona: Planeta, 1993), 34-35

²¹ As Fraticelli points out, since the days of Cervantes and Lope de Vega, Spanish authors have long been fascinated by Istanbul, described as exotic, mysterious and luxurious, and which represented ‘the gateway to a distant and marvellous Orient’ (2015): 152

²² Gala, *La Pasión Turca*, 125

²³ Barbara Fraticelli, “La Imagen de la Ciudad de Estambul, entre Realidad, Metáfora y Sueño”. *Romance Quarterly* 63 no.3, (2015): 152

Yamam with his business, as a kind of Eastern hell populated by tortured, unfortunate beings; the blind, the physically and mentally handicapped who try to beg a meagre living from the shop owners; she, in turn, is a guardian angel sent from the Occident in order to rescue these poor creatures.²⁴

Similarly, recently arrived in Istanbul, Loti's Istanbul is also heavily Orientalised. He experiences the overwhelming chaotic energy of the city, which is described almost as an assault on the senses;

The busy quarter of Taxim, on the high ground of Pera. The carriages and dresses of Europe jostling the costumes and vehicles of the East. Burning heat; a blazing sun; a warm wind stirring up the dust and the yellow leaves of August; the scent of myrtle; the cries of the fruit sellers; the streets heaped with grapes and watermelons. These are the impressions my first glimpse of Constantinople has left upon my mind²⁵

For both characters, in line with the Orientalist stereotype of the unchanging, backward East, travelling to Istanbul is like travelling in time to an earlier, pre-rational era. For Loti, for instance, the Turks are defined by love of the old and a dislike of change;

Eski, a word uttered with reverence, means 'antique', and is equally applicable in Turkey to old customs, old fashions in dress, and old materials. The Turks have a passion for the past, a passion for stability and stagnation (1989, 73)

Moreover, the East and its inhabitants are characterised by fatalism and superstition rather than a 'Western' belief in scientific rationality. In both novels, the Turkish characters appear to apprehend portents of doom, Yamam apparently reading Desi's suicide in her coffee cup,²⁶ and Aziyadé and Achmet sensing impending disaster when an owl circles their boat at night.²⁷ Similarly, during an eclipse both Aziyadé and Achmet find Loti's attempt to explain the phenomenon in scientific terms ridiculous, believing instead that it is caused by the moon fighting a dragon.²⁸

It is in this atmosphere of Oriental timelessness and mystery that both Desi and the Loti character meet the objects of their passions. Desi quickly falls in love with Yamam, the exotically attractive tour-guide, while Loti encounters the beautiful, childlike and mysterious slave-girl Aziyadé. Both encounters develop

²⁴ Gala, *La Pasión Turca*, 219

²⁵ Loti, *Aziyadé*, 33

²⁶ Gala, *La Pasión Turca*, 196

²⁷ Loti, *Aziyadé*, 93-94

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 87-88

into passionate affairs which end, effectively, with the self-destruction of the protagonists. The depictions of both Yamam and Aziyadé are, as discussed further below, heavily influenced by Orientalist-type stereotypes of 'the Turk' which, in line with Bhabha's conception of the stereotype as fetish, are often ambivalent in nature.

Yamam appears to exemplify the 'fear and desire' that, for Bhabha, underscore postcolonial texts; he is depicted as sexually desirable yet violent and destructive. Yamam is a passionate, sexually charged creature, capable, unlike Desi's 'Occidental' partners, of abandoning himself completely to the animal joys of the body unencumbered by guilt or reason. He is a notorious womaniser, although he also indulges in homosexual intercourse.²⁹ In this context, his depiction arguably draws heavily on the Western stereotype of 'the Lusty Turk', "half-envied, half despised for their assumed athleticism and subtle cruelties in the bedchamber."³⁰ Yamam's sensuality in bed is compared positively through Desi's eyes with the performance of her almost impotent husband Ramiro and with her other European lovers, Denis and Ivan. This comparison, while perhaps apparently unfavourable to the European males, throws into relief the Orientalist dichotomy between the self-controlled, rational European and the Oriental, debauched and unable to control his lust.

Thus, in the novel "Western civilization is placed in direct opposition to the animal forces of the body, sexual potency and fertility";³¹ indeed, as Gilmour points out,³² Desi herself explicitly associates sexuality with non-European cultures;

I know better than other women the incompatibility of a regulated, model, or at least reasonable life with the violence of the call of sex, with its African abyss, irrational and sweaty.³³

In this context, Yamam's attitude to Desi, too, can also be regarded as stereotypically 'Oriental'; he is violent and aggressive towards her, even beating her from time to time, and generally expecting her to behave in a submissive,

²⁹ Gala, *La Pasión Turca*, 204

³⁰ Andrew Wheatcroft. *The Ottomans: Dissolving Images*. (London: Penguin, 1993), 210

³¹ Nicola Gilmour, "Turkish Delight: Antonio Gala's *La Pasión Turca* as a Vision of Spain's Contested Islamic Heritage", *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* 10 no.1, (2006): 83

³² Gilmour discusses *La Pasión Turca* in terms of 1990s Spain's identity crisis *vis à vis* its Muslim past (2006). For further discussion of developments in Spanish literature in the post-Franco period see, for instance, Öztunalı (2010).

³³ Gala, *La Pasión Turca*, 131

passive fashion.³⁴ This depiction, then, arguably draws on the stereotype of the terrifying, destructive ‘Terrible Turk’.³⁵ Moreover, despite his jealous nature, Yamam puts pressure on Desi to prostitute herself in order to secure an important deal or placate a creditor. In this way, then, Yamam expects Desi to be passionate and available in bed as well as passive and submissive, like a stereotypical Oriental woman.

In addition, Yamam, in Orientalist fashion, is profoundly dishonest. This is not only limited to his major deceptions – his marriage and children, his drug-dealing, his womanising – but, as Desi points out, he cannot be trusted even on details. His ethnic origin appears to vary with his mood, as do his political opinions and even his life story.³⁶ When Yamam tells Desi about his time in Spain, for instance, she points out that “The dates, as I confirmed when, as always, I reconstructed his narration, didn’t match either with his age or with the facts he referred to.”³⁷

In this sense, then, Yamam appears to be the typical Oriental ‘baddie’. Indeed, Said’s description of Hollywood Arab villains could almost, in fact be referring to Yamam:

In the films and television the Arab is associated either with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty. He appears as an oversexed degenerate, capable, it is true, of cleverly devious intrigues, but essentially sadistic, treacherous, low. Slave trader, camel driver, moneychanger, colourful scoundrel: these are some traditional Arab roles in the cinema³⁸

However, in a seemingly contradictory fashion, Yamam is also characterised by weakness and helplessness, another stereotypical feature of the Oriental. We learn that he is actually nothing but a petty drug dealer, low in the pecking order and at the mercy of both the police and his ‘bosses’. Worse, Yamam’s mother dominates him completely, deciding who he should marry, that he should not get divorced. It is she who disapproves of his relationship with Desi and forces her to have an abortion and a hysterectomy. In this sense, then, the character of Yamam, simultaneously dangerous and weak, controlling of and controlled by women, arguably displays the ambivalent nature of the colonial stereotype as put forward by Bhabha

In contrast to the violent character of Yamam, Aziyadé is described by Loti as childlike and innocent as well as being erotically alluring; she is “a vision, a

³⁴ Ibid., 236-237

³⁵ Wheatcroft, *The Ottomans: Dissolving Images*, 231-247

³⁶ Gala, *La Pasión Turca*, 172

³⁷ Ibid., 145

³⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, 286-287

spectre of romantic Turkish mystery.”³⁹ In this context, the depiction of Aziyadé draws on the common Orientalist stereotype of Oriental women as naïve and subservient eternal children on the one hand, and as immoral and libidinous temptresses on the other. As Said argues, in Orientalist writing, “women are usually the creatures of a male power fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing”⁴⁰

As Yeğenoğlu notes, “the Western subject’s desire for its Oriental other is always mediated by a desire to have access to the space of its women, to the body of its women and to the space of its women.”⁴¹ This can be explained by the fact that the Orient itself is seen in feminine terms by the coloniser; it is simultaneously racialised and feminised. While the masculine, Western subject is discursively constructed as rational, ordered, powerful and dominant, the Orient, like the female sex, is depicted as possessing contrasting characteristics such as exoticism, eroticism, passivity, weakness, depravity and irrationality. Thus, it is the metonymic association between the Orient and its women that has made Oriental women a particular source of fascination for male Western travellers.⁴² In this sense, as de Burgh points out, Loti essentialises Aziyadé; she is rendered a superficial element of her culture. Loti’s ‘falling in love’ with Aziyadé, then, implies that he has also fallen in love with the culture that she represents.

Notably, the Oriental woman was often defined as passive and indolent. In the gaze of the Western narrator, Aziyadé herself appears idle, quiet to the point of being almost inaudible, while giving off an air of Oriental mystery;

Aziyadé seldom speaks, and, though she often smiles, she never laughs. Her step is without sound; her movements are supple, sinuous, unhurried and inaudible... There is a dreamlike quality about her and she seems to cast a radiance whithersoever she goes. You look to see an aureole floating above that serious and childlike countenance...She is idle, like

³⁹ Hélène De Burgh, *Sex, Sailors and Colonies: Narratives of Ambiguity in the Works of Pierre Loti* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 60

⁴⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, 207

⁴¹ Meyda Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards A Feminist Reading of Orientalism*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 72-73

⁴² *Ibid.*, 73

all women brought up in Turkey. But she can do embroidery, make rose-water and write her name...^{43 44}

In addition to being childlike, self-effacing and indolent, the Oriental woman is also stereotypically characterised as immoral, erotic and exotic. As Flaubert, for instance, mentions after his travels in the Orient, “The oriental woman is no more than a machine: she makes no distinction between one man and another man.” (quoted in Said 1995, 187)⁴⁵ In de Burgh’s view, however, while Aziyadé fulfils the role of Baudelaire’s “divine prostitute, in that she links Loti to other men and to the social life of Istanbul, her sexuality is, although present, unarticulated. It is precisely this lack of a defined sexual role which leaves Aziyadé in ‘a state of ambiguity and potential slippage’”⁴⁶

The harem, in particular, functioned as an image of Oriental mystery and intrigue, barbarism and eroticism and harem women were described “simultaneously as objects of pity, deprived of liberty, but also possessing a ‘libidinous nature,’ and whose licentiousness was endorsed by their husbands and masters”⁴⁷ Loti arguably deflates the Orientalist mystery of the mysterious exotic space of the harem through Aziyadé’s description of the rather hum-drum nature of her daily life there.⁴⁸ However, he also describes harem women as

⁴³ Aziyadé’s role as a cultural symbol is also illustrated in the scene of Loti’s rejection of Seniha hanım, who appears wearing Western clothes, and presents herself as sexually available. While Loti’s rejection of Seniha can be explained by his being overcome with love and pity for Aziyadé (Loti 1989, 114), then, Seniha hanım’s Westernised appearance means that she does not fulfil his criterion of the Oriental woman as cultural symbol. In this sense, then, she is not ‘Other’ enough, unsettling Loti’s sense of being a dominant Self (De Burgh, *Sex, Sailors and Colonies: Narratives of Ambiguity in the Works of Pierre Loti*, 58).

⁴⁴ While Loti’s homosexual affairs are never overtly described in the novel, the homoerotic subtext of *Aziyadé* has frequently been emphasised, perhaps most famously by Roland Barthes (1973). In this sense, the relationship between Loti and Aziyadé is read as acting as a ‘smokescreen’ for the ‘real’ homosexual action of the novel, i.e. the affairs that Loti has with Samuel, then with Achmet. As de Burgh argues, ‘while Aziyadé represents Loti’s emotional connection to Turkey, the relationship that he creates with Samuel partially represents the erotic element within Turkish culture’ (De Burgh, *Sex, Sailors and Colonies: Narratives of Ambiguity in the Works of Pierre Loti*, 125).

⁴⁵ Gustave Flaubert, “Letter to Louise Colet” quotes in Said, *Orientalism*, 187.

⁴⁶ De Burgh, *Sex, Sailors and Colonies: Narratives of Ambiguity in the Works of Pierre Loti*, 57

⁴⁷ Thisaranie Herath, “Women and Orientalism: 19th century Representations of the Harem by European Female Travellers and Ottoman Women”, *Constellations* 7 no.1 (2015): 32

⁴⁸ De Burgh, *Sex, Sailors and Colonies: Narratives of Ambiguity in the Works of Pierre Loti*, 62

fundamentally Other, as and incomprehensible according to Western rules of behaviour;

These little girls, fatherless and motherless, reared in the shadow of the harem, may well be forgiven their outrageous notions. *Their actions cannot be judged by the laws that govern Christian women*⁴⁹

In this context, Loti describes the women in Aziyadé's harem, and indeed Turkish women in general, as sexually free and unfaithful to their husbands. As Loti points out, "Like all Turkish *hanums* of noble family, who think nothing of ogling every European male they see in the streets in the most seductive and challenging manner, these ladies conducted themselves most outrageously."⁵⁰ In this context, just like Yamam in *La Pasi6n Turca*, the stereotypically cruel, despotic lord of the harem is revealed as simultaneously weak, powerless and are easily duped by his womenfolk, hence the need for strict surveillance:

Turkish women, great ladies in particular, make little account of the fidelity they owe their lords. ... Had I chosen, I could have made my house a trysting place for all the languishing beauties of the harems⁵¹

3 The 'Colonising Subject' and Colonial Ambivalence: The 'Eastern' Side of Desi and Loti

As both Said and Bhabha emphasise, racial/ethnic stereotyping tells us at least as much about the Western/colonising subject's attempt to construct a superior identity as it does about the Oriental target of the stereotypes. However, for Bhabha, as has been noted, this identity is far more ambivalent than it is for Said. Thus, according to Bhabha, the subject's identity is always challenged by the ambivalence at the heart of colonial discourse;

The fetish or stereotype gives access to an 'identity' which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it... For the scene of fetishism is also the scene of the reactivation and repetition of primal fantasy - the subject's desire for a pure origin that is always threatened by its division, for the subject must be gendered to be engendered, to be spoken.⁵²

⁴⁹ Loti, *Aziyadé*, 147 (my own emphasis)

⁵⁰ Ibid., 111.

⁵¹ Ibid., 112.

⁵² Ibid., 107.

While the Western subject uses stereotyping in order to construct its identity through asserting its difference from the fetishised object, however, Krishnan argues that the links of identification between subject and object are inherently unstable.⁵³ In other words, rather than constructing an identity based uniquely on superiority to and difference from the fetishised, stereotypical Other, the Western subject may instead identify with it, becoming “as a self, ... another fetish of his own creation”, a situation which inevitably leads to abjection.⁵⁴ For Krishnan, then, “unlike Bhabha’s framework, this exotic relationship is not one which the subject may stand outside of; like the exotic Other, the metropolitan self is another object in his self-created chain of connections, always under the threat of collapse.”⁵⁵

In this context, both Loti and Desi have a relationship with the fetishised Orient that is more complex than a simple dichotomy between the (supposedly) superior Western subject and inferior Oriental Other would suggest. In fact, neither character takes a fixed position *vis à vis* the Orient; instead their subject positions appear to vary between a self-perception of being a superior outsider and an identification with the East.

For the Loti character, this split literally takes the form of a divided identity. While he never fully rejects his identity as Loti the English officer, he creates an Ottoman alter-ego, Arif, who dresses in Turkish clothes and, for all intents and purposes, appears to be a Turk.⁵⁶ However, in a novel characterised by ‘contradictions, uncertainties and instabilities’ Loti/Arif’s position is ultimately untenable; “Loti delights in his ability to oscillate between Effendi and sailor, but ultimately he denies himself the security of being in either position and only serves to confuse us about who Loti really is”⁵⁷

Despite his fascination with the Orient and his attachment to Aziyadé, however, when faced with the possibility of becoming a naturalised Ottoman subject, Loti opts to reject both his alter-ego Arif and the possibility of a life with Aziyadé to return to his life in England. Deserted by Loti, Aziyadé soon dies,

⁵³ Krishnan, “Abjection and the Fetish: Reconsidering the Construction of the Postcolonial Exotic in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*”, 30

⁵⁴ Ibid., 30. According to Kristeva, “The foreigner is within us. And when we flee from or struggle against the foreigner, we are fighting our unconscious—that “improper” facet of our impossible “own and proper ... To discover our disturbing otherness, for that indeed is what bursts in to confront that ‘demon’, that threat, that apprehension generated by the projective apparition of the other at the heart of what we persist in maintaining as a proper, solid ‘us’ (Kristeva 1991, 191-192).

⁵⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁵⁶ Arif is not the only Ottoman alter ego that Loti creates throughout the course of the novel; he also attempts to pass himself off as an Armenian and a Jew called Marketo.

⁵⁷ De Burgh, *Sex, Sailors and Colonies: Narratives of Ambiguity in the Works of Pierre Loti*, 260

probably of a broken heart. However, in the end, Loti is unable to forget his 'Eastern' self and his love for Aziyadé and/or Istanbul; when he learns of her probably suicidal death he enlists in the Ottoman army, leading to his perhaps desired death in action at the end of the novel.

Desi's relationship with the Orient is also ambivalent; here, her (partial) sense of belonging to the East can be read as symbolic of Spain's complex attitude to and relationship with the Orient; according to Gilmour, "the relationship of the protagonists in the novel can be read as an attempt to construct a Spanish national identity via what is ultimately a fetishistic Orientalist fantasy."⁵⁸ Indeed, on an earlier trip to Syria, Desi attributes this sense of identification with the Orient to a 'call of the blood' originating from her own supposed Moorish ancestry;

I noted something decisively fraternal in that trip. As if the Andalusian Arabs murmured incomprehensible prayers inside my veins. Nothing dies completely; forgetting doesn't exist. I believed then, and I continue to believe today, that we are made of that which we appear to forget.⁵⁹

She also ponders her own putative Moorish ancestry when examining herself in the mirror: "Where do these dark eyes come from, that unusual fold of the eyelids, that voracious mouth, this blackest of hair, this fervour for staying alive despite all the difficulties?"⁶⁰

In this context, with undissimulated pleasure, at Yamam's side, Desi throws herself into the role of the lusty yet passive Oriental woman, in effect fetishising herself. As time passes, however, Desi becomes increasingly disillusioned with everything Oriental and, more specifically, Turkish,⁶¹ and she also begins to define herself according to her *differences* from stereotypical Turkish women. Thus, she starts to become dissatisfied with her role of waiting in Yamam's shabby apartment for the 'Sultan' to come home; "I rarely leave the flat apart from to do the basic shopping. My life is like that of a harem woman except for my trips to the Baazar, which don't even amount to half a dozen"⁶²

Desi's harem is, however, a notably unglamorous one:⁶³ as she notes; "Who would have thought that my daily view of this city, so dreamed of, so full of an

⁵⁸ Gilmour, "Turkish Delight: Antonio Gala's *La Pasión Turca* as a Vision of Spain's Contested Islamic Heritage", 81.

⁵⁹ Gala, *La Pasión Turca*, 77.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 77.

⁶¹ Adriana Raducanu and Catherine MacMillan, "Istanbul – the Palimpsestic City in Cornelia Golna's *City of Man's Desire* and Antonio Gala's *The Turkish Passion*" *Gender Studies* 8 no. 1, (2009): 105-118.

⁶² Gala, *La Pasión Turca*, 170

⁶³ Fraticelli, "La Imagen de la Ciudad de Estambul, entre Realidad, Metáfora y Sueño", 155.

aura of majesty and mystery, the most coveted of all the cities in History, would be a parking lot?”⁶⁴ Thus, Desi decides to look for a job, pointing out to Yamam that “I’m not made to hang around all day waiting for the sultan... I’m not a Turkish woman who settles for getting fat while her man goes around the world.”⁶⁵

However, she also fears that, as a brunette, she is also not exotically Occidental enough in Yamam’s eyes to maintain his interest indefinitely; she complains to him, prophetically, that he will find a blonder woman one day. Indeed, he eventually begins an affair with a French woman, Blanche, who is blonde, and, as her name suggests white-skinned,⁶⁶ thus perhaps a more suitable object for a fetish of Yamam’s own.

At times, however, Desi uses her ambiguous identification with the Western Self and the orientalist Other to her advantage; at a dinner party with other Europeans, for instance, she attempts to play up the exotic, Orientalised appeal of her Spanish background while simultaneously attempting to make Yamam feel the inferior Oriental outsider: “That was my purpose: to make it understood that ‘we Europeans’ were kindred spirits and had a good time together”⁶⁷

However, her destabilised identity, in addition to her inability to overcome her attachment to the fetishised object, in this case the violent, unfaithful and domineering Yamam, eventually leads to Desi’s suicide, which takes place in an Istanbul hotel room after she is evicted by Yamam from his flat in order to make room for her rival, Blanche. In this sense, her end arguably resembles that of the harem girl Azyadé, who dies of a broken heart after her desertion by her lover Loti, even more than it does that of Loti himself.

4 Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to draw attention to the importance of the stereotype as fetish in both *Azyadé* and *La Pasión Turca*. In both novels, the Western protagonists’ Turkish objects of passion, Yamam in *La Pasión Turca* and Azyadé in the eponymous novel, are depicted in heavily Orientalised, stereotypical terms. However, these stereotypes differ widely according to the gender of the Turkish characters, and, as predicted by Bhaba, are extremely ambivalent, in the sense that they appear to be almost self-contradictory, and reflect the fetishistic combination of fascination and repulsion inherent in the stereotype.

⁶⁴ Gala, *La Pasión Turca*, 156

⁶⁵ Ibid., 189

⁶⁶ Ibid., 129

⁶⁷ Ibid., 269

Both Western protagonists are, then, ‘swallowed up’ by their stereotypical Eastern world of dream and nightmare. Thus, while partially retaining a Western outsider’s Orientalist attitude of superiority, both Desi and Loti begin to identify themselves with the fetishised Other. Arguably, it is this self-fetishisation which, in addition to the ambiguous passion engendered by the fetishised love interest, destabilises their sense of identity, eventually driving both Loti and Desi to the abyss of abjection.

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