



Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia

Dottorato di ricerca in Filosofia e Storia della Filosofia – Ciclo XXXIII

**Critical Theory on movies: Culture Industry and the representation
of Middle Eastern culture in American cinema.**

Bahar Tahsily Fahadan

Matricola 1379913

Supervisor:

Prof. Stefano Petrucciani, Prof. Stefano Velotti

Anno Accademico 2020/2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter I: Culture Industry and film	19
1. Adorno and Film Theory	19
1.1 Adorno in Frankfurt (1925-1938)	36
1.2 Adorno in exile (1938-1949)	39
1.3 Adorno after returning to Germany (post World War II)	43
2. Culture Industry and Cultural Commodity	51
2.1 Culture industry and pseudo-individualism	60
2.2 Culture industry and Free time	67
2.3 Culture Industry and Cinema	70
2.4 Free Time and Boredom	81
3. Marcuse and Culture Industry	83
3.1 Repression and Free-Time in Advanced Industrial Society	83
3.2 Culture Industry and One-Dimensional Society	88
3.3 Marcuse on Mass Media Culture	95
Chapter II: Orientalism and Representation of the “Other” in Media	101
1. Edward W. Said and Orientalism	102
1.1 Orientalism and representation of Islam in the Western media	110
1.2 Neo-Orientalism, Islamophobia, and media post 9/11	122
2. Homi K. Bhabha and Orientalism	131
2.1 Bhabha and critique of Orientalism	131
2.2 Stereotype in Colonial Discourse	135
2.3 Bhabha on Media	140
Chapter III: Culture Industry and Orientalism in Movies	150
1. Stereotypes concerning Muslims in media	151
2. Studies in Prejudice, Right Wing Authoritarianism and Social Dominance Orientation	154
3. <i>300</i> : same story in repetition	164
3.1 Animals, monsters and disability	168
3.2 Missing point	173
4. Orientalism as Culture Industry	175
5. Iranian Islamic Propaganda Organization and Media	186
5.1 Stereotypical representations of Iranian heroes and Western Monsters	188
6. Combining Orientalism and Culture Industry	197
BIBLIOGRAPHY	202

Introduction

“The world is my representation”: this is the opening quote of one of the most radically innovative works of modernity, *The World as Will and Representation*. Here Schopenhauer was reinstating one of the central perspectives of Western Idealism, which can be traced back at the origin of philosophical reflection, and in particular to the “allegory of the cave” in Plato’s *Republic*. Ever since Plato, the world has appeared as the outcome of the manipulated perspective of those who observe it: as a world of appearance where sensorial perception leads us into mistake. Senses cannot be trusted, in what Adorno addresses as the general ‘idealism’ of our tradition, and what remains as access to truth is the contemplation of ideas. This tradition became the ground of Western philosophy in the Renaissance, with the creation of the Platonic schools, and then in modernity, with the radical affirmation of a model of rationalism in Descartes. With modernity, it is the purity of numbers and geometrical figures that represents the standard of truth beyond illusions generated by the senses. But modernity, with its standards of rational thought grounded on ‘scientific’ observations, presented new and still unresolved problems. The turning point of the scientific standards of rationality generated an increasingly strong form of dehumanization: on one hand, passions, emotions and feelings were forced into marginalization in the understanding of the world. On the other hand, in its most radical version, positivism presented itself as the ‘correct’ model of analysis. The

positive standards of rationality created what Adorno and Horkheimer called the “Dialectic of Enlightenment”.

Going back to Schopenhauer’s claim that “the world is my representation”, this implies that how I see the world is what determines even its existence. There are no more objective truths in the phenomenal world; only interpretations. This form of thought was even more radicalized by Nietzsche, since at least in Schopenhauer a ‘true’ world still existed, even if just in a metaphysical realm. With Nietzsche even this last form of truth disappears, and we are left only with a permanent process of interpretation of the world, according to a model based on ‘perspectivism’. We can still claim that the world is representation, but to what extent it is ‘our’ interpretation? This is where the problems of ideology becomes extremely relevant. I see the world through a perspective that might not be mine. By now the development of new technologies in the field of media provides a way in which I should see the world, but that perspective is not mine, and it makes me accept a standardized version of a fake truth which has little to do with my perspective.

It seems that we are in a sort of the world of Oz; a grand master is presenting a truth to us which is false and sometimes even oppressive. Who is the master beyond this? The answer, under a Marxist perspective adopted by critical theory, is at the same time very easy and yet very hard to ascertain: capitalism. Capitalism has generated a perfect ‘machine’ of creation of needs and desires that have very little (or nothing) to do with our passions and emotions. Like Tin Men we walk around

searching our inner world that has by now been substituted with a coarse and desperate quest for a commoditized pleasure. The world is not my representation anymore; it is the representation of a reified world that pushes me into conformity with dominant ideology. We live in a movie that has all the glittering aspects of the happy ending, but beyond the curtain reality has never been so miserable. The promise of happiness of capitalism is not just betrayed as it happens in works of art, but it is reduced to a paradoxical acceptance of today's catastrophe. While I'm here, writing this, the majority of human population is worried on how to get alive to the next day. For those who can instead afford to appreciate the pleasures of life, everything has been set up so that pleasure is not even their own. Production, consumption and death: this is the vicious circle in which we seem to be entrapped. Here is where the contribution of the Frankfurt School becomes determinant, especially in its early formulation in authors such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse.

Western rationality is the outcome of a process of domination of nature which makes us not only increasingly passive towards ideology, but that demarks the drastic fracture with internal and external nature. The representation of the world we must conform to is false, commoditized into its tiniest little details. We need to be constantly distracted and entertained. The mainstream of media and movies represent the world for us in the most coarse manner: after all, everything is fine, happy ending is there for everyone. We must focus on the most insulting issues of

gossip and chase a dream of success that is precluded to us. Our lives are immersed in a constant 'commercial' of commodities that, in many cases, make our lives more miserable. The destructive ideology of capitalism, according to the Frankfurt School, is omni-pervasive. We wake up in the morning to be productive in an alienated system that tends to the banning of personal fulfilment from our activities, so that we can consume increasingly meaningless commodities that are destroying our existence, under the blackmail of credit and loans which force us to constantly return to this absurd routine. We look at those who are in a more desperate situation than ours as the scapegoats of our awful situation. Always ready to blame them for our unhappiness. In this, capitalism has shown its perfect machinery. It prevents us from happiness while promising always new and reachable happiness. It prevents us from experiencing beauty, while chasing the ugliest forms of standardized beauty. It prevents us from addressing the problems where the problems stand, while blaming the oppressed for the oppression.

In this desperate situation, hope stands still in the most repressed aspect of our lives: beauty. Not the cheap and vulgar beauty that the masses have to accept from ideology, but the beauty created for emancipatory purposes by art. Here we will analyse one of the most influential means through which ideology is reproduced in society: movies. As in all other artistic representations, we should clarify to what extent movies can be emancipated from the dominant function of passive homologation to the standards of society and lead us to a counter-consciousness

based on autonomous thought. This dilemma of movies is the dilemma of art. On the one hand, movies are mainly produced as part of the superstructure which makes us passively accept the dominant ideology, in a more or less subliminal manner. On the other hand, the new means of communication, of which movies are among the earliest and most influential form, can represent a huge potential of divulgence of emancipatory content. How to get out of this dilemma has been the focus of one of the main debates over aesthetics since the early 20th century, since the sometimes even harsh debate between Benjamin and Adorno. The representation of the world offered by movies can be both destructive and redemptive.

The central purpose of this project is to offer a perspective in which movies can emancipate from ideology and generate critical and autonomous thought. A key aspect of this process is the ability of art to provide the audience with a de-sublimation of needs and passions, by referring primarily to the aesthetic models of Adorno. The representation of the world offered by movies can foster a personal and autonomous perspective, which can fight the ideological and destructive representation offered by culture industry.

Mass-produced and multimedia visual imagery today is ever more central to our culture. Given the rise to increasing importance of the culture of the image and spectacle, it is more important than ever to understand how visual culture is constructed, communicates, and affects us and how to critically analyse, interpret, and use visual images.

We should be aware that all technologically-mediated visual images are constructed, that photography, film, television, and other media are technologies of image production that have their codes, conventions, and biases and that every technologically mediated visual image is the product of image-producers who themselves have agendas and biases that should be subject to scrutiny. Likewise, we should be aware that in a digital culture, images can be constructed, transformed, refined, and modified through technical means and that not everything one sees in visual culture is an exact copy or replication of the object or event portrayed.

Since the 1940s, an impressive variety of critical approaches to the media and movies have developed. In my study I will first present the perspective of the Frankfurt School, especially in its early formulation as developed by key authors such as Benjamin, Adorno and Marcuse, as inaugurators of critical approaches to media studies. In this part the analysis will primarily focus on central concepts such as “culture industry” and “ideology”. I will then discuss how a wide range of theorists addressed what later became known as the politics of representation in critical media studies, engaging problematics of class, gender, race, sexuality, and other central components of media representation and social life. The main focus of the first part is to analyse the controversial interpretation of Adorno and Marcuse regarding the role of movies, also in relation to the lively debate on this in North America, where in recent years there has been a strong “return to the origin” of the early thinkers of the Frankfurt School. This lively debate has primarily tried to revise an often hasty

conclusion that regards the model of “culture industry”, developed in their American exile by Adorno and Horkheimer between 1941 and 1944, as outdated and too restrictive. Here the authors, in their severe critique of the commodity structure of capitalism, concluded that movies and any other media based on technology, seemed incapable of operating under alternative practices.

On the contrary, one of the main points of the first chapter is to show how, especially in Adorno’s discussion on film aesthetics, the dichotomy of mass culture and modern art can generate new meanings for the role of movies. From Adorno’s project for an experimental film designed to test anti-Semitic attitudes of the audience (which only achieved the script stage), to the more consistent analysis of Hollywood film music (especially in *Composing for the Films*), up to the latest production on *Culture Industry Reconsidered* and, most importantly, *Transparencies on Film*, his thought concerning the role of film as a form of writing is open to the overcoming the obstacles generated by the dependency on industrial technology of mechanical reproduction which impeded a film aesthetics. This part of the project will focus not only to the debate between Benjamin and Adorno on mechanical reproduction, but also to the new studies concerning movies’ production as a form of emancipatory technology.

While remaining rather sceptical, in his writings of the 60s Adorno has in fact modified his original perspective, reaching the point of attributing to the cinematographic technique the status of aesthetic material, at least in the context of

non-commercial films. Adorno, therefore, at last came to the conclusion that autonomous art must keep up with technical development: in the case of cinema - where the technical achievements and the fetishism of goods have become synonymous - a poverty of technical effects and a self-conscious abstention from a passive reception of imposed models and roles can be instruments suitable for reaching standards of artistic values.

In order to get a better grasp on Adorno's ideas on film aesthetics and the changes during different periods of his work a division of them in three distinct phases could be helpful:

1. Adorno in Frankfurt (1925-1938)
2. Adorno in exile (1938-1949)
3. Adorno after returning to Germany (post World War II)

The main purpose of such division is to show how Adorno's thought concerning the role of movies evolved during these phases, shifting into a more reconciliatory view of their function.

In the section concerning culture industry and cultural commodity, we will analyze the standard notion of culture and the consequences of its manipulation. Culture can be generally defined as a collection of beliefs, values, habits, behaviors and rules which have been created by the members of a society. The fact that behavioral patterns and values of a society are highly tied up to their culture shows how, instead of using a physical force, just by manipulating the culture of society we might be able

to manipulate people's beliefs and behaviors. Following Critical Theory's perspective, today this manipulation of culture and people's opinion is possible through the culture industry. The second part of the first chapter is then dedicated to the notion of culture industry and how it influences society through media, especially film. The culture industry's goal is to produce and control culture in order to captivate the interest of special groups in society. In order to grasp the double-edged position that film takes on in modern society, it is first of all important to understand what Adorno means by the concept of culture industry. Admittedly, this famous concept codeveloped with Max Horkheimer in the 1940s overstates the situation.

In this part, firstly I go through Horkheimer and Adorno influential book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to explain how they introduce the concept of the culture industry, and later I continue my study mainly in Adorno's works like *How to Look at Television*, *Television as Ideology*, *The Theory of Pseudo-Culture* and *Free Time* to demonstrate the characteristics and mechanisms of the culture industry.

In the last part of the first chapter I will discuss another prominent member of the Frankfurt School: Herbert Marcuse. In order to have a better understanding of the culture industry and its consequences, I will address some of Marcuse's key concepts, such as one-dimensional thought, false needs, and repressive de-sublimation. We will see how advanced industrial society creates some new and false needs for people in order to encourage them to consume extra goods and services. The artificially created needs generated by a capitalist system force people to work harder and to consume

more commodities. Therefore, by satisfying these false needs, a person cannot really improve the quality of his/her life. This is what Marcuse calls 'one-dimensional' society, a society in which the main goal is the maximizing of the production of goods and services for generating profit. That is how the one-dimensional society creates a one-dimensional man, whose major goal is to consume as many products as possible, neglecting the life-affirming impulses (joy, happiness etc.) that should characterize his/her existence. In this section, we will then see how Marcuse's ideas on the role of technology in Western societies influenced movie production.

In the second chapter of my research I will focus on one of the most renowned theories of postcolonialism, Edward W. Said's notion of Orientalism and representation of middle east by the West. Orientalism is a Western style for depicting the Orient, and it shows how, from knowledge based on the studies of the orientalist from nineteenth century, the Orient is defined by a set of recurring images and clichés, and how afterwards this knowledge of the Orient is put into practice by colonialism and imperialism. Orientalism is used in three overlapping ways. First, orientalism refers to an academic discipline devoted to the study of the languages, religions, and cultures of regions from the Near to the Far East. Second, orientalism is defined as an ideology, a set of prejudices that is reinforced by the sense of superiority of Europeans over the East, and by legitimizing imperialism and colonialism it let them exploit "inferior" culture identified in the East. Third, orientalism is considered as a theme in literature and the visual arts.

Orientalism is affiliated with the representation of the Self (Occident) and the Other (Orient), in which the “Self” is privileged and has the upper hand in contrast to passive, silent and weak “Other”. Forms of binarism that western philosophy is based on range from general binaries such as light/dark, white/black, to some more complicated and culturally biased as man/woman, the colonizer/colonized and, in this case, the self/other. This binary opposition takes a prominent place within psychoanalysis, feminist, postcolonial and queer theory. The Self – when it is conceived as white male – is regarded in positive terms. On the contrary, the Other – be it female, black, non-Western – is viewed in negative terms. My aim is to transfer some of Adorno's key concepts, and in particular identity-thinking and domination of nature, to more concrete case studies regarding orientalism in ways that would illustrate the importance, appropriateness, and promise of his critique of identity and of his revival of dialectics by viewing Said’s writings as closer to this intentions, rather than as exclusively tied to a genealogical method or to deconstructive parameters. Said, in his numerous strategic and provocative references to Adorno demonstrates how the absence to which the other has been consigned can be transformed into negation and repudiation of imperialist Western values.

In this part of my thesis my focus is mainly on depiction of East by the West, so inevitably the role of Islam and Muslims is going to be more prominent. I closely analyse the western mass media (especially movies) to trace the stereotypical views that form the popular culture today. As a turning point in movie history after the

September 11, 2001, end-of-the-world scenarios dominated the Cinema. These films all reflect the sense that we are living in a world where anything could happen. Since 9/11, Muslim men, a group historically slandered in American cinema, became even more vilified, and a form of Islamophobia became more structured.

This second chapter will also analyze a key figure of post-colonial studies, namely, Homi Bhabha. His influential interpretation, as well as his critique of Said will be discussed as part of what Bhabha addressed as 'colonial discourse.' The major contribution of Bhabha's work is related to the fundamental role he attributed to stereotypes in colonial discourse. The importance of stereotypes used in media will be discussed as an integration of the analysis of culture industry, in particular on how they shape our perspective on non-Western representations.

The last chapter of this work will analyze the relationship between culture industry and Orientalism, with concrete reference to how Orientalism is presented in contemporary movie production. For this purpose, we will go back to the early formulation of culture industry created by Adorno and Horkheimer. In their famous essay "Elements of Anti-Semitism", these authors argued that anti-Semitism is primarily caused by the division of labor in capitalism. Racism, in other words, is considered an integral part of modern conditions of social and political reproduction. Therefore, since capitalism develops racism at the same pace with the development of the modes of production, it is possible to foresee forms and effects of racism on

the basis of an analysis of the structural changes of capitalist development and its modes of production.

As Adorno and Horkheimer observe, what makes anti-Semitism a mask for the domination in the division of labor and in the capital circulation is the way that it captures dejected subjectivity and provides a new site where its calamities can be projected. So, the subjectless self falls into its ego, and “for the ego, sinking into the meaningless abyss of itself, objects become allegories of ruin, which harbor the meaning of its own downfall.” (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1972, 158).

In capitalism exploitation remains an indispensable social element and, therefore, fascism has the function of concealing capitalist exploitation. Any form of racism, although derived from different historical genealogies of power, can be understood at the level of a breakdown in the conceptualization of class conflict. With all the due differences between Antisemitism and Islamophobia, we will analyze how the stereotypes concerning Jews and Muslims are in fact a substitute and, at the same time, a symptom of the failure of revolutionary subjectivity. In the projection of the model of resentment developed by Adorno and Horkheimer, the Jew - but this can be extended, with all its differences, to the Muslim - becomes a substitute, a projection based on a general sense of resentment, and this resentment serves as a diversion from the class conflict. The oppressed must turn their resentment towards ever new categories of "inferiors", to divert their revolutionary potential from the source of their oppressive situation, which must be found in the production process.

This section of the chapter will be integrated by a detailed analysis of specific contemporary movie production, with an in-depth case study regarding the 'blockbuster' movie *300*. This movie, and the tremendous box office success it achieved, is paradigmatic of how Orientalism is used in portraying the negative stereotypes of middle-easterners, with major relapses in authoritarian ideology.

The following section of the third chapter will address the integration of Orientalism into the model of culture industry, with a specific focus on the Iranian revolution and the way it has been portrayed both by internal and external observers. According to Said, the whole body of mono-cultural knowledge is built on the notion of national superiority. In *Orientalism*, Said shows that the study of the Orient in Western universities is an active attempt of the West "to impose itself on the peoples and cultures who came under its hegemonic sway." (Said, 1978, 7) To eliminate Western domination means first to deconstruct this self-sufficient Western discourse about the existence of Occident and Orient as separate, which promotes "the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures." (Said, 1978, 7) However, as Bill Ashcroft in his book on Said explains, "if both Europeans and non-Europeans must be liberated from this ideological oppression, there is a danger that a decolonizing culture, by becoming monist in its rhetoric, often identifying strongly with religious or national fundamentalism, may tend to take over the hegemonic function of imperial culture". (Ashcroft, 2001, 88)

So, as the other end of the spectrum of orientalism, extreme religious conservatism shows up seeking for same media attention.

In case of Islamic Republic of Iran, Said described Khomeini as an oppositionalist leader like any other driven by rational and universal political concerns. Therefore, the description of Khomeini provided by Western media as a clerical fascist was not only misguided, but also anti-Islamic and orientalist, producing 'fearsome caricatures' of Muslims. Even after the growing criticism of Khomeini by members within his own leftist supporters, Said avoided reality by focusing on the US media's characterization of the Iranian revolution as 'Islamic.' Said, by ignoring the severe ideological fallacy in Khomeini's lectures and publications, did not even mention him in his 1982's *The Emergency Committee for the Defense of Democracy and Human Rights in Iran*. Said's misreading of event in the modern Middle East was not based on a careful consideration of the evidence available, but on the theoretical category of Orientalism. His focus on American media prevented him to see that the media is the exact same tool that helps to spread ideologies in the Middle East too.

In the early years following to the revolution in Iran, cinema was primarily used for propaganda purposes to spread Islamic values among the Iranian population. The goal of recapturing the dignity of Iran as a Muslim country had to be achieved through education and the consistent emphasis on Islamic morality. So, a new national cinema which would respect and promote Islamic values of the Iranian society had to be

created. This goal was even mentioned in the first speech of Ayatollah Khomeini following his return from exile to Iran lines out his position regarding cinema:

"We are not opposed to cinema ... cinema is a modern invention that ought to be used for the sake of educating the people, but as you know, it was used instead to corrupt our youth. It is the misuse of cinema that we are opposed to, a misuse caused by the treacherous policies of our rulers." (Naficy, 1995, 548)

Analysing Iranian cinema and its peculiarities after the Islamic Revolution has the function of showing the consequences of censorship and the influence of propaganda movies to shape the national beliefs. In this section, this analysis will be integrated with the study of some key Iranian movie production.

In the concluding part of my study I will show how, in contemporary advanced capitalism, media and movies absolve a function of regulating society by enforcing strict ideological adherence to the dictates of the market and to a model of authoritarian personality. Media have a fundamental role in reproducing both a passive and destructive form of consumerism, which is leading us towards catastrophe, and the replacement of culture with a homologation to an ideology of domination which is opening a scenario of regression into barbarism.

Understanding visual language, expressed through visual media as a way in which the audience gather his or her information about the world requires seeing it as a form of political representation that is shaped by the knowledge and values of those who create and perceive them.

Orientalism as a form of critical analysis tries to understand and decode the values that shape the visual representations that is depicted by Westerners of non-Western subjects. Said's conclusion is that Orientalism established binary oppositions that, along with 'othering' the Orient, also represented the 'West' positively as everything the 'East' was not. So, orientalist depicted East as irrational, backward, exotic, despotic and lazy, and on the opposite side the civilized 'West' is rational, moral and Christian. Although the representations of the East produced by the West did not resemble the 'reality' of the 'East', Orientalists defined the nature of the 'East' in Western knowledge in such manner that the westerners can keep their control of the 'East'.

Hollywood films are designed to reflect their audience's views and preconceptions. Film studios try to have the largest market and they show their audiences what they expect to see. Thus, examining Hollywood films set in Iran or the representation of Iranians in American mainstream movies will provide evidence of a specific kind of American representation of the Middle East, and how it has changed over time. A model heavily structured on the reinforcement of authoritarian models based on stereotypes that diminish the diversity in all its forms.

Chapter I

Culture Industry and film

While the analysis of movies is not a central part of Adorno's theory, many ideas were developed by him over this topic especially in relation to the notion of 'culture industry'. In the first section of this chapter we will focus on Adorno's reflections on the function of movies, while the second section will focus more directly on the central concept of culture industry. In the third section, the development of this concept will be discussed in relation to the theory of Marcuse.

1. Adorno and Film Theory

According to Adorno, while genuine artworks unfold their critical potential precisely by sustaining a critical distance from the social reality from which they stem, the products of the culture industry – including commercial movies – are perfectly in line with the dominant power structure of advanced capitalism. Manufactured in order to be widely consumed, they are effect-oriented rather than original. For the sake of profitability, they always (re)produce the same stereotypes, rigid identities and fixed values. Genuinely artistic qualities are but secondary concerns. Nevertheless, the influence of the culture industry is not limited to those artifacts that are deliberately designed for the market, such as commercial cinema. It also gets hold

of folkloristic creations and formerly autonomous artworks. For the culture industry tends to slickly integrate any cultural productions into the circuit of the market and turn them into commodities. Subsumed under the same commercial logic, the only relevant difference between 'serious' art, entertainment formats and popular forms of expression lies in their target audiences. Hence, genuine artworks inevitably lose their particularity and their transgressive force when they are absorbed by the sphere of consumption and reduced to their exchange value. A modernistic painting in the cabinet of a dentist, a Beethoven symphony as background music in a supermarket, or an extract of a play by Beckett employed as a commercial's slogan are products of the culture industry just as catchy hit songs, crime novels, Westerns or mainstream television series. They turn into clichés in the same way as the glossy and hackneyed images produced in the Hollywood's studios.

Films, and in general visual media, did not occupy a major position in Adorno's work, especially when compared to music, in which he was involved as a critic, performer, and composer. For Adorno film remained for the most part a theoretical concern.

As Adorno writes in *Culture Industry Reconsidered*:

The color film demolishes the genial old tavern to a greater extent than bombs ever could: the film exterminates its imago. No homeland can survive being processed by the films which celebrate it, and which thereby turn the unique character on which it thrives into an interchangeable sameness. (in Bernstein, 1991, 103)

Annihilating the differences and subsuming every particularity under familiar types, the culture industry's products transform that which is singular into generic and characteristic features without leaving any place for otherness. This is how a normative imagery worms its way into collective consciousness and establishes a biased, uniform way of looking at reality. The overpowering presence of the products of the culture industry shapes a perception of the world in which singularity is immediately obliterated and superseded by commonplaces. Images become patterns, because the associations triggered by omnipresent clichés cultivate reflex reactions in perception.

Adorno's critique of film is an extension of his critique of the mimetic impulse in art. For Adorno, the mimetic impulse suggests a utopian reconciliation between human beings and nature through art. But the effort to imitate nature is destined to failure. The more the artwork tries to achieve realism, the more it distances itself from reality, and the more art tries to imitate life, the more it gets close to the death of nature. The death of nature is what makes possible for capitalist society to develop art into a sheer commodity. Adorno claims that most films are advertisements for themselves: "Every commercial film is actually only the preview of that which it promises and will never deliver" (Adorno, 1982, 160). Following his interpretation, since film reproduces the world of everyday life, the audience receives the world as an extension of the film he just left behind. The more accurately filmic techniques

duplicate the world, the more the illusion prevails, and the screen ends up representing reality:

The sound film, far from surpassing the theatre illusion, leaves no room for imagination or action on the part of the audience, who is to respond within the structure of the film yet deviate from its precise detail, without losing the thread of the story; hence the film forces its victims to equate it directly with reality [...]. Sustained thought is out of the question, if the spectator is not to miss the relentless rush of the facts. (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 126-127)

Adorno's consideration of the possibility of even including movies into an art form is then quite problematic. These problems can be included in two main categories. On one hand, from the formal aspect of movies, Adorno rejects the artistic function of movies on the assumption that the mechanical reproduction, the technical aspect of movies, is dissolving the aura of a work of art. Form and content are in everlasting tension in art, and every work of art reflects this tension differently in each historical period. The analysis of the form of a work of art for Adorno is the fundamental part in any work of art, since it reveals the true, radical criticism that the work can express towards existing reality. If we analyze a painting of Michelangelo, it might immediately reveal a content (often times religious) which might be realistically expressed and concretely received by the observers. But it is the form of the work of art, "how" a certain scene is presented, that for Adorno represents the true critical aspect of that work. The technical aspects of the form of a work of art can in fact

reveal a completely different interpretation of reality. When Michelangelo was portraying the human body (either in a near-perfect style in his sculptures, or in a paradoxically exaggerated form in his painting), he was delivering, through form, a message that was even antithetical to the one delivered through content. A painting that in content glorifies religious themes, when analyzed in its form, can turn into the glorification of what religion represses: the bodily, physical aspect of our life. All great works of art, for Adorno, somehow play with this tension of content and form, though a radical turning point occurs with modern art. Modern art reduces content to a minimal aspect, and retreats into a type of representation based almost exclusively on form. Adorno was obviously influenced by the abstract form of figurative arts, where content became increasingly more insignificant, but most importantly by the musical composition techniques of atonality. A painting of Kandinsky or a musical piece by Alban Berg could not be analyzed any longer according to the standard model of previous art, since they inverted the schema of previous aesthetics: form has become content, and content has become form. Art's critical function is not displayed any longer through art's "content", as a more or less direct "message" that we can elicit from an artwork. And not even through some "direct language" of emotions which would show the limits of rational understanding. The cognitive function of art for Adorno should always be subordinated to art's form. Only the form of an artwork

can embody the contradictions of reality; something that art cannot express “realistically”¹.

Form expresses the “enigmaticalness”² of every work of art, that is, it shows how art cannot simply reproduce reality or its mechanisms; otherwise its distance from reality would be filled, and art would fall back into ideology. Yet, this separation from reality is not an absolute independence; in the form of the artworks all the tensions of reality are still present. Modern art critically takes upon itself the alienation of the world in its works; and it does so not by realistically presenting the causes of alienation, but by exposing alienation in the compositions’ form. As it is very evident from his production, the artistic model that according to Adorno best exemplifies this function is modern music, and in particular the dissonance of atonal music. Atonality breaks down the standard structure of musical composition and analyzing the form of atonal music could lead to the unveiling of the falsity of the capitalist order:

¹ Here we can also detect Adorno’s diffidence and criticism of realism as the correct artistic form in ‘orthodox’ Marxist aesthetics. A theme that will be more explicitly developed by Marcuse, in his *Aesthetic Dimension*.

² What Adorno calls enigmaticalness (*Rätselcharakter*) is the connection between art’s attempt to express its innate content and the impossibility of that it could entirely sublimate itself in the movement of the spirit. According to Adorno the enigmatic aspect of art is tied to history: “The trace of natural beauty in art ensures that the enigmaticalness of artworks remains bound up with history... It was through history that they became an enigma; it is history that ever and again makes them such and conversely, it is history alone—which gave them their authority—that holds at a distance the embarrassing question of their *raison d’être*” (Adorno, 1970, 120).

Atonality is the fulfilled purification of music from all conventions. [...] The dissonant chord, by comparison with consonance, is not only the more differentiated and progressive; but furthermore, it sounds as if it had not been completely subdued by the ordering principle of civilization. (Adorno, 1973b, 40)

For Adorno conceptual understanding does not always have to determine the affirmation of permanent identities, and a concept should be interpreted as we do when we follow a musical movement, as “becoming”. Adorno follows an interpretative model for the form of artistic compositions that he calls “psychological dream case studies” (Adorno, 2002, 28).

In a certain sense, following Freud, the artwork should be interpreted like a dream: not in terms of its content (whether immediate or latent), but through its form. But the subject of the case studies represented by artworks is not the individual artist and the analysis of a work does not lead to the disclosure of a specific artist’s sublimation. Artworks represent instead the case study of subjectivity in general by tracing the “neurosis” of society. The “childhood trauma” of subjectivity, discussed by Adorno at the origin of the dialectic of Enlightenment – the “introversion of sacrifice”, the domination of nature that turns against the subject itself – shows its symptoms in the obsession with the so-called “identity thinking”.

Atonal music not only offers a critique of alienation, but extends this critique to the general principle of identification that regulates rationality. Yet, the dissonance of atonal music does not correspond to the affirmation of a form of irrationalism in

philosophy. If atonal music “seems to destroy the rationally ‘logical’ relationships, dissonance is nevertheless still more rational than consonance” (Adorno, 1973b, 165). The task of dissonance is to show the basic flaw of reason, its identifying principle, which in music corresponds to the unity of “homogeneous” sound. By refusing to establish a closed system, atonal music embodies the spirit of negative dialectics: its openness to non-identity. The fundamental importance of this model of atonal music explains Adorno’s diffidence towards Schönberg’s development of the twelve-tone technique. The ability of art (and in particular of atonal music) to maintain the consideration of the specific moment of non-identity of the object represents for Adorno the affirmation of an original impulse that humans have toward nature: mimesis. With the affirmation of “scientific” rationality, mimesis was expelled from rational understanding, but it still remained active in art. In genuine art the awareness that replication of nature’s non-identity is impossible is still present, and artistic mimesis does not aim at the absolute accurateness of reproductions of nature. In art we imitate nature with the necessary contribution of our personal interpretation; mimesis does not create an absolute identification of nature, since it still considers identifications as impossible. In this way, mimetic impulse shows us what should be the role of the subject in rational understanding:

Spirit does not identify the non-identical: It identifies with it. By pursuing its own identity with itself, art assimilates itself with the non-identical: this is the contemporary stage of development of art’s mimetic essence. (Adorno, 1970, 134)

One of the main objections that can be raised to Adorno's evaluation of the possibilities of developing a critical consciousness concerns the extremely limited access to his aesthetic critical models, which presents a form of "elitism". To put it more directly: is it possible, in the "administered world", to grasp the social tensions represented in the dissonances of atonal music? The "standardized" masses cannot do so. Yet, the critique of Adorno's "elitism" cannot lead to the apology of commercial "art" or any other form of ideological products of cultural industry. How can we avoid the alternative between an elitist conception of how to achieve a critical consciousness and the impossibility of conceding any more room to the advancement of ideological cultural standardization? For Adorno the solution lies in the potential advancements of technical reason: the emancipation from "the spell of labor". (Adorno, 1963, 145) Here it seems that we can face a problem of priority in Adorno's perspective. What comes first, the change in material conditions of production which would allow a critical consciousness, or the critical consciousness which would determine a different productive structure? Adorno's solution harks back to Marx;³ the relationship between critical consciousness (theory) and a change in material conditions of production (practice) should not concede priority to any of these

³ Marx distanced himself from idealism of Hegel and also materialism of Feuerbach. Marx argued that there must be consistency between theory and action. He is advocating for abolishment of the gap between praxis and theory, saying: "Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it."

moments: “praxis does not proceed independently of theory, nor theory independently of praxis” (Adorno, 1963, 276).

Adorno, though, dedicated practically the whole of his philosophical production to the critique of ideology and to the development of a dialectical approach for the construction of a critical theory. In the end he entrenched himself behind the taboo of giving positive images of forms of practice that would overcome the spell of labor/commodities. This constraint was caused by his conviction that the affirmation of any positive model would immediately represent a barrier to autonomous thought; any model that is not purely critical can be easily transformed into a form of dogmatism. This obstinacy can be partially justified by the fact that Adorno’s original ambition was to be a musical composer, that his critical perspective was always filtered by his primary interests in music and, to a broader extent, in aesthetics. The primary image of liberating praxis that he personally experienced was musical performance. His contact with the spell of labor was only indirect, through his critical analysis of capitalism’s contradictions. We should then not be surprised if Adorno’s most important monographs were dedicated to major musical composers (but also to key authors in literature), while he only marginally addressed other and more contemporary forms of artistic expression and, most noticeably, movies. Adorno was definitely too hasty in marginalizing new artistic forms in music, as he did for example with jazz. His rejection of the artistic potential of jazz has solid theoretical grounds based on the analysis of its form, but his knowledge of this music was too limited to

its most commercial production. A similar haste can be detected concerning movies. We can easily imagine what could have been the reaction of a highbrow and refined German intellectual, trained in music in the School of Vienna, who entertained a close working relationship with the elite of intellectuals of 20th century, to the commercial production of Hollywood movies. Immediately bored by a content that was calling for a coarse identification with the lifestyle of capitalism, and the clear regressive messages often portrayed in the "moral" of cheap Hollywood production certainly created an immediate rejection of this artistic form in Adorno. But while he definitely did not deepen his analysis of movies even remotely close to other artistic forms, nonetheless Adorno approached the production of movies according to his typical aesthetic analysis. On the one hand, as I discussed earlier, he addressed the content part of movies, overwhelmingly involved with the ideological manipulation of the masses, on the other hand he analyzed the formal aspect of them, which involved the dissolution of the artistic aura due to the immanent realism they involved.

Movies presented, according to Adorno, the main problems of any artistic creation. At the level of content, they were largely included into the ideological function generated by culture industry. Movies had an element of propaganda which could be expressed explicitly or implicitly. They could glorify bourgeois values as the ideal form of existence and enforce passivity and conformity in the audience. While we will discuss the ideological issues related to culture industry, we should also notice that Adorno did not consider the problems of content in movies as necessary. Actually,

when movies were capable of emancipating from the economic structure of capitalism, they could express a very critical message, even if not directly. Antonioni's *La Notte* (one of the few movies Adorno praises maybe because he is mentioned in it) was portraying the emptiness of bourgeois life in a "trancelike" atmosphere. Shock images of early surrealist movies, even if considered as not too open to a conceptual understanding, challenged the audience into a severe critique of dominant values. In other words, even if Hollywood was an industry producing sheer commodities that reinforced a passive reception of the dictates of capitalism, movies could emancipate themselves from this function and offer a critical perspective to the audience. But even this critical message could not be disclosed immediately or realistically. This is the core of Adorno's critique of, "orthodox" Marxist reading of the use of art. Even though in accordance with the structural Marxist critique of capitalism, Adorno rejected the first and basic point of Marxist aesthetics: realism. Socially and critically aware movies, although displaying a correct image of social reality, miss the point of art. No artwork can impose a "message" on the audience, even if the message is correct. Adorno thought that having an explicit, realistic message in a work of art ended up doing the same mistake of propaganda: a message is predisposed for the audience, who then has no room for developing free and autonomous thought. Sociology has the task of revealing the problems related to capitalism, not art. Indoctrination is a problem no matter where it politically stands. We can wonder what would be the reaction of Adorno to a movie by Ken Loach. While it is easy to envision

Adorno's repulsion for mainstream movie production, which is actually just as ideological as it was during his times, we can imagine his critique to militant Marxist productions as the ones of Loach. Loach's realism in showing the brutality of capitalism has the function of exposing the audience to a critical awareness of social reality, and yet this awareness, for Adorno, should not be achieved directly. Loach has definitely the social value of disclosing to the masses the awareness of specific problems of capitalism, but, in Adorno's eyes, art should indicate the mechanisms of the type of rationality that determines these problems. Capitalism can be corrected only through a new form of rationality that is no longer based on the construction of permanent identities.

The debate between realistic forms of art and the abstract and "elitist" modern expressions is present since the early 20th century. A clear example of that is the debate between Adorno and his close friend Walter Benjamin. Benjamin never experienced the latest development of culture industry in advanced capitalism, since he committed suicide in 1940. But his close friendship with Bertolt Brecht brought him to an enthusiasm for those new forms of artistic production that relied on mass reproduction. In his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935), Benjamin discussed the major consequences of the loss of the aura of works of art when mechanically reproduced. But while the authenticity of the work of art was compromised by this process, Benjamin also remarked the important political consequences that mass-reproduction involved. Art was historically produced

primarily for private consumption (especially in modernity), while its new technical reproduction, best exemplified by photography and movies, had the great advantage of bringing art back to the masses. In very few words, the new techniques of mechanical reproduction of art could have a “democratizing” effect on the distribution of art, and when used in the correct (that is, Marxist, in Benjamin’s perspective) manner, they could foster a critical awareness in the proletariat leading to the class consciousness required for a socialist revolution. Adorno was quite receptive of Benjamin’s idea concerning the loss of the aura in mechanical reproductions, but he never shared the idea of creating class consciousness through art. Class consciousness requires a direct, realistic exposure to the problems of capitalism, but art, once again, has a different function. Art needs to reawaken independent forms of thought without any imposition. Marxist aesthetics, when directly open to realism, runs the risk of falling into ideology, no matter how “good” the message of ideology is. Maybe the important return to Adorno’s theory in contemporary aesthetics proves that Adorno’s critique was well grounded. A critical masses were not just the result of Fascism or advanced capitalism; the same homologation to the dominant ideology was just as evident in “real socialist” countries.

If problems related to the content of works of art, including movies, cannot be easily solved with the rhetoric of a revolutionary “message”, those related to the technical, formal aspects of movies are even more radical. A major difference

between the temporality of film and that of music involves the issue of reproduction that was at the core of Adorno's objections to Benjamin's artwork essay. The relations between time and movement inscribed in film, the static filmstrip, and the dynamics of projection differ substantially from the relations between the notation of a musical piece and its actualization of interpretation – in performance. It should also be noted that the electronic and digital availability of films has given viewers a greater freedom in performing and interpreting the film, although this does not make it the same thing as musical practices of improvisation and aleatory processes in performance. Indeed, it may be that the only level at which aspects of musical and cinematic time and movement can be usefully compared is that of the listening/viewing experience.

Adorno's critique of a regressive or illusory emancipation of rhythm from metronomic – chronometric, mechanical – time bears on film aesthetics in the context of a broader debate on rhythm, the body, and technology that emerged in Europe in the early 20th century. In that debate, the conception of rhythm in terms of the accelerated speed of industrial-urban modernity competed with the advocacy of a different kind of rhythm – a physiological, organic sense of rhythm attuned to the cyclical processes of nature and preindustrial modes of collective labor and linked to fantasies of community.

In his influential book *Das Wesen des Rhythmus (The Nature of Rhythm, 1923)*, Ludwig Klages explained the irreconcilable opposition between the flow of “primal rhythm” (heartbeat, breath, planets, tides, waves) and the staccato measures of

clocks and metronomes imposed by the “rational, ordering, and segmenting activity of the intellect”. Suppressed and disrupted by the regime of machinic civilization, the shocks of metropolitan traffic, organic rhythm was hailed as a remedy against the pathologies of modern living in a whole range of movements, from body culture and expressive dance (eurhythmic gymnastics), and vitalist philosophy. It is not surprising that these two competing discourses on rhythm played an important part in the work and writings of the cinematic avant-garde of the 1920s, as in Epstein, Dulac, Léger, Richter, and Eisenstein – in particular the fascination with accelerated montage in the wake of Griffith’s *Intolerance* (1916). As montage, the manipulation of tempo through rhythmic editing served to articulate the experience of modern life in terms of an overcoming of natural by mechanical rhythms. Reading Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927) in terms of the rhythm debate – flooding waters versus structures of machinic oppression, both mediated by the image of the heart – Micheal Cowan, in *The Heart Machine: “Rhythm” and Body in Weimar Film and Fritz Lang’s Metropolis*, credits the film with trying to imagine cinema as “a forum for mediating between technological and organic rhythms”. (Cowan, 2007, 132) We could discern a more radical version of that project developed around the same time, and probably in awareness of the rhythm debate, in Benjamin’s notion of the cinema as a medium of collective mimetic innervation and play-form of technology. For Adorno, on the contrary, there is no place in art for images of a reconciled future, regardless of whether materialist or

idealist form; images that can only be as impossible or false as they are desirable. In one of his most quoted passages he writes:

The only philosophy which can be responsibly practiced in the face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption. Knowledge has no light but that shed on the world by redemption [...]. [P]erspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light. (Adorno, 1979, 247)

Aesthetic experience is not to be understood as the subject's experience of the object but rather as that which elicits the crisis of the identity of subject and object. Aesthetic experience compels us to question our relationship to the object, which is never ready at hand.

In order to get a better grasp on Adorno's ideas on film aesthetics and the changes during different periods of his work a division of them in three distinct phases could be helpful: Adorno in Frankfurt (1925-1938), Adorno in exile (1938-1949), and Adorno after returning to Germany (post World War II). The main purpose of such division is to show how Adorno's thought concerning the role of movies evolved during these phases, shifting into a more reconciliatory view of their function.

1.1 Adorno in Frankfurt (1925-1938)

The first phase consists of early writings - mostly for the journal *Musikblätter des Anbruch* - concerning popular culture in the form of “light music” and “kitsch”⁴, such as the European operetta, popular hits, and jazz, as well as “mechanical music”, which included gramophone records, the radio, and “the musical problems of the cinema”, both silent and with sound. Then Adorno’s writings expanded mainly in 1936, when Adorno wrote *On Jazz* (1936) and then *On the Fetish-Character of Music and the Regression of Listening* (1936, published in 1938), up to his exile in the United States (from 1938 to 1949).

Already in 1936, Adorno’s mocking verdict on the current state of the film world and its entanglement with the capitalist society led to a fierce controversy with his friend Walter Benjamin. As I mentioned, according to the latter, the technological apparatus wipes out the aura of images, making them appear in a different light through the shock-effects produced by montage (Benjamin, 2006, 119-120). Thus, Benjamin believed that film would prepare the public for coping with the conditions of reality in a critical manner, by establishing a “reflexive relation with modernity and modernization” (Hansen, 2012, 69). As Benjamin explains:

⁴ At this period of time in his life Adorno was still studying composition at the Hoch Conservatory and his writings were mostly consisting of concert reviews. He used to work with many journals at that time, like *Zeitschrift für Musik*, *Neue Blätter für Kunst und Literatur*, and later in 1925 the Viennese journal *Musikblätter des Anbruch*.

What withers in the age of technological reproducibility of the work of art is the latter's aura. This process is symptomatic; its significance extends far beyond the realm of art. It might be stated as a general formula that the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to reach the recipient in his or her own situation, it actualizes that which is reproduced. These two processes lead to a massive upheaval in the domain of objects handed down from the past – a shattering of tradition which is the reverse side of the present crisis and renewal of mankind. (Benjamin, 2006, 104)

Benjamin saw the montage technique used in the avant-garde silent film as a potential device and tried to show that, with the historical change in the production and reception of art, art could become an instrument of political revolution for the first time in history. Adorno did not share his friend's optimism regarding this new medium. He rejected Benjamin's idea that a transformative potential would inhere the camera technology itself. In particular, he contested that technological images were per se devoid of aura. On the contrary, he observed that commercial Hollywood movies were especially infused with auratic effects through and through. (Adorno, 1980, 123) What is more, given the conventional, consumer-friendly and predictable shape of the majority of the films shown in movie theatres, he also called into question that the motion picture was a priori progressive. Thus, Adorno criticized Benjamin for overrating the inherent forces of the medium and overlooking its actual

appearance in society, which shows that film was part of the problem of the modern society rather than a means to overcome its current state. Benjamin was convinced that film could be released from the hegemony of capital and appropriated by the masses, while Adorno not only doubted that such a liberation was possible; he also remained pessimistic about both the capacity and the desire of spectators to emancipate themselves from the dominating power structures of society. For Adorno, it was a failure of dialectical thinking when Benjamin associated aura and autonomous art “to which it then flatly assigned a counter-revolutionary function.” (Lonitz, 1999, 129) Adorno contested the emancipatory effect of the film and the idea that it could help the proletariat to become conscious of its position as a potential historical subject, and the idea that this would prevent it from becoming absorbed into bourgeois ideology – a process which in his view was long since complete. “The laughter of the cinema audience”, he told Benjamin, “is anything but salutary and revolutionary; it is full of the worst bourgeois sadism.” And later on, he added, the idea that “a reactionary individual can be transformed into a member of the avant-garde through an intimate acquaintance with the films of Chaplin strikes me as simple romanticization.” (Lonitz, 1999, 130)

Adorno, in his letters to Benjamin, warned him about falling too much under the influence of Bertolt Brecht. He was concerned about Brecht’s interpretation of Marxism and also about the way in which Brecht insisted on the political nature of drama. As Henri Lonitz addresses this argument between Adorno and Benjamin in *The*

Complete Correspondence, a dialectical conception of art and mass culture, a “dialectic between the extremes,” could only be achieved through “the elimination of Brechtian motifs” (Lonitz, 1999, 131). The way in which Benjamin tried to combine Marx’s materialism with a philosophical messianism was totally disapproved by Adorno. He classified Benjamin’s materialism as “anthropological” and ascribed to him the belief that “the human body represents the measure of all concreteness” (Lonitz, 1999, 146). Adorno felt unable to accept such an undialectical thought.

1.2 Adorno in exile (1938 – 1949)

This phase includes Adorno’s most prominent engagement with film and other types of mass-produced media like television and radio. In 1941 Adorno, in collaboration with Horkheimer, published an experimental film project, *Research Project on Anti-Semitism*. Later on, with the help of the American Jewish Congress as sponsor, he wrote the script *Below the Surface*, in order to test discriminatory attitudes toward Jews. Although the project never went farther than the script stage, Adorno followed up with the project through several versions from 1943 to 1946.

Two drafts of the film exist among Max Horkheimer’s papers: the first one seems to have been completed around June 1945, the second one was finished before April 1946. The outline of both drafts is more or less the same. During rush hour on a crowded subway, a woman falls out of a car and one of her fellow passengers, who

had earlier pushed a peddler, is the suspect. As people get into the fight and accusations start to turn into a riot, the woman declares that she is unhurt and that she is not certain about whether she was pushed or fell. In the first draft, in the peak of the fight, Martin Luther Thomas shouts, “Why, if I told you what I’ve gone through – being persecuted in my fight against them – my blood would boil in my veins!” (Jenemann, 2007, 99)

There are some differences, though, between the two drafts. In Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s initial conception, the guilt or innocence of the Jewish suspect was the primary difference between the films. However, in the two drafts, the screenwriters heed Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s note regarding the different ethnic and racial backgrounds of the accused, and those became the crucial distinction. In the memo from April 1946 introducing the film, this variation is described as follows: “Each version is very similar to the others with the exception of the character who is blamed for the accident. In one case it is a Jew, in another case it is a Negro, and in a third version it is a Gentile white-collar worker.” (Jenemann, 2007, 101) The final draft solves some of the problems of the first version. The first version was one script having separate, branching pages, titled depending on the accused character (“Negro version”, “Jewish version”, and “White Collar version”). The second version is simply three different scripts, each called by the name of the character in question (“Johnson,” “Shapiro,” and “Roberts”). One of the writers who helped with the final draft in English was Dore Schary, who became the head of production at Metro-

Goldwyn-Mayer and eventually president of the studio during the 1950s. Schary in 1947 produced the movie *Crossfire*, and Horkheimer believed that Schary stole their ideas from *Below the Surface*, and that *Crossfire* and the Anti-Defamation League had taken Adorno's and Horkheimer's "research" and transformed it into a hit film.

The other more well-known project that Adorno worked on during 1940's was *Composing for the Films*, written in collaboration with composer Hanns Eisler in 1944. When *Composing for the Films* was first published in English in 1947, it appeared under Eisler's name because Adorno did not want to draw the attention of McCarthyists to Eisler. Only in 1969, Eisler published the complete version of the text, with a new preface by Adorno.⁵

Adorno and Eisler reject abstract film that seeks to derive compositional laws from a presumed perceptual-psychological relation between the optical and the sonic qualities of the media, arguing that such film could only be considered as "ornamental applied-art" mistaking itself for avant-garde. Rather than imposing to the film formal principles that proved their expressive agency in other artforms, a genuinely filmic aesthetics should emanate from the material itself. Yet, the photographed images produced and set in motion by a technical apparatus are devoid of any determinate

⁵ Eisler first went to Adorno with the idea of writing this book in 1942 because he had received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation for a project analyzing film music. As their research material they got help from some major Hollywood film studios like Twentieth Century-Fox and Paramount and Eisler also used his own experience as the composer of film scores such as *Hangmen Also Die* (1943).

meaning to disclose: they are simply the result of an automatic recording. What makes them meaningful comes after, through montage (a model that already had been introduced by Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Alexandrov in 1928 *Manifesto on Sound*), their juxtaposition with sound and music, their rhythm etc.

Composing for the Films does not address the problem of images themselves, but rather discusses their interplay with antagonistic music scores. Still, it alludes to the possibility of subverting the representational character of filmic images precisely through their contrapuntal juxtaposition. Against the tendency in mainstream cinema to produce familiar moods or strong affects through the harmonization of sound and image, the two authors plead for a subversive employment of music. Rather than merely accompanying the visuals so as to amplify the intended effects, they think of the soundtrack as a constitutive part of the film, as a relatively autonomous element in the construction of the whole which disrupts the visuals and deflects them from their immediate appearance. Thus, the relation between music and images, their montage, “is not one of similarity, but, as a rule, one of question and answer, affirmation and negation, appearance and essence”. (Adorno, Eisler, 1969, 70) As a dialectical other to the visuals, that sort of music composition interrupts the commonsensical perception and adds a subversive dimension that unfolds through their concomitant presence.

1.3 Adorno after returning to Germany (post World War II)

The third phase of Adorno's engagement with film and technological mass media begins with the decision to (re)publish *Composing for the Films*. This phase includes writings applying the critique of the culture industry, such as his essays on television (based on research in the United States in 1952–53) and *Culture Industry Reconsidered* (1963). This phase also contains Adorno's efforts to understand film in the context of modern art, on which he elaborated more in *Aesthetic Theory* (1970). But his most substantial work on the question of film aesthetics remains the essay *Transparencies on Film* (1966), written in solidarity with the Oberhauseners. Adorno begins his discussion of film in *Transparencies on Film* by referring to the Young German Cinema, a group of filmmakers from West Germany who on 28 February 1962 at the Eighth West German Short Film Festival in Oberhausen read out a manifesto – that became known as the Oberhausen manifesto – in which they referred to the previous sixty years of the film industry as 'Daddy's Cinema'. Adorno identifies the 1966 film *Der Junge Törless* (*Young Törless*), by Volker Schlöndorff (adapted from the autobiographical novel, *The Confusions of Young Törless* by Robert Musil), as the initial point of the New German Cinema movement.

Adorno had been on friendly terms with Alexander Kluge (the main filmmaker behind the Oberhausen Manifesto) since the 1950s, and he often jokingly referred to Kluge as the nonconformist child he had always wanted. Alexander Kluge, a filmmaker and writer who had previously studied law as well as history and church music, was

also a qualified lawyer who succeeded Hellmut Becker in advising the Institute of Social Research on legal matters and who sat on the board of trustees. Adorno recommended Kluge to Fritz Lang, with whom Kluge then worked for some time as an assistant. Adorno saw the films that Kluge made during this period: *Yesterday Girl* (1966) and *Artistes at the Top of the Big Top: Disorientated* (1967), and it is probably under Kluge's influence he did show willingness to admit the possibility of accepting the function of film medium for some movies like Antonioni's *La Notte* (1961). Adorno pointed out that Michelangelo Antonioni's *La Notte* is a film whose static character "provocatively" negates the medium-specific focus on moving objects and asserts: "Whatever is anti-cinematic in this film gives it the power to express, as if with hollow eyes, the emptiness of time". (Adorno, 1947, 201)

According to Adorno, unlike music, which at least up to the electronic period allowed a clear distinction between innate technique and performance, film has no distinction between technique and technology. Adorno mentions Benjamin's observation about film that: "the cinema has no original which is then reproduced on a mass scale: the mass product is the thing itself." (Adorno, 1966, 200) The case that Adorno used to convey his point is Chaplin, who either purposefully or unknowingly underuses cinematic technique:

being content with the photographic rendering of sketches, slapstick routines, or other performances. This in no way lowers Chaplin's status and one can hardly doubt that he was 'filmic'. Nowhere but on the screen could this enigmatic figure –

reminiscent of old-fashioned photographs right from the start – have developed its concept. (Adorno, 1966, 200)

The main problem Adorno raised about a film aesthetics is that the photographic basis of the moving image privileges the representational object over aesthetically autonomous procedures. Considering his doubts about abstract film or animation in the critique of the culture industry, his reflections on film aesthetics are clearly aimed at live-action film, as he mentions in *Transparencies on Film*: “Even where film dissolves and modifies its object as much as it can, the disintegration is never complete” (Adorno, 1947, 207).

Kluge believed that Adorno mainly liked the use of music and the soundtrack in his films. They both shared an interest in music (especially the opera) and usually their conversations were about the connection between music and film and on whether the making of a film resembled the composition of a piece of music, or how the visual and the musical side of films could be put together in order to achieve a harmony of image, words and music. In line with the slogan of the Oberhausener “The old film is dead. We believe in the new one,” Adorno rejects the old Daddy’s Cinema by saying: “What is repulsive about Daddy’s Cinema is its infantile character, regression manufactured on an industrial scale. The sophistry of the defenders insists on the very type of achievement the concept of which is challenged by the opposition.” (Adorno, 1947, 187)

The manipulation of the masses begins with the fact that, on the surface, it seems that people are demanding to watch these bad films but, in the core, they are manipulated into doing so. For Adorno, Daddy's Cinema is simply responding to what the viewers as consumers want or, in better words, it gives them an "unconscious canon of what they do not want." As he further explains: "It is undeniable that Daddy's Cinema indeed corresponds to what the consumers want, or, perhaps, rather that it provides them with an unconscious canon of what they do not want, that is, something different from what they are presently being fed. Otherwise, the culture industry could not have become a mass culture." (Adorno, 1947, 195)

Addressing the "reified consciousness," Adorno notes how the apologists of the culture industry claim that it is the "art of the consumer" which, in reality, is only the "ideology of ideology". (Adorno, 1947, 194) It might appear as if they are only responding to the consumer's demands, but in reality it is a form of exploitation, as the audience assimilate themselves to what they are watching in an uncritical manner. Against these manipulative practices by the culture industry, Adorno notes how a more experimental cinema has developed, which might be an alternative to make audiences think more critically. For Adorno, this positive aspect is present in those films that are not technically complete and have an improvised quality, and this is precisely what might give them the possibility of becoming autonomous art. Comparing the autonomous art and culture industry, Adorno notes:

While in autonomous art anything lagging behind the already established technical standard does not rate, vis-à-vis the culture industry – whose standard excludes everything but the predigested and the already integrated, just as the cosmetic trade eliminates facial wrinkles – works which have not completely mastered their technique, conveying as a result something consolingly uncontrolled and accidental, have a liberating quality. In them the flaws of a pretty girl's complexion become the corrective to the immaculate face of the professional star. (Adorno, 1947, 188)

Adorno argued that a form of emancipated film is not falling into the sensory immediacy trap and should not depend on technology. Techniques that deliberately diminish the realism inherent in photographic process, as Adorno mentions, are soft-focus shots, superimpositions, and frequently flashbacks. In Adorno's opinion, film's dependency on industrial technology, as a means of mechanical reproduction and circulation, has dominated the development of artistic technique, and the main problem is that film's photographically based structure brings out immediacy and iconic representation, which restricts the possibilities of artistic construction.

Adorno believed that by using montage, film can be salvaged from pseudo-reality. In *Transparencies on Film* he argued that the most promising potential of film is its ability to interact with other media, especially certain kinds of music. He cites a

television film by the Argentinian composer Mauricio Kagel, *Anthitese* (1962)⁶, which to him was one of most the powerful examples of interaction of film and music.

Adorno's view on the intersection of artistic technique and industrial technology is not limited to film. In *Aesthetic Theory* he addresses the relationship between inner-aesthetic technique and extra-aesthetic technology as historically and dialectically mediated. According to Adorno, the very idea of inducing a meaning from the outside to an aesthetic material, of instrumentalizing artworks for intentional purposes and inflecting them through an extra-aesthetic content, is a corruption of the particular force of art. For the latter consists precisely in its resistance against the societal logic and schemes of signification. By contrast, the very idea of communication through an artwork, be it for ideological or emancipatory purposes, turns it into a social product like any other. As Adorno argued:

Art does not provide knowledge of reality by reflecting it photographically or 'from a particular perspective' but by revealing whatever is veiled by the empirical form

⁶ *Anthitese* is an instrumental theatre that Kagel dedicated to John Cage and it consists of electronic music generated by speakers and theatrical performances. Miriam Hansen described the film as follows: "*Antithèse für einen Darsteller mit elektronischen und öffentlichen Klängen* tracks the psychic meltdown of a sound engineer haunted by an unruly soundscape ostensibly emanating from an array of old and new recording, mixing, and amplifying equipment that combines "electronic and public," directional and ambient sounds, including music and birdsong; the film systematically blurs the distinction between diegetic and nondiegetic sources, and prompts a corresponding breakdown of coherent space and continuous movement, initially doubled on a TV monitor within the studio." (Hansen, 2012, 246)

assumed by reality, and this is possible only by virtue of art's own autonomous status.

(Adorno, 1980, 162)

Even in the critique of the culture industry, Adorno allows an exception for film's technologically based procedures when he mentions that the culture industry preserves its ideological stability precisely by "carefully shield[ing] itself from the full potential of the techniques contained in its products." (Adorno, 1947, 88) However, Adorno acknowledged that technology sets a standard that cannot be reversed or ignored and in his writings on music, especially in the 1938 text *Music in Radio*, influenced by Kracauer's essay on the mass ornament, maintains "that there is in principle no way out of mechanical reproduction and that any progressive tendencies can only be realized by going right through it." (Adorno, 1947, 89) In a similar manner, he and Eisler argue in *Composing for the Films* that:

[T]echnology as such [should not] be held responsible for the barbarism of the cultural industry [...]. Technology opens up unlimited opportunities for art in the future, and even in the poorest motion pictures there are moments when such opportunities are strikingly apparent [...]. [T]he same principle that has opened up these opportunities also ties them to big business. (Adorno, Eisler, 1969, 2-3)

Nonetheless, Adorno at this point does not deny that film could *eventually* become a genuine art form. However pessimistic his account of commercial cinema might have been, and however critical he was about the inherent revolutionary force of its technology, he neither ended up condemning the medium as such, nor excluding it

once and for all from the sphere of genuine art. He approaches this sphere through the dimension of its historical development and in a dialectical relation with the society from which it stems and which it challenges. As he claimed in *Aesthetic Theory*:

Posed from on high, the question whether something such as film is or is no longer art leads nowhere. Because art is what it has become, its concept refers to what it does not contain. [...] Art can be understood only by its laws of movement, not according to any set of invariants. It is defined by its relation to what it is not. The specifically artistic in art must be derived concretely from its other; that alone would fulfill the demands of a materialistic-dialectical aesthetics. (Adorno, 1970, 3)

Rather than relating the aesthetic agency of art to a particular media, Adorno understands genuine artworks as the unassimilable other of society, a counterpart that disrupts society's appearance as an overarching totality by rescuing that which it excludes and represses, the non-identical. Consequently, the artistic quality of film, just as the aesthetic potential of any artform, depends on its capacity of establishing an antagonistic relation with society through its subversive configuration rather than on its technological condition or the intention of the filmmaker. In this later phase of his production Adorno considers film, this genuinely modern invention conceived for the masses, as an inherently collective medium: the images set in motion are the images of the collective. As such, it bears a particular subversive potential: its images, rhythms and forms grant access to collective experience in relation to the social reality from which they emerge. While cinema is certainly more social fact than autonomous

form – to the point that its collective dimension becomes primary – it is nevertheless not completely devoid of artistic autonomy. That much is true for Adorno: one cannot ignore the ideological power of film and should not refrain from criticizing its instrumentalization. Nor should one disregard its critical potential as a form that is able to penetrate into the standardized representation disseminated in capitalist society through the products of the culture industry. In the service of the culture industry, film takes part in the construction of the ideological veil hiding the antagonisms of reality under a glossy, falsely harmonized imagery – but it is also through filmic means that this veil can be pierced and problematized in its impacts on society.

2. Culture Industry and Cultural Commodity

Although Adorno in early 1930's worked on effect of mass culture especially on music⁷, it was only after his emigration to the United States that him and Horkheimer developed the theory of the culture industry. Adorno and Horkheimer worked during their exile in the United States from late-1930's till early 1940's to develop the theory of culture industry and this timing coincides with the culmination of the success of

⁷ See *On the Social Situation of Music* (1932).

radio and cinema, and not long before the overwhelming role of television over popular culture.⁸

In *Culture Industry Reconsidered*, Adorno explains why he and Horkheimer chose the term 'culture industry' instead of 'mass culture' or 'popular culture':

"In our drafts we spoke of 'mass culture.' We replaced that expression with 'culture industry' in order to exclude from the outset the interpretation agreeable to its advocates: that it is a matter of something like a culture that arises spontaneously from the masses themselves, the contemporary form of popular art. From the latter the culture industry must be distinguished in the extreme" (Adorno, 1975, 12)

They saw the culture industry as artificially created culture and as an instrument of social control, so as to consider the term 'popular, mass culture'⁹ (as coming from or

⁸ The effects of American television were examined later on by Adorno in two essays '*Fernsehen als Ideologie*' and '*Prolog zum Fernsehen*' (For an English-language essay on television, including some of the ideas in these pieces, see 'How to Look at Television', in *The Culture Industry Selected essays on mass culture*, 1991, 157).

⁹ In order to clarify the use of the term mass/mass culture in Adorno's work and why it could not be considered as an alibi of Adorno's elitism, I agree with Deborah Cook's explanation in her book *The Culture Industry Revisited: Theodor W. Adorno on Mass Culture*, where she states that some scholars interpret the term mass as "an abusive epithet for the lower class". However, "It is clear from his discussion in "Reflexionen zur Klassentheorie" that Adorno included both workers and the bourgeoisie among those he occasionally labeled the "masses." In addition, although the masses are an amalgamation of both classes, Adorno does not use the concept to refer to a homogeneous group, nor does it replace the Marxist notion of class [...] It is still possible to speak of classes because of the continued existence of economic exploitation [...] Nonetheless, owing to the bourgeoisie's loss of economic autonomy, to the veil screening economic exploitation, and the effects of reification, two

for people) as misleading. Douglas Kellner explains the use of the term 'culture industry' in *The Media and Democracy*:

The term 'culture industry' [...] contains a dialectical irony typical of the style of critical theory: culture, as traditionally valorized, is supposed to be opposed to industry and expressive of individual creativity while providing a repository of humanizing values. In the culture industries, however, culture has come to function as a mode of ideological domination rather than of humanization or emancipation. (Kellner, 2003, 8)

In one of his letters to Walter Benjamin, dated 3rd of March 1936, Adorno explains the difference between high art and mass-produced popular art, which represents one of his most famous statements on culture industry. Adorno asserts that both high art as well as industrially produced consumer art "bear the stigmata of capitalism, both contain elements of change. Both are torn halves of an integral freedom, to which, however, they do not add up." (in Bloch, 1977, 123)

The question of the culture industry for Adorno concerns the possibilities for social transformation. We must comprehend the culture industry by its abilities of affecting 'integral freedom'. But a problem is still present, namely, that although high art and

different socio-economic strata have become a "mass," confronting anonymous political and economic powers which impose the same laws on both." (Cook, 1996, 12)

the product of culture industry are two halves of an integral freedom their sum does not create a whole.

According to Adorno, from the beginning the culture industry must be analyzed along with the acknowledgment of the failure of evolutionary aspects of Marxist historical materialism. The classical Marxist belief that emancipatory elements will be produced out of capitalism leading to class consciousness for Adorno is just an illusion. "Universal history must be construed and denied. After the catastrophes that have happened, and in view of the catastrophes to come, it would be cynical to say that a plan for a better world is manifested in history and unites it." (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 320) As we already saw in the last part, this mistrust in historical progression is further explained: "No universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb. It ends in the total menace which organized mankind poses to organized men, in the epitome of discontinuity." (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 34)

Many of the key ideas of Adorno's theory on the culture industry first appeared in 1938 in an essay called *On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening*, and later comprehensively materialized in his and Horkheimer's book *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

The Enlightenment, by empowering a form of rationality which enables people to overcome the myths and to dominate nature, because of its self-destructive

character, produces concrete possibilities of returning into myth. 'Instrumental rationality' as the characteristic of enlightened reason represents a form of domination, which goes all the way back to the formation of the conceptual understanding and identity thinking.¹⁰

For Adorno and Horkheimer, art plays one of the most distinctive roles in the progress of Enlightenment. In the first excursus of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* on Myth and Enlightenment, Adorno and Horkheimer famously chose a Homeric tale in book XII of *Odysseus*, which recount the story of Odysseus and his encounter with the Sirens, to discuss the "entanglement of myth, domination, and labor." (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 32) In Canto 12, Odysseus is warned by Circe that there are only two possible ways for him and his men to survive the song of the Sirens. First, in order to block the temptation caused by Sirens' song, he has to plug his men's ears with wax, and they must row the boat without any interruption. The only functioning members of society would be the ones that are only fully engrossed in labor and could survive the journey through their alienated labor. The other surviving method is the one Odysseus chose; he is going to be bound to the mast, so that he can listen to the songs. Odysseus hears the song, but he cannot move and:

¹⁰ This is the core of Adorno's critique of reason as he developed it especially in his *Negative Dialectics*. The moment of identification of nature's non-identity represents the branding trademark of instrumental reason, and it leads to the creation of a "second nature" which, as he explains in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, is repressive of both internal and external nature.

his men, who do not listen, know only the song's danger but nothing of its beauty, and leave him at the mast in order to save him and themselves. They reproduce the oppressor's life together with their own, and the oppressor is no longer able to escape his social role. The bonds with which he has irremediably tied himself to practice, also keeps the Sirens away from practice: their temptation is neutralized and becomes a mere object of contemplation – becomes art. (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 34)

For Adorno and Horkheimer the story of Odysseus and the Sirens could be interpreted as an allegory of what happens in capitalist society, in which both the capitalist and the workers are imprisoned by their social roles. The workers having only survival in mind are chained to a life of labor without any temptation for beauty; and the capitalist set his goal for accumulation of more capital which makes him unable give in into happiness.

When high art is only accessible to the upper class of society, the universality of art could only be an illusion of universality, and it is then reduced to culture industry, which in this form no longer promises happiness, but only offers temporarily relief from labor: "Amusement under late capitalism is the prolongation of work. It is sought as an escape from the mechanized work process, and to recruit strength in order to be able to cope with it again." (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 137)

Adorno and Horkheimer, addressing the process through which everything is reduced to a commodity in capitalism, assert that the language that promotes this process could not be trusted: "There is no longer any available form of linguistic

expression which has not tended toward accommodation to dominant currents of thought; and what a devalued language does not do automatically is proficiently executed by societal mechanisms". (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, xi-xii)

In the chapter *The culture industry: Enlightenment as mass deception* the authors claim that, while it might appear as if in Capitalist society culture should be a chaotic matter (because of the decline of established religions and the fast growth of science and technology), it has in fact become objectively like any industry: "Culture now impresses the same stamp on everything. Films, radio and magazines make up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part." (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 120) The false happiness offered by the culture industry is the degraded version of a utopia of the present. The success of the culture industry is not about the ideology that it endorses, but about the fact that it eliminates any alternative thought that is not functional to the reproduction of the status quo.

When Adorno discusses the concept of culture industry and how it defeats the ability of reflection, one might be skeptical towards this analysis based on how watching a tv series or a Hollywood movie is not a sign that one has lost the ability for reflection and can actually be able to see through the manipulation of the system. However, if the audience were to be entirely passive, they would not be able of committing self-deception. But there is another level to this manipulation that Adorno and Horkheimer call for in the last part of their section about the culture industry in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: "The triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that

consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them.” (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 167) While this consumeristic behavior seems completely irrational, Adorno, in several of his writings, explains how culture industry includes the ability of its consumers to tell the difference between truth and falsity. For getting a better grasp on Adorno’s analysis of this irrational/rational duality of the system of consumption in capitalist society we can delve into his study of the Los Angeles Times astrology column, *The Stars Down to Earth* (1952–53). Here Adorno explains how occult or, as he calls it, “secondary superstition”, like any product of culture industry neither asks for an actual belief in supernatural powers nor rely on any scientific reason. The culture industry - and specifically here astrology - distorts the connection between fact and fiction, mixing mundane everyday life with an irrational metaphysical touch detached from any seriousness. “A certain abstractness enveloping the whole realm of the commercialized occult may well be concomitant with a substratum of disbelief and skepticism, the suspicion of phoniness so deeply associated with modern big time irrationality” (Adorno, 1953, 49).

Adorno’s experience in exile in America, and especially in Southern California, consistently contributed to the development of his analysis on culture industry. Martin Jay addresses this issue quoting Adorno in his book *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America*: “In America, I was liberated from a certain naïve belief in culture and attained the capacity to see culture from the outside. To clarify the point: in spite of all social criticism and all consciousness of the

primacy of economic factors, the fundamental importance of the mind- 'Geist'—was quasi dogma self-evident to me from the very beginning. The fact that this was not a foregone conclusion, I learned in America.” (Jay, 1986, 124)

Although Adorno never underestimated the totalitarian regimes, and especially fascist propaganda, in terms of being completely irrational, later on in his essay on astrology he tries to draw the attention to the similarities between these two phenomena and how they are developed in modern capitalist society:

People even of supposedly “normal” mind are prepared to accept systems of delusions for the simple reason that it is too difficult to distinguish such systems from the equally inexorable and equally opaque one under which they actually have to live out their lives. This is pretty well reflected by astrology as well by the two brands of totalitarian states which also claim to have a key for everything, know all the answers, reduce the complex to simple and mechanical inferences, doing away with anything that is strange and unknown and at the same time fail to explain anything. (Adorno, 1974, 83)

In later works, such as his essay *The Theory of Pseudo-Culture*, Adorno maintained that the need for cultural commodities is intensified because of the narcissistic need of consumers that are not satisfied with their socio-economic status. In *that essay* Adorno states that culture is not referring only to 'high' culture, but it represent the

entire manner of doing things in society by its members. The society that succumbs into the temptation of pseudo-culture has already failed to mature and progress.¹¹

The attitude which links pseudo-culture and collective narcissism is that of being in charge, of having a say, of conducting oneself and considering oneself as an expert [...] the narcissistic gratification of leading a secret life and belonging to a select group. This narcissistic gain exempts the individuals from reality testing [...] allowing them to live in the delusional systems supplied by the schemata of the culture industry. (Adorno, 1993, 33)

2.1 Culture industry and pseudo-individualism

The products of culture industry all share an important characteristic, namely, that they are all cut from the same mold. For instance, as we see in most Hollywood films, there are some basic molds of characters, plots and structures which create a formula for each types of movies, and the formula always remains the same. As Adorno and Horkheimer explain: "Films, radio and magazines make up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part. Even the aesthetic activities of political opposites are one in their enthusiastic obedience to the rhythm of the iron system." (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 120) This sameness of a formula applies to the form of popular

¹¹ The German word for pseudo-culture is "Halbbildung" which could be translated as half-education.

culture products and does not affect the content of it. One of the most famous examples that Adorno uses concerning this is on Jazz Music.¹²

The content of jazz happens to change continuously, but its form is always a pattern that repeats itself and hides its repetitive formula by using the excuse of being free style. Just like what happens with Jazz music and its audience, all the culture industry products have to seduce their consumers into believing that they are experiencing something new. Consumers would not buy identical products, so the

¹² Adorno wrote seven essays on Jazz from 1933 to 1953 (three essays in 1930's, two essays in 1940's and two essays in the fifties). The anti-jazz policies of Nazi Germany in early thirties encouraged Adorno to write his first essay on jazz *Abschied vom Jazz* (Farewell to jazz) in 1933 arguing that, although jazz was banned by the Nazi regime (because of racist beliefs of Nazis which considered jazz as black music), it was an ineffective move on the lifespan of this type of music since jazz was in decline anyway. In his second essay four years later *Über Jazz* (On jazz), he continued his argument on commercialized music and false promises of jazz music. In *American Jazz Music* of 1941, Adorno described the characteristics of jazz music as pseudo-vocalization and pseudo-morphosis: "The instrumental music behaves as if it were vocal, the mechanism as if it had a voice of its own [...] If there is a specific difference between jazz and ragtime, it lies within this pseudo-morphosis [of singing, speaking, and playing]. Ragtime was exclusively instrumental, in fact, limited to the piano [...] The pseudo-vocalization of jazz corresponds to the elimination of the piano, the 'private' middle-class instrument, in the era of the phonograph and radio" (Adorno, 1941, 169). In 1953 Adorno's last essay entitled *Zeitlose Mode: Zum Jazz* (Timeless fashion: on jazz) summarized twenty years of his views on jazz. Here Adorno argues that jazz is just like the timeless fashion. He claimed that jazz music uses same formulas a cliché over and over again like perennial fashion: "Jazz consists not in a basic organization of the material within which the imagination can roam freely and without inhibition, as within an articulate language, but rather in the utilization of certain well-defined tricks, formulas and clichés: to the exclusion of everything else. It is as though one were to cling convulsively to the 'latest thing' and deny the image of a particular year by refusing to tear off the page of the calendar. Fashion enthrones itself as something lasting and thus sacrifices the dignity of fashion, its transience." (Adorno, 1983, 123)

purpose of pseudo-individualism is to build the illusion that there are real differences between the products that modeled off of standardized form in culture industry. The example that Adorno uses in *A Social Critique of Radio Music* concerning radio music can be generalized for all products of the culture industry: “The consumer is unwilling to recognize that he is totally dependent, and he likes to preserve the illusion of private initiative and free choice. Thus standardization [in radio] produces the veil of pseudo-individualism.” (Adorno, 1945, 226)

Cultural commodities bring with them a sense of absolute and immediate use, and the use-value of cultural commodities in capitalist society is replaced by their exchange-value. For Adorno mass culture makes people believe that the only pleasurable and genuine use-value of any object is its exchange value.

The appearance of immediacy takes possession of the mediated exchange-value itself. If the commodity in general combines exchange-value and use-value, then the pure use-value, whose illusion the cultural goods must preserve in [a] completely capitalist society, must be replaced by pure exchange-value, which precisely in its capacity as exchange-value deceptively takes over the function of use-value [...]. The feelings which go to the exchange value create the appearance of immediacy at the same time as the absence of a relation to the object belies it. The more inexorably the principle of exchange-value destroys use-values for human beings, the more deeply does exchange-value disguise itself as the object of enjoyment.” (in Bernstein, 1991, 279)

If it is true that Adorno mainly brought up the pseudo-individualism in order to explain commodified music, however, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* he and Horkheimer mentioned the effects of pseudo-individuation on other commodities in the cycle of the culture industry: "Pseudo-individuality is rife: from the standardized jazz improvisation to the exceptional film star whose hair curls over her eye to demonstrate her originality" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 154).

In *The Schema of Mass Culture*, Adorno, while describing the characteristics of the molds that create different types of cultural commodities, states:

The task of the screen actor breaks down into a set of precisely defined obligatory exercises each of which is compared with the corresponding one in the work of all the other competitors in the same group. And then in the end we have the final spurt, the ultimate exertion which has been kept in reserve all along, the culmination without antecedent intensification isolated from the previous action, the opposite of the dramatic climax. The film is articulated into so many sequences but its total duration, like that of the hit song, is regulated as if by stopwatch. In a space of one and a half hours the film should have knocked out its audience as planned." (in Bernstein, 1991, 74-75)

In his essay *How to Look at Television*¹³ Adorno further explains how these patterns work in TV series, as for example in the crime shows. (Adorno, 1954, 213- 235) In that

¹³ Adorno and Horkheimer predicted in the early 1940s that television would become one of the most essential parts of the culture industry: "Television aims at a synthesis of radio and film, and is held up

essay, he describes how the commercial production of cultural goods nowadays work so efficiently that their impact on the consumers has simultaneously increased. Popular culture over time developed into a system: "The more the system of 'merchandising' culture is expanded, the more it tends also to assimilate the 'serious' art of the past by adapting this art to the system's own requirements." (Adorno, 1954, 215) In order to explain how the newer descendants in popular culture have been evolved, Adorno uses the examples of popular novels of the first half of the nineteenth century and television mystery shows. In those novels, although the victory of the good over the evil was always the outcome, there were lots of plots and subplots that prevented the readers from being aware of the moral, and they could expect anything to happen; something that is missing in the mystery crime shows. The

only because the interested parties have not yet reached agreement, but its consequences will be quite enormous and promise to intensify the impoverishment of aesthetic matter so drastically, that by tomorrow the thinly veiled identity of all industrial culture products can come triumphantly out into the open, derisively fulfilling the Wagnerian dream of the Gesamtkunstwerk -- the fusion of all the arts in one work" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 124). And later on, comparing television and film, they argued that the potential of television programs to be saturated by commerciality is so high that the movies seem rather less commercialized cultural products: "if technology had its way--the film would be delivered to people's homes as happens with the radio. It is moving toward the commercial system. Television points the way to a development which might easily enough force the Warner Brothers into what would certainly be the unwelcome position of serious musicians and cultural conservatives" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 161).

audience of these shows prefer to be “feeling on safe ground” (Adorno, 1954, 216), rather than looking for any excitement.

Another important part in the cultural commodity system is what Adorno calls “multilayered structure”. He states that mass media are not openly presenting the conclusion of all the actions that they portray, nor explicitly delivering the message that the consumer should get from these actions. There is always more than one message, and often the hidden messages have more importance than the apparent ones. “The relation between overt and hidden message will prove highly complex in practice. Thus, the hidden message frequently aims at reinforcing conventionally rigid and ‘pseudo-realistic’ attitudes similar to the accepted ideas more rationalistically propagated by the surface message.” (Adorno, 1954, 222). The effect of pseudo-realism of cultural commodities is stronger in the patterns used in television and film because these media can create more realistic content based on everyday life events. Today, we would address this process as the way in which subliminal messages are delivered by mass media reinforcing a passive acceptance of values aimed at the reproduction of the status quo.

Adorno explains that there are different types of genres that are used in producing television programs (and this applies also to movies). Every type of program has its own sets of formulas which: “to a certain degree, pre-established the attitudinal pattern of the spectator before he is confronted with any specific content and which largely determine the way in which any specific content is being perceived.” (Adorno,

1954, 226) A strict form of passivity is imposed on the audience, and it is finalized at the suppression of critical thought through the reinforcing of stereotypes.

The pattern in a cultural commodity system centers on the creation and imposition of stereotypes. Stereotypes endorse conformity, normalize behavioral standards and dictate what is socially acceptable. As Adorno and Horkheimer discussed, in a capitalist society the main aim is generating more profit, and in order to achieve this goal humans have to lessen their critical abilities: “The bread which the culture industry offers man is the stone of the stereotype.” (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 148)

In order to implement the idea upon consumers that they are active parts of society, culture industry uses various stereotypes. As Miriam Hansen explains in *Mass Culture as Hieroglyphic Writing*:

Horkheimer and Adorno ascribe the effectivity of mass-cultural scripts of identity not simply to the viewers' manipulation as passive consumers, but rather to their very solicitation as experts, as active readers. The identification with the stereotype is advanced by the appeal to a particular type of knowledge or skill predicated on repetition: the identification of a familiar face, gesture or narrative convention takes the place of genuine cognition. (Hansen, 1992, 51)

In *Fernsehen Als Ideologie (Television as Ideology)* Adorno explains how stereotypes, although organic part in the realm of art, in the hands of the culture industry turn into rigid and reified clichés. Adorno argued that the depiction of each

type of character in tv shows and movies is dangerously reinforcing the psychological division of the world into two separate groups of black (the out-group) and white (we, the in-group). (Adorno, 1954, 231). By studying some cultural stereotypes that worms their way into television and movies we can better understand the hidden ideas that psychoanalysis attributes to certain stereotypes. One of these stereotypes which Adorno addressed in many of his essays regards the artists/intellectuals versus real and strong man, which we will examine in detail in the chapter on the movie "300". Adorno argued that there is a popular idea that "the artist is not only maladjusted, introverted and a priori somewhat funny; but that he is really an 'aesthete', a weakling, and a 'sissy'. In other words, modern synthetic folklore tends to identify the artist with the homosexual and to respect only the 'man of action' as a real, strong man." (Adorno, 1954, 233)

2.2 Culture industry and Free time

A crucial concept discussed in the theory of culture industry is the one of 'free time'. Free time is a time which any individual is free to control and manage as he/she wants. By seizing the free time, culture industry could govern the last residues of individual freedom. In a capitalist society there are hidden similarities between work and free time. What we consider as free time usually in reality is only the time recuperating from the tiredness of our labor. Adorno argued that the separation of work and leisure is mainly illusory, as the activities that people practice in their free

time replicate the conditions of work. "Free time depends on the totality of social conditions, which continues to hold people under its spell. Neither in their work nor in their consciousness do people dispose of genuine freedom over themselves." (Adorno, 1991, 187)

The commodification of labor has increased the control over laborers. The workers, who are bored by the repetition of their work, generally want something new in their free time; however, being an efficient part of society means that the fatigue of working for endless hours does not allow anyone to dedicate the concentration that is needed to break free from the patterns of mass culture and experience something different than what they are accustomed at work. The purpose of most leisure time activities - organized within culture industry - is to rejuvenate the consumer and prepare them to go back to work and generate more profit. As Adorno argued in *Free Time* essay:

Because, in accordance with the predominant work ethic, time free of work should be utilized for the recreation of expended labor power, then work-less time, precisely because it is a mere appendage of work, is severed from the latter with puritanical zeal ... On the one hand one should pay attention at work and not be distracted or lark about; wage labor is predicated on this assumption and its laws have been internalized. On the other hand, free time must not resemble work in any way whatsoever, in order, presumably, that one can work all the more effectively afterwards. Hence the inanity of many leisure activities. (in Bernstein, 1991, 189-190)

In leisure time, as for any other aspect of capitalist society, autonomy and spontaneity do not exist. All that remains is standardized goods and ready to use products. As Adorno puts it: "They want standardized goods and pseudo-individuation, because their leisure is an escape from work and at the same time is molded after those psychological attitudes to which their workaday world exclusively habituates them." (Adorno, 1941, 38)

In his essay on free time, Adorno addressed media and symptoms of a double consciousness of the consumers of culture industry.¹⁴

What the culture industry presents people within their free time [...] is indeed consumed and accepted, but with a kind of reservation. Perhaps one can go even further and say it is not quite believed in. It is obvious that the integration of consciousness and free time has not yet completely succeeded. The real interests of individuals are still strong enough to resist, within certain limits, total inclusion [...] A society, whose inherent contradictions persist undiminished, cannot be totally integrated even in consciousness. (in Bernstein 1991, 169)

¹⁴ The results of studies of the Institute for Social Research in 1960's on the German public's reception of the Dutch royal wedding showed how the audience at the same time were excited and involved with the program while keeping their distance and being skeptical.

Although Adorno did not fully discuss the issue of double consciousness, he mentioned that, as a consequence of it, the culture industry does not have the ability to completely control the consciousness and unconsciousness of its consumers.

2.3 Culture Industry and Cinema

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* cinema was introduced as a typical part of a system that, as a whole, creates the culture industry with the main goal of turning the audience to passive consumers. Although Adorno might have changed some of his ideas on film after the New German Cinema, he mostly maintained his and Horkheimer's stance on Culture Industry. In response to Benjamin's optimistic view on the progressive elements of film, Adorno and Horkheimer argued that Hollywood film production, like any other product of the culture industry, is systematized industrially and uses all the standard patterns and formulas to convey its purpose, which is adjusting the spectators to the life of consumer in a mass society.

They hammer into every brain the old lesson that continuous friction, the breaking down of all individual resistance, is the condition of life in this society. Donald Duck in the cartoons and the unfortunate in real life get their thrashing so that the audience can learn to take their own punishment. (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 138).

In Adorno's writings, films overall do not fit in the category of aesthetics. The primary reason that film could not be considered as art is because of the technological

origins of it, which makes the aesthetic techniques secondary to the technology.

Adorno, in *Composing for the Films* explains:

Quite apart from the detrimental influence of commercialism, aesthetic analyses of the motion picture easily become inadequate because it is rooted less in artistic wants [in der künstlerischen Konzeption] than in the fact that in the twentieth century optical and acoustic technic reached a definite stage, which is essentially unrelated, or related only very indirectly, to any possible aesthetic idea. (Adorno and Eisler, 1971, 63)

Cinema reproduce the everyday reality by putting together familiar places, objects and gestures; however, this similarity to everyday reality is the opposite of what Adorno called mimesis. What commercial movies do is posing themselves as realistic, and Adorno called this the “pseudo-realism” of film. Although movies recreate the everyday reality using all the ordinary and tangible life experiences, there is always this feeling that the objects that appear in films are more real than the one in reality, and that is because their technique has alienated these objects from their contexts and recreated them as cultural commodities. The rigid stereotypes and cliché of Hollywood stars and their characters are examples of the pseudo-realism in commercial movies: “Pseudo-realism allows for the direct and extremely primitive identification achieved by popular culture, and it presents a façade of trivial buildings, rooms, dresses and faces as though they were the promise of something thrilling and exciting taking place at any moment.” (Adorno in Bernstein, 1991, 171)

The culture industry thus tries to induce the individual to identify with society's typical figures and models:

What is individual is no more than the generality's power to stamp the accidental detail so firmly that it is accepted as such. The defiant reserve or elegant appearance of the individual on show is mass-produced like Yale locks, whose only difference can be measured in fractions of millimeters. (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 154)

The culture industry thus serves as a powerful instrument of social control that induces individuals to accept their fate and conform to existing society. Advertising progressively fuses in style and technique with the entertainment of the culture industry (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 156-167) which in turn can be read as advertisements for the existing society and established way of life.¹⁵

In the '40's and '50's Adorno and Horkheimer wrote on culture industry while there were only a few film studios in Hollywood, and they used to produce many movies

¹⁵ Before Adorno's study on all aspects of culture industry and commodified culture in television (and movies) Siegfried Kracauer, in his book *The Mass Ornament* (1963), discussed how there are only few patterns and formulas for all the movies that were produced at his time: "In order to investigate today's society, one must listen to the confessions of the products of its film industries. They are all blabbing a rude secret, without really wanting to. In the endless sequence of films, a limited number of typical themes recur again and again, they reveal how society wants to see itself. The quintessence of these film themes is at the same time the sum of the society's ideologies, whose spell is broken by means of the interpretation of the themes. The series "The Little Shop girls Go to the Movies" is conceived as a small collection of samples whose textbook cases are subjected to moral casuistry". (Kracauer, 1963, 294)

based on standardized plots just because they did not see the need for innovation to generate profit; however, even after the growth of the various studios in later years, the same strategy was adopted on using standardized patterns to produce movies.

As Michael Storper explains in his book *The Regional World: Territorial Development in a Global Economy*, the film production was generally divided into three phases. The first phase was "pre-production," in which movie scripts were prepared. In the second phase, the one of "production," the whole movie was shot and, in the third and last phase called "post-production," films were edited and sound mixing and special effects were added. In order to clarify the coordination between these three phases he states:

The major studios had permanent staffs of writers and production planners who were assigned to produce formula scripts in volume and push them through the production system. Production crews and stars were assembled in teams charged with making as many as thirty films per year. Studios had large departments to make sets, operate sound stages and film labs, and carry out marketing and distribution. A product would move from department to department in assembly-line fashion. The studios endeavored to maximise capacity utilities and stabilise throughput. As a result, the internal organization — or technical division of labor — in each phase of the labor process became similar to that of true mass production, where routinisation and task fragmentation were the guiding principles. (Storper, 1997, 85)

Many movies use same plots and stories, but with some changes in location, actors and time period and in this way Studios present a new movie with a guaranteed sale rate at the box office. For instance, we can see how two films were produced with same story but different technique of production. The story of an old and cynical man whom, after the death of his wife, overcomes his bitterness and antisocialism with the help of his young Asian neighbor. First, we see this plot in the movie *Gran Torino* (2008) by Clint Eastwood, which at international box office earned \$274,543,085. A year after, the same plot was used in a well appraised animation movie called *Up*, directed by Pete Doctor and Bob Peterson. This movie, among many other awards, was the winner of the “Best Animated Feature Film of the Year” at Academy Awards in 2010, and was nominated for “Best Writing, Original Screenplay” at the same Academy and at many other major film festivals around the world. This movie earned \$735,099,082 worldwide at the box office. In these two movies there are enough pseudo-individual factors (especially the fact that *Up* is an animated movie) to lure the spectators to watch them both and even guarantee the ulterior amount of profit from the DVD and Blu-ray release of the films.

Another example of these ready-made formulas that have countless instances in Hollywood movies is the plot of American white hero saving oppressed non-white group. From the animated film *Pocahontas* (1995) and *Dances With Wolves* (1990), with white male heroes defending a group of innocent Native Americans, to *The Last Samurai* (2003), with a similar plot, but this time the indigenous people are replaced

by Japanese; and even *Avatar* (2009), in which the hero (Sam Worthington) becomes a part of an alien tribe in order to help them against the evil corporation.

Comparing *Dances with Wolves* and *Avatar*, the two movies have clearly a similar plot with some political differences. In *Dances with Wolves*, Lieutenant John Dunbar of the Union Army leads Union troops to a victory during the Civil War. Attracted by the lifestyle of the Sioux tribe, he gets accepted as a member. However, at the end, Dunbar returns to white society and takes with him the other white woman in the tribe to spread the message of anti-racism among their fellow white countrymen. Nearly twenty years later the movie *Avatar*, a movie with extreme public and critique success, came out with the similar plot.¹⁶ The main protagonist is again a white guy who is accepted as a member of an alien society and decides to turn his back to his own people and the corporate mission that he had partaken in. This time, instead of the native American identity, the protagonist's dilemma is choosing between being white or being blue. The small alteration here at the ending of the movie, comparing to *Dances with Wolves*, is that the woman the protagonist fell in love with is not a fake indigenous tribe member, but she actually is a blue alien, and the protagonist, for the

¹⁶ *Avatar* earned nearly 2.79 billion USD at the worldwide box office and set the record for the highest-grossing film of all time. Among the countless awards that this movie won in different film festivals are Best Achievement in Cinematography and Best Achievement in Visual Effects at the 82nd Academy Awards in 2010 and the overused plot of the movie got James Cameron nominated for Best Original Screenplay at Writers Guild of America.

sake of the noble cause of saving this planet from evil corporation, sacrificed his whiteness and becomes just like one of the aliens.

The next characteristic of the culture industry that we trace in movies are the stereotypes. In *Film and Stereotypes* Jörg Schweinitz, using the 1930's research of Daniel Katz and Kenneth Braly's, explains what are stereotypes:

stereotypes are standardized conceptions of people, primarily based on an individual's belonging to a category (usually race, nation, professional role, social class, or gender) or the possession of characteristic traits symbolizing one of these categories. This concept focuses on belief patterns and emphasizes their guiding influence on attitudes and perceptions. (Schweinitz, 2006, 4)

Schweinitz offers seven sets of characteristics within stereotypes:

1. Stability: The relatively permanent mental fixtures of an individual.
2. Conformity: Intersubjectively distributed within certain social formations, for which they assume the functions of consensus building and standardization.
3. Second-hand nature: They do not, or only seldom, rely on personal experience but are primarily socially communicated.
4. Reduction: They are limited to the simple combination of a few characteristics.
5. Affective coloration: They are accompanied by strong feelings.

6. Cliché effect: Functioning automatically, stereotypes are considered to substantially interfere with the processes of perception and judgment, which they influence and even determine.
7. Inadequacy: Stereotypes are often ascribed the status of inappropriate judgments.

The bombardment of advertisement and product placement in the commercial movies - no matter what genre of movie we are watching - that repeat themselves over and over again, to the point that the audience feels the need to have the same products in his/her life, absolves the same function of the repeated slogan and the stereotype that is used daily on television and in movies. Adorno and Horkheimer, in *Enlightenment as Mass Deception*, noted that this is how propaganda machine works in totalitarian regimes.¹⁷ When a word is repeated for countless times it loses the experience behind it, and many people even do not understand the meaning of many words that they repeat because they heard them somewhere in a movie or read them in a newspaper or a magazine.

¹⁷ "The American term "fad" for fashions which catch on epidemically—inflamed by the action of highly concentrated economic powers—referred to this phenomenon long before totalitarian advertising bosses had laid down the general lines of culture in their countries. If the German fascists launch a word like "intolerable" [*untragbar*] over the loudspeakers one day, the whole nation is saying "intolerable" the next. On the same pattern, the nations against which the German Blitzkrieg was directed have adopted it in their own jargon." (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 134)

When Adorno and Horkheimer explain the effect of advertising in the culture industry they use the term 'psychotechnique', first used by The German American Hugo Münsterberg, the founder of applied psychology in America, who published the first methodical study on the psychology of film titled *The Photoplay* in 1916.

Advertising and the culture industry are merging technically no less than economically. In both, the same thing appears in countless places, and the mechanical repetition of the same culture product is already that of the same propaganda slogan. In both, under the same dictate of effectiveness, technique is becoming psychotechnique.¹⁸ (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 133)

One of the main characteristics of stereotypes is simplicity. The stereotype has to be simple and easily identifiable with some similarity to other stereotypes. "The distinctive features of stereotypes are considered to be: a heightened affinity for demonstrative, clear performance through formulaic reduction of complexity, on the one hand, and an increased tendency toward repetition, in which the given form manifests an especially high degree of stability, homogeneity, and inertia, on the other." (Schweinitz, 2006, 31)

¹⁸ Münsterberg analyzed many movies for his study of contemporary filmic techniques and he developed the term psychotechnique (*Psychotechnik*) which could be applied in many contexts including movies. His study was concentrated on psychological factors that could improve the efficiency of labor. According to Münsterberg, one of the communication forms that improve efficiency is the pleasure of repetition. He argued that pure repetition gives off a sense of familiarity which leads to pleasure.

In order to explain this characteristic in movies we shall go back to the films that we already analyzed in this chapter on film and pseudo-individuality. In the 2009 movie by James Cameron, *Avatar*, there are so many not well-concealed stereotypes. One is the portrait of white American hero or the stereotype of the white messiah and, on the other side, there is the portrait of the indigenous Na'vi, which is depicted as the stereotype of a primitive person; as half-naked, living close to the nature in a forest like environment. The dichotomy of self/other in the movie could be explicitly seen in the dialogue between the main protagonist (Jake Sully) and Colonel Quaritch (Jake's commanding officer). When the colonel finds out that Jake is sympathetic to the Na'vi and is about to drop the military operation, in an argument he says: "You let me down, son! So, you find yourself some local tail, and you just completely forget what team you're playin' for? Hey Sully, how does it feel to betray your own race? You think you're one of them?"

There are many articles and studies on *Avatar*, mainly because of its success in so many festivals and of its financial profits at the box office. Joshua Keating, in his article on *Avatar* and its political meanings around the world, called the movie an "all-purpose allegory" (Keating 2010). Many international film critics analyzed the storyline of the film based on their own national political conditions and cultural identities. In the United States the message of the movie was mainly understood as a metaphor of US imperialism. Some movie critics in America wrote in their reviews of the film that, like many other Hollywood films, it is an allegory of American

imperialism also because of the timing of the release of the movie, in connection to the disaster at hand which was the Iraq war. Some of the more conservative critics in America also argued that Avatar is an unjust critique of the US military.¹⁹

Avatar can also be seen as a neo-Orientalist film using a well-known plot in Hollywood, which involves the white savior rescuing the oppressed indigenous people. This theme, as we saw earlier, is nothing new in American commercial cinema, confirmed by movies like *Dances with Wolves*, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Pathfinder*, *The Last Samurai*, and many other examples. Although colonialism allegedly was over by the mid-twentieth century, it left behind many stereotypes and mechanisms to ensure the sovereignty of the West over the former colonies. The necessity of the movies like Avatar in the twenty first century could be seen also as an excuse to legitimize the West's involvement in the war in the Middle East by showing that the presence of the West in those countries is essential, because they have to be freed from the regimes that are oppressing them. Avatar, like all the other movies that use the white Messiah trope, portray a character of the colonial self and the colonized other. Avatar replicates a basic colonial trope

¹⁹ For example Nile Gardiner in his article *The Most Expensive Piece of Anti-American Propaganda Ever Made* (2009) argued that Avatar is: "a critique of the Iraq War, an assault on the US-led War on Terror, a slick morality talk about the 'evils' of Western imperialism, a futuristic take on the conquest of America and the treatment of native Americans—the list goes on."

that is originated from the archives of imperial imaginary. Gautam Basu Thakur, in his analyses on postcolonial theory and Avatar, states:

Avatar's formulaic narrative about a clash between a colonizing imperialist power and a self-respecting native culture is specifically set up to recall critically instances of European highhandedness against non-European Others in the past and the present. But underneath its rhetoric of multiculturalism, tolerant pluralism, ecological consciousness, and critique of the corporate militarism of the West, the film reproduces a narrative of European privilege and subject-production. Avatar is not about the Na'vi, the Other in the film. It thematizes our relation to the Other only to repossess otherness as what we already are or could be while excluding 'the real otherness of the Other.' (Thakur, 2015, 5)

2.4 Free Time and Boredom

Horkheimer and Adorno, in *Enlightenment as Mass Deception*, wrote: "The whole world is passed through the filter of the culture industry. The familiar experience of the moviegoers, who perceives the street outside as a continuation of the film he has just left, because the film seeks strictly to reproduce the world of everyday perception, has become the guideline of production" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 99). The real life shown in these movies encourages some spectators to keep watching this fake reality to escape from the reality of their own lives. The reality introduced by

culture industry has a paradise-like appearance and it does what has to be done to never lose its grip on the consumers.

The flight from the everyday world, promised by the culture industry in all its branches, is much like the abduction of the daughter in the American cartoon: the father is holding the ladder in the dark. The culture industry presents that same everyday world as paradise. Escape, like elopement, is destined from the first to lead back to its starting point. Entertainment fosters the resignation which seeks to forget itself in entertainment." (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, 113)

Adorno, in *Minima Moralia*, looks once more into the allure of the culture industry through the promise of an easy escape from the unsatisfactory reality, and he argues that culture industry abuses its power on people's boredom: "The boredom that people are running away from merely mirrors the process of running away, that started long before. For this reason alone the monstrous machinery of amusement keeps alive and constantly grows bigger without a single person being amused by it." (Adorno, 1947, 139)

Adorno depicts the vicious cycle of culture industry that creates entertainment to overpower the boredom of the consumer, but then again, the consumer seeks for another type of entertainment because, after a while, each standardized entertainment gets boring. Before *Minima Moralia*, Adorno and Hans Eisler, in *Composing for the Films*, noted that in today's society practically every product of the culture industry is objectively boring, "But that the psycho-technique of the studios

deprives the consumers of the awareness of the boredom they experience". (Adorno and Eisler, 2007, 84). So, the consumers are always bored and unaware of their boredom. We will discuss in the second chapter how culture industry continues its function of passive acceptance of the status quo, and a more thorough analysis of the use of stereotypes in movies will be developed, with particular reference to Orientalism. Before doing so, we will now discuss the role of Marcuse's theory in relation to the notion of culture industry.

3. Marcuse and Culture Industry

3.1 Repression and Free-Time in Advanced Industrial Society

Another critical theorist from the 'first generation' of the Frankfurt School who can help us to have a better understanding on the effects of mass culture and the culture industry in late capitalist societies is Herbert Marcuse. In his 1955 book *Eros and Civilization* Marcuse, primarily inspired by Marx's and Freud's ideas, tried to depict the characteristics of a non-repressive society. According to Freud, in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, civilization surfaced because of repression, suffering and the need to be in control of human desires. In the first half of his book Marcuse explains why there is repression in advanced industrial societies, while the second part of the book is devoted to a theory of liberation from the repressive society.

Marcuse disagrees with Freud's argument that there cannot exist any non-repressive society. Following Marcuse's perspective, Freud believed that the precondition of progress of society is the rejection of satisfaction, because unconstrained sexual gratification conflicts with the struggle for existence. So, if pleasure does not have any spot in culture, as Marcuse argued: "Culture is thus a methodical sacrifice of pleasure and is the social equivalent to repression." (Marcuse, 1955, xiii) Marcuse partially agrees with Freud on the necessity of some type of repression at the beginning of human community in order to satisfy essential needs, and calls this crucial repression the 'basic repression'. What happens in capitalist societies is that, after this certain amount of repression that is necessary for labor and production, the goal of obtaining the maximum profit and capital is not going to be achieved.

According to Freud, in *Civilization and its Discontents*, it was the goal set by the pleasure principle that decided the purpose of life. (Freud, 1930, 25) He argued that there is a connection between reason and repression and that there is an eternal conflict between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. Disagreeing with Freud, Marcuse believed that repression is a historical product of society and so, as to point out to social-historical elements of repression and the reality principle in industrial societies, he presented two terms:

(a) Surplus-repression: the restrictions necessitated by social domination. This is distinguished from (basic) repression: the “modifications” of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization.

(b) Performance principle: the prevailing historical form of the reality principle.
(Marcuse, 1955, 35)

According to Marcuse, after the basic repression, there might be some people whose needs are not satisfied; however, the answer is not increasing the level of repression but the problem of distribution and managing goods and services has to be resolved. Marcuse argued that repression is not the result of scarcity of commodities:

The prevalent scarcity has, throughout civilization (although in very different modes), been organized in such a way that it has not been distributed collectively in accordance with individual needs, nor has the procurement of goods for the satisfaction of needs been organized with the objective of best satisfying the developing needs of the individuals. Instead, the distribution of scarcity as well as the effort of overcoming it, the mode of work, have been imposed upon individuals - first by mere violence, subsequently by a more rational utilization of power.” (Marcuse, 1955, 36)

Marcuse claimed that we must be able to differentiate between the reality principle and the performance principle. Although the reality principle is necessary for producing enough commodities for the survival of the members of the society, the

advanced industrial societies, because of the performance principle, would not stop after reaching this goal to gain more profit and dominance. Marcuse explained the function of performance principle and noted: "Men do not live their own lives but perform pre-established functions. While they work, they do not fulfill their own needs and faculties but work in alienation." (Marcuse, 1955, 45)

One of the most crucial notions that Marcuse argued about in this book is domination. Domination is different from rational practice of power. Domination happens when an individual or a group of people misuse their power to maintain their privileged position. There are two sides to domination: internal and external. In external form domination acts like social repression and the internal form involves the embodiment of social demands and values by an individual. When domination takes part in administrating the social life, the easiest way to spread the message is to use forms like entertainment, mass media and in general cultural commodities. Discussing domination in Marcuse's theory Douglas Kellner, in *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*, refutes that domination is just a form of ideology and says: "For Marcuse domination is a crucial totalizing concept that combines ideology and institutions, norms, values and social practice; culture, socioeconomic and political phenomena; social and individual psychology; and an entire technical apparatus and social system." (Kellner, 1984, 167)

When Marcuse talks about alienation the notion that he has in mind is a combination of Marx's concept of alienated labor and Freud's theory of repression.

Marcuse argued that the performance principle makes man exist 'part-time': "During the working day one is an instrument of alienated performance; the rest of the time he is free for himself." (Marcuse, 1955, 47) According to Marcuse this free time could be summed up as four hours out of twenty-four.²⁰ Marcuse continued by defining how does free time work in advanced industrial societies and claimed that the free time that potentially could be available for pleasure is just another period of time that is governed by performance principle. "The basic control of leisure is achieved by the length of the working day itself, by the tiresome and mechanical routine of alienated labor; these require that leisure be a passive relaxation and re-creation of energy for work." (Marcuse, 1955, 48)

Although Marcuse believed that in advanced industrial societies humans are impoverished both physically and mentally (culturally), and acknowledged all sociological clichés around dehumanization of people by mass culture, however, he thought that they are all going in a wrong direction. According to Marcuse, the cause of the process of dehumanization is not in the standardized way of living, but it is in its restrictions which coincides with losing control over labor time and free time.

The high standard of living in the domain of the great corporations is restrictive in a concrete sociological sense: the goods and services that the individuals buy control

²⁰ If the average working day, including preparation and travel to and from work, amounts to ten hours, and if the biological needs for sleep and nourishment require another ten hours, the free time would be four out of each twenty-four hours throughout the greater part of the individual's life.

their needs and petrify their faculties. In exchange for the commodities that enrich their life, the individuals sell not only their labor but also their free time. (Marcuse, 1955, 100)

3.2 Culture Industry and One-Dimensional Society

Douglas Kellner, in his introduction to *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*,²¹ described the differences between Marcuse's concept of one-dimensionality and Horkheimer and Adorno's "culture industry."

In the 1940s there were two tendencies within Critical Theory: (1) the philosophical-cultural analysis of the trends of Western civilization being developed by Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and (2) the more practical-political development of Critical Theory as a theory of social change proposed by Marcuse and Neumann." (Kellner, in Marcuse, 1966, Xxii)

Marcuse first published his thoughts on the diminishing effect of industrial society on individuality in an article titled *Some Social Implications of Modern Technology* in 1941. He argued that when individual rationality overcomes superstitions and irrationality, it puts the critical individual in opposition to society. The advancement of industry and technological rationality influenced the individual rationality and increased the domination of technological rationality over individuality. In advanced

²¹ While Marcuse mentions advanced industrial society the term that he described throughout his work is advanced capitalism especially when he made examples of capitalist society in the United States.

capitalist society the machine is not a dead object, but it obtains a human being status. The development of technology in advanced industrial society ended up spreading the “mechanics of conformity” throughout society.²² Gradually in this society the individual loses his ability of critical thinking and becomes a one-dimensional man in a one-dimensional society.

The connection between the notion of culture industry and one-dimensional man is based on how invasive reification is and how much critical consciousness could prevent this process. According to Marcuse, in advanced industrial society every detail is under careful administration and this leaves people clueless of their true needs in opposition to false or generated needs. This task could be done only by mimicking the real human needs and to take advantage of them through commodification. In *One-Dimensional Man* Marcuse addressed the capitalism’s manipulation of needs:

We may distinguish both true and false needs. "False" are those which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery, and injustice. Their satisfaction might be most gratifying to the individual, but this happiness is not a condition which

²² Marcuse here quoted Thorstein Veblen from *The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts* which said: “To live - not to say at ease - under the exigencies of this machine-made routine requires a measure of consistent training in the mechanical apprehension of things. The mere mechanics of conformity to the schedule of living implies a degree of trained insight and a facile strategy in all manner of quantitative adjustments and adaptations, particularly at the larger centres of population, where the routine is more comprehensive and elaborate.” (Veblen, 1914, 314)

has to be maintained and protected if it serves to arrest the development of the ability (his own and others) to recognize the disease of the whole and grasp the chances of curing the disease. The result then is euphoria in unhappiness. Most of the prevailing needs to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and hate, belong to this category of false needs. (Marcuse, 1966, 7)

It might appear as if a person in the advanced industrial society satisfies his own needs, but in reality, he only satisfies the needs of the system. Marcuse argued that people should recognize their true and false needs, however this recognition could only be obtained by an individual free from any kind of domination.

Most of the prevailing needs to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and hate, belong to this category of false needs. Such needs have a societal content and function which are determined by external powers over which the individual has no control; the development and satisfaction of these needs is heteronomous. No matter how much such needs may have become the individual's own, reproduced and fortified by the conditions of his existence; no matter how much he identifies himself with them and finds himself in their satisfaction, they continue to be what they were from the beginning-products of a society whose dominant interest demands repression. (Marcuse, 1966, 7)

According to Kellner, there are two ways to read Marcuse's theory of the one-dimensional society:

One can interpret Marcuse's theory as a global, totalizing theory of a new type of society that transcends the contradictions of capitalist society in a new order that eliminates individuality, dissent and opposition... [The other is] as a concept describing a state of affairs that conforms to existing thought and behavior in which there is the lack of a critical dimension and the dimension of alternatives and potentialities which transcend the existing society. (Kellner, 1984, 234-235)

One of the most important characteristics that we came across with in Adorno and Horkheimer's theory of the culture industry is the lack of individuality or pseudo-individuality. Marcuse too believed in the power of authentic individuality for breaking through from one-dimensional mentality. Marcuse noted that one-dimensional man is unable to control his own destiny. The inner freedom or private space has been invaded by technological reality and all the values, needs and goals are dictated by the society. *One-Dimensional Man* is Marcuse's protest against decline of authentic individuality. By losing individuality, one-dimensional man also loses his freedom to decide what he needs. He might think that he can freely choose what he needs but, in reality, these needs are not his own, as they are superimposed by society.

In order to explain the differences between characteristics of authentic individuality and shortcomings of one-dimensionality Kellner draws a chart:

Authentic Individuality	One-dimensional Man
--------------------------------	----------------------------

<p>Autonomy/individual capacity to think, choose and act:</p> <p>a) freedom from domination</p> <p>b) freedom for self-determination, choice, dissent and refusal.</p>	<p>Heteronomy/social domination of thought and behavior:</p> <p>(a) servitude to social control.</p> <p>(b) conformity, false needs and consciousness.</p>
<p>Creative self-activity: growth and development.</p>	<p>Mimesis: mechanical reproduction of conformist behavior.</p>
<p>Reflection and critical awareness of needs, assumptions and one's unique selfhood</p>	<p>Unreflective and non-critical acceptance of prevailing needs, ideas and feelings; no sense of one's own needs and potentialities.</p>
<p>Power and will: ability for creative action.</p>	<p>Powerlessness/ conditioned behavior.</p>

According to Marcuse, advanced capitalist society have changed all values of society and replaced it with consumerism. The important aspect of advanced industrial society is its ability to spread comforts and transform commodities into the extension of individual's mind and body and new forms of social control are obtainable with the aid of advertising and mass culture. "The people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment. The very mechanism which ties the individual to

his society has changed, and social control is anchored in the new needs which it has produced." (Marcuse, 1966, 11)

One-Dimensional Man is by far a more pessimistic work than *Eros and Civilization*. For the one-dimensional society, Marcuse lost his hope in art and aesthetic education and their emancipatory force. Marcuse's support of the New Left with its combination of aesthetic aspiration, sexual freedom and adamant negativity, was supported by the fact that he saw it as the only hope to construct a new civilization against the one-dimensional society.²³

In Marcuse's view, the mass media is using a one-dimensional language to eradicate any social contradictions and to be able to control public thought with the values of the capitalist society. Marcuse analyses the formulas that is used by the standardized language to shape public thought:

This sort of well-being, the productive superstructure over the unhappy base of society, permeates the "media" which mediate between the masters and their dependents. Its publicity agents shape the universe of communication in which the

²³ When we talk about the support of Marcuse for new left student movement it is inevitable to mention Adorno and his debate on whether it is wrong or right. After what happened at the institute in 1969 between German Socialist Student Alliance (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund) who occupied the institute and Adorno who summoned police to arrest the 72 demonstrators, when Marcuse was asked to make a lecture at the institute he put a condition first that he would do that if they let him to have a meeting with the students. There followed a considerably long exchange of letters between Adorno and Marcuse debating their thoughts on the student movement.

one-dimensional behavior expresses itself. Its language testifies to identification and unification, to the systematic promotion of positive thinking and doing, to the concerted attack on transcendent, critical notions... The elements of autonomy, discovery, demonstration, and critique recede before designation, assertion, and imitation. Magical, authoritarian and ritual elements permeate speech and language” (Marcuse, 1966, 89)

According to Marcuse, One-dimensional language represses both the dimensions of history and criticism, so it is going to eliminate the memories of past oppression and abuse and also revolutionary hopes, because the remembrance of the past might endanger the present possessions by recalling the terrors and hopes of the past.²⁴

When Marcuse is talking about this language, he mentions the same element that we saw Adorno addressed earlier in this chapter, namely, the fact that even when the consumers see through this formula they still go by the flow and do not resist the lure of the market.

This language controls by reducing the linguistic forms and symbols of reflection, abstraction, development, contradiction; by substituting images for concepts. It

²⁴ Marcuse cites Adorno when he explains the role of historical memory: "The spectre of man without memory [...] is more than an aspect of decline – it is necessarily linked with the principle of progress in bourgeois society [...]. Economists and sociologists such as Werner Sombart and Max Weber correlated the principle of tradition to feudal, and that of rationality to bourgeois, forms of society. This means no less than that the advancing bourgeois society liquidates Memory, Time, Recollection as irrational leftovers of the past [...]." (Adorno, 1960, 14)

denies or absorbs the transcendent vocabulary; it does not search for but establishes and imposes truth and falsehood. But this kind of discourse is not terroristic. It seems unwarranted to assume that the recipients believe, or are made to believe, what they are being told. The new touch of the magic-ritual language rather is that people don't believe it, or don't care, and yet act accordingly. One does not "believe" the statement of an operational concept but it justifies itself in action-in getting the job done, in selling and buying, in refusal to listen to others, etc. (Marcuse, 1966, 106)

Even though people in a one-dimensional society believe that they are free, in reality they are unable to choose freely and freedom at the end is only an illusion. The choices of the one-dimensional men are established for them by society in advance and as consumers they only have to choose between different brands and mostly same products. Douglas Kellner explains Marcuse's view as:

In Marcuse, the system's widely championed individualism is a pseudo-individualism: prefabricated, synthesized and administered by the advertising agencies, corporations and media manipulators. Further, the individual's freedom is a pseudo-freedom that fails to see that bondage to the system is the price of its being able to 'choose' to buy a new car and live a consumer lifestyle. (Kellner, 1984, 248)

3.3 Marcuse on Mass Media Culture

Marcuse argued in *Eros and Civilization* that the decline of the family as the main agent in society and the increasing popularity of the mass media, like radio and television, lead next generations of these societies to have more affinity towards getting their basic education from mass media rather than the family.

The repressive organization of the instincts seems to be collective, and the ego seems to be prematurely socialized by a whole system of extra-familial agents and agencies. As early as the preschool level, gangs, radio, and television set the pattern for conformity and rebellion; deviations from the pattern are punished not so much within the family as outside and against the family. The experts of the mass media transmit the required values; they offer the perfect training in efficiency, toughness, personality, dream, and romance. With this education, the family can no longer compete. (Marcuse, 1955, 97)

Marcuse's in his works analyzed the role of technology and technological rationality which led to new ways of social control and declining of authentic individuality and freedom. According to Marcuse, television (and commercial movies) are parts of an apparatus of control in the advanced capitalist societies. The device of the control is mass media that spread the knowledge and information, as Marcuse noted:

With the decline in consciousness, with the control of information, with the absorption of individuals into mass communication, knowledge is administered and confined. The individual does not really know what is going on; the overpowering machine of entertainment and entertainment unites him with the others in a state of anesthesia from which all detrimental ideas tend to be excluded. (Marcuse, 1955, 104)

Marcuse believed that in advanced industrial society the mass media act as a device that prevent the political opposition. According to Marcuse, mass media in a society like the United States has the full control on people and their decision-making process which makes the character of tolerance just an illusion. In *Repressive Tolerance* he wrote: "Within the solid framework of pre-established inequality and power, tolerance is practiced indeed. Even outrageous opinions are expressed, outrageous incidents are televised; and the critics of established policies are interrupted by the same number of commercials as the conservative advocates." (Marcuse, 1966, 15)

In a democratic society like America, political discussion is tolerable as long as it is within the limits of established framework and in media "the stupid opinion is treated with the same respect as the intelligent one, the misinformed may talk as long as the informed, and propaganda rides along with education, truth with falsehood" (Marcuse, 1966, 6). Marcuse believed that, for people to be able to have a debate, it is necessary that everybody could access the required knowledge and authentic information, which is the total opposite of what they can gather from the mass media.

Value judgments, in Marcuse's view, had been placed on all opinions prior to their articulation by the 'normal course of events'... and by the 'mentality shaped in this

course'. (Marcuse, 1966, 7) According to Marcuse the objectivity²⁵ which is presented by mass media is only there for keeping people apart from the public's 'political existence'. In advanced industrial societies like in the United States any voice that is far different from the established ideas of the society could not be heard by the general public. The example that Marcuse used to explain this issue is popularity of the Left in America:

The Left has no equal voice, no equal access to the mass media and their public facilities - not because a conspiracy excludes it, but because, in good old capitalist fashion, it does not have the required purchasing power. And the Left does not have the purchasing power because it is the Left. These conditions impose upon the radical minorities a strategy which is in essence a refusal to allow the continuous functioning of allegedly indiscriminate but in fact discriminate tolerance, for example, a strategy of protesting against the alternate matching of a spokesman for the Right (or Center) with one for the Left. Not 'equal' but more representation of the Left would be equalization of the prevailing inequality." (Marcuse, 1966, 14)

One-dimensional society described by Marcuse in his work is still relevant to today's society with overwhelming growth of technology and consumerism. The

²⁵ One of the examples of the media objectivity that Marcuse mentioned in this essay is on how they put the most horrible news and colorful and joyful advertisements one after each other that has the effect of neutralizing any program shown in television or any article and news piece in newspapers and magazines. If objectivity has anything to do with truth, and if truth is more than a matter of logic and science, then this kind of objectivity is false, and this kind of tolerance inhuman. (Marcuse, 1966, 7)

devices used at Marcuse's time in 1960's for social control over public opinion only got more powerful as mass media expanded its wings by using new outlets and techniques. What Marcuse envisioned in *One-Dimensional Man* was a society with an advanced technological apparatus to control not only the knowledge and information and accordingly public opinion, but also it turns to a propaganda machine that defends global domination.

While substantial differences remain present in the approaches of Marcuse and Adorno, especially concerning the individuation of a political subject capable of fostering a radical change, their analysis of the role of media has many similarities which can still be quite useful in analyzing the role of contemporary movie production in affirming a passive reception of dominant values. The outlook of the 'first generation' of critical theory on culture industry is still extremely relevant to uncover the biases towards certain parts of society, and to understand how these biases play a fundamental role in shaping the public opinion and in minimizing the spaces for critical thought. What we will discuss next is the relationship between the theorization of culture industry and the use of Orientalism in mainstream media, with a special focus on movies. Critical theory, along with the studies concerning Orientalism, is in fact an invaluable tool for unmasking certain stereotypes concerning middle-easterners and for understanding why these stereotypes are functional to the fostering of a capitalist, and often imperialist, mindset which reproduces models of colonialism in contemporary societies.

Chapter II

Orientalism and Representation of the “Other” in Media

In 1950 Michel Leiris published an article on the relationship between ethnography, anthropology and colonialism in the French journal *Les Temps modernes* entitled “L'ethnographe devant le colonialism.” In his article Leiris addressed how the European knowledge about the Eastern or colonized countries shape the Western worldview, and how Western imaginative or scientific writings unjustly empowered them for centuries to talk on behalf of the rest of the world. Leiris called for denouncing exoticism and stated that when the objects of observation (Arab, African, Oriental, Native American) claim back their cultural and political independence, they would start to write about the west too. And that is exactly what is happening with postcolonial studies, sub-altern studies and what is most relevant to this study: Orientalism.

In the first section of this chapter I will show how the media represent the East and, in order to do so, I will begin with the most influential study in this field, namely, *Orientalism* by Edward Said, and continue with his later studies, chronologically, from *The Question of Palestine* (1979) and *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (1981), to his later works *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) and *Peace And Its Discontents* (1995). In the last part of this section

I will discuss the new orientalist discourse after 9/11 attacks and its manifestation in media.

1. Edward W. Said and Orientalism

Edward Said, a literary and social critic, is a highly controversial figure who widely influenced the field of cultural and postcolonial studies. *Orientalism* (1978), although partly the outcome of his difficult circumstances and his experiences as a Palestinian immigrant whose homeland politically did not exist, is not simply his personal protest on this situation; rather, it is a literary criticism based on epistemological assumptions on the styles of cultural discourse and how this evolves in time. The connotations associated with Orientalism are diverse²⁶, but the one primarily used by Said refers to a specific type of ideological knowledge of the East which was created by Western imperialism.

In his book *Orientalism*, Said argued that “Orient and occident are manmade” (Said, 1978, 5) and that the Orient is a Western “system of ideological fictions” (Said, 1978, 321); just like capitalism, its purpose is to maintain the Western system of

²⁶ The term ‘Orientalism’ was first used in France in the 1830s, and since then has appeared in various disciplines: from literature and Oriental scholarship to painting and visual arts but, of course, the most significant use of the term is the one applied by Said in 1970’s.

power over the Orient. For Said, following primarily the perspective of Foucault²⁷, power is what basically determines the truth.

The origin of Said's research on orientalism is traced in Homer, Aeschylus and, later on during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, in literary works such as the *Chanson de Roland*; yet, based on his interpretative model, the modern origins of Orientalism are individuated in the *Bibliothèque Orientale* by Barthelemy d'Herbelot's in 1697. Said's criticism of d'Herbelot is directed towards the version of the Orient represented by him; much too abstract and excessively systematic.

In such efforts as d'Herbelot's, Europe discovered its capacities for encompassing and Orientalizing the Orient [...]. But what becomes evident is not only the advantage of a Western perspective: there is also the triumphant technique for taking the immense fecundity of the Orient and making it systematically, even alphabetically, knowable by Western laymen. (Said, 1978, 65)

One of Said's examples of d'Herbelot's systematic approach is his representation of Mohammad. He wrote:

This is the famous imposter Mahomet, Author and Founder of a heresy, which has taken on the name of religion, which we call Mohammedan. See entry under Islam.

The interpreters of the Alcoran and other Doctors of Muslim or Mohammedan Law

²⁷ Foucault, according to his interpretation of Nietzsche, believed that people with power create discourse and by administering the discourse they create the truth: "we are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth" (Foucault, 1980, 93).

have applied to this false prophet all the praises which the Arians, Paulicians or Paulianists, and other Heretics have attributed to Jesus Christ, while stripping him of his Divinity... (Said, 1978, 66)

Said argues that using the European derogatory term of Mohammedan instead of Islam, and indicating that Islam is a mere imitation of a true religion, which is Christianity, are part of an image created by scholars like d'Herbelot to systematically represent the East:

D'Herbelot's character of Mahomet is an image, because the false prophet is part of a general theatrical representation called orientale whose totality is contained in the Bibliothèque. The didactic quality of the Orientalist representation cannot be detached from the rest of the performance. In a learned work like the orientale, which was the result of systematic study and research, the author imposes a disciplinary order upon the material he has worked on; in addition, he wants it made clear to the reader that what the printed page delivers is an ordered, disciplined judgment of the material. (Said, 1978, 66)

Said, then, analyzed many works of various authors in different periods, such as Sylvestre de Sacy's *Chrestomathie arabe*, the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt and the *Description de l'Égypte*, Karl Marx's essay on India, Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, Lamartine's *Voyage en Orient*, Flaubert's *Salammbô*, Burton's *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Meccah*, and Louis Massignon's studies on Sufism and Mansur Al-Hallaj.

In this journey through time and a vast range of authors, Said followed the thread of the systematic Orientalist discourse. One of the outcomes of his study was to identify the Oriental stereotypes: the feminine and the sexually crazed Arab, camel riding nomads, the crowded marketplace, oriental despotism and cruelty. Said argued that Western writers spread these stereotypes and justified them by saying that they have to speak for the silent other.²⁸

According to Said, the structure of Orientalism is based on the dichotomy between 'us' and 'them', which raises the question: "can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly?" (Said, 1978, 45) Any type of division brings hostility between the groups, which in this case is between 'us' (Westerners) and 'them' (Orientals). This division creates limits for people from different cultures and traditions which can be easily encountered.

Said also asks the following question: "how one can study other cultures and peoples from a libertarian, or a non-repressive and nonmanipulative, perspective?" (Said, 1978, 24) The solution requires the overcoming of the obstacle between

²⁸ There is a debate in subaltern studies which addresses this issue by asking "can the subaltern speak?". This question is also the title of a famous essay by Gayatri Spivak. Spivak stated that the subalterns who have been subject to advanced capitalist regimes and their sophisticated mechanisms of domination are conditioned to a type of muting with the excuse of emancipating the subalterns by the white men and, according to her: "If the subaltern can speak then the subaltern is not a subaltern anymore" (Spivak 1990a, 158). If the subaltern speaks, "when a line of communication is established between a member of subaltern groups and the circuits of citizenship or institutionality, the subaltern has been instituted into the long road to hegemony" (Spivak, 1999, 310).

knowledge and power. The knowledge of Orientalists on the Orient, for instance, created the power which could be detected in colonialism and which was used as ideological justification for oppression.

In his book, Said gave three definitions for Orientalism. First, the academic definition: “Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient— and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist— either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism.” (Said, 1978, 2) For the second definition Said goes through many novels, poems, political accounts and theories to show that these authors, poets, philosophers and political theorists based their works on the dichotomy between the East and the West. “Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident.’” (Said, 1978, 2) The third definition is more historically and materially defined than the other two:

The corporate institution for dealing with the Orient— dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (Said, 1978, 3)

Said regarded Orientalism as a manner of regularized writing, vision and study full of ideological prejudices. He noted that Orientalism is in fact produced by politicians and serves political agendas. The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system

of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness and, later on, Western empire.

The notion used by Said in his book as an equivalent to the dominant discourse is "the textual attitude."²⁹ Said explained how the discourse of Orientalism falsely claimed to be a humanistic discourse and led the textual attitude to an instrumental attitude: "The major change in Orientalism since 1870 was a shift from an academic to an instrumental attitude." (Said, 1978, 246) According to Said, two situations favor a textual attitude. The first one is when someone has to confront something unknown and threatening. In this case, the materials that would help are either the personal experiences of some situation that resembles the current situation or others' experiences which one can read about. Said explained:

Travel books or guidebooks are about as "natural" a kind of text, as logical in their composition and in their use, as any book one can think of, precisely because of this human tendency to fall back on a text when the uncertainties of travel in strange parts seem to threaten one's equanimity. Many travelers find themselves saying of an experience in a new country that it wasn't what they expected, meaning that it wasn't what a book said it would be. (Said, 1978, 93)

²⁹ As he explains: "such texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it." (Said, 1978, 94)

The second situation favoring the textual attitude occurs when one reads a book and the claims of that book turn out to be true, since then most likely this person is going to be encouraged to read more books by that same author, and believe in them. Said argued that, by using orientalist discourse, the West suffused Orientals' activities and kept them silent.

Foucauldian discourse analysis is seen by Said as reductionist and ignoring the subjectivity of the authors; for Said, on the contrary, each text and author counts, and in fact he concludes: "Foucault believes that in general the individual text or author counts for very little; empirically, in the case of Orientalism (and perhaps nowhere else) I find this not to be so." (Said, 1978, 23) Hence, although in the preface to *Orientalism* Said acknowledges Foucault's influence (referring to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish* in particular), there are some areas where he detaches himself from Foucault. Valerie Kennedy, in her book *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction*, noted that:

There are two major inconsistencies in Said's use of Foucault's concept of discourse. There is, first, the relationship between truth and representation, and in particular the question of whether there can be such a thing as true representation or whether any representation is, of necessity, to some extent a misrepresentation. Second, Said's conception of the relationships between discourse, knowledge and power differs from Foucault's, and the opposition between pure and interested knowledge

is problematic for Said in a way that it is not for the French philosopher. (Kennedy, 2000, 27)

Yet, still faithful to the Nietzschean connection between knowledge and power supported by Foucault, one of the most important aspects of Said's *Orientalism* is the biased distinction of culture between the West and the East. At the end of his book, Said raised a set of questions:

How does one represent other cultures? What is another culture? Is the notion of a distinct culture (or race, or religion, or civilization) a useful one, or does it always get involved either in self-congratulation (when one discusses one's own) or hostility and aggression (when one discusses the "other")? Do cultural, religious, and racial differences matter more than socio-economic categories, or politico-historical ones? (Said, 1978, 325)

Said argued that the notion of culture that defined the Orient came from European anthropologists and is not devoid of the ideological biases that created the dichotomy of 'them' and 'us'. As he explained later on in the same book, scholars have the power to create an image by spreading the dishonest knowledge and fabricate false stories which help to maintain the permanent domination of the West over the East. For him, there is no escape from these factious dichotomies:

If not the East/West division, then the North/South one, the have/have-not one, the imperialist/anti-imperialist one, the white/colored one. We cannot get around them all by pretending they do not exist; on the contrary, contemporary Orientalism

teaches us a great deal about the intellectual dishonesty of dissembling on that score, the result of which is to intensify the divisions and make them both vicious and permanent. Yet an openly polemical and right-minded "progressive" scholarship can very easily degenerate into dogmatic slumber, a prospect that is not edifying either.

(Said, 1978, 327)

1.1 Orientalism and representation of Islam in the Western media

Said's analysis of the role of the media is primarily based on the mainstream ones in the United States. In *The Question of Palestine* he argued that the American media have a prevailing influence on public opinion, and the image that is shown of Palestinian terrorists makes the violence used by Israel against them as merely defensive. Said accused the American media of failing to show Israeli violence against the Palestinians and other Arab Muslims in Lebanon and Jordan. Furthermore, he claimed that the image of Muslims as terrorists, as it especially happens for Palestinians, who are stripped from their civil and political rights, makes it extremely hard for them to fight for getting back their rights and their homeland. In *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, Said noted that the US media especially reinforce the image of Muslim terrorist using various stereotypes and labels, including "anti-Semite Arab":

The attention to Israel has been institutionalized and because its valence is so positive in Western public life, there has been a tendency, in the US especially, to associate

resistance to Israel not simply with 'terrorism' and 'communism,' but also with anti-Semitism. As the arguments for Israeli democracy increase in intensity they have also tended to expand in sheer volume, so that the place of Palestinians in such public locales as the American television screen, the daily newspaper, the commercial film, shrinks to a few stereotypes — the mad Islamic zealot, the gratuitously violent killer of innocents, the desperately irrational and savage primitive. (Said, 1988, 2)

In *The Question of Palestine*, Said noted that Israeli and American media are reporting the conflicts one-sidedly, and they do not report of the violence that Israeli army is enforcing against Palestinians.

In the West, Palestinians are immediately associated with terrorism, as Israel has seen to it that they are. Stripped of its context, an act of Palestinian desperation looks like wanton murder— as in fact, I have thought, many acts of individual adventure (hijacking, kidnapping, and the like) were acts of unbalanced, finally immoral, and useless destruction. But we should note that at least since the early seventies, the PLO has avoided and condemned terror. (Said, 1979, 171-172)

Here Said gave the example of the Ma'alot attack in 1974, which he believed happened because, prior to the incident, Israeli army were bombing Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon for weeks. However, American media failed to report these events, and only showed the Ma'alot incident as an unwarranted act of terrorism.

The double standards of the Western media, according to Said, are revealed when they neglect to address Israel's abuse of its power and the violation of the basic human rights of Palestinian civilians. One of the examples of this mistreatment from the Western media is shown in how they justify the violence and torture against Arabs, which has remained unaltered through the torturing techniques used especially by Americans in Iraq and Afghanistan:

The most recent, and in many ways the most outlandish, such deliberate act of omission concerns the London Sunday Times "Insight" Report on torture in Israel (June 19, 1977). Using an exhaustive series of investigative techniques, the Times revealed that torture of Arabs is a regular, methodical, and officially sanctioned device in Israel: that hundreds of Arabs are being detained and tortured; that the evidence is wholly convincing that the state condones the practice as a way of intimidating, controlling, and terrorizing the "native" population in the Occupied Territories. (Said, 1979, 42)

In more recent years the assassination of Osama bin Laden in 2011 gave the West a good excuse to normalize in media the torture used as method of interrogation.³⁰ This can be seen, for example, in one of the movies that addressed the process of bin Laden's capture: *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), by Kathryn Bigelow. Nominated, among others, for the Oscar as best picture, *Zero Dark Thirty* follows the story of the CIA's agent Maya in hunt for Osama bin Laden. At first, Maya seemed to be repulsed by the

³⁰ It has been officially addressed as "enhanced interrogation".

“enhanced interrogation” techniques used by CIA agents in order to get information, but afterwards we see that she is willing to use same torturing techniques to achieve her goal. The depiction of torture in this film created some uproars which led the director, Bigelow, to explain her point of view in the Los Angeles Times. She argued that, although the depiction of torture in her film is not an endorsement, we cannot ignore the role that torturing techniques played in successful U.S. counter-terrorism policy and practices.³¹

What Bigelow used as her defense is completely deceptive: showing forty-five minutes of all kinds of tortures in a neutralized tone is an endorsement. As Slavoj Žižek observed in his article for the Guardian, *Zero Dark Thirty: Hollywood's gift to American power*:

Torture saves lives? Maybe, but for sure it loses souls – and its most obscene justification is to claim that a true hero is ready to forsake his or her soul to save the lives of his or her countrymen. The normalisation of torture in Zero Dark Thirty is a sign of the moral vacuum we are gradually approaching. If there is any doubt about this, try to imagine a major Hollywood film depicting torture in a similar way 20 years ago. It is unthinkable. (Žižek, 2013)

As noted earlier, Islam has consistently been depicted as an unpopular faith among Europeans. Said’s analysis of texts from the Middle Ages and throughout the early

³¹ There is around 45 minutes of depiction of torture in the movie: as an example, the film shows the detainee – al Balouchi – stripped down and humiliated, wearing dog collar and giving ride to his captor.

part of the Renaissance in Europe shows that Islam used to be regarded as a demonic religion of apostasy and blasphemy, while Mohammed for Christians was just a hypocrite, a false prophet and an agent of the devil. Said, in *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (1981), argued that Islam and Muslim countries gave Europe a sense of worry that no other Eastern country could cause, pointing out that:

Only Islam seemed never to have submitted completely to the West; and when, after the dramatic oil-price rises of the early 1970s, the Muslim world seemed once more on the verge of repeating its early conquests, the whole West seemed to shudder. The onset of 'Islamic terrorism' in the 1980s and 1990s has deepened and intensified the shock (Said, 1981, 5)

Said believed that what happened at the end of 1970's in Iran made an immense contribution to what the West (especially America) thinks about Islam.³² After the Cold War, Iran became one of the new enemies of the United States and, according to Said, one of the main reasons was that Iran continued to help groups like Hezbollah in South Lebanon to fight against its occupation by Israel. On this topic, Said raised some important questions:

Why is it that a whole range of political, cultural, social, and even economic events has often seemed reducible in so Pavlovian a way to "Islam"? What is it about "Islam"

³² I am going to discuss the shortcomings of Said analysis on Iran's revolution and its outcomes in the next chapter.

that provokes so quick and unrestrained a response? In what way do “Islam” and the Islamic world differ for Westerners from, say, the rest of the Third World and, during the Cold War, the Soviet Union? (Said, 1981, 9)

Media, whose responsibility was to report on the Islamic world especially from the 1970’s oil crisis, dismissed any romantic and exotic tale about middle-eastern countries preferring to show a more villainized version of a ‘terrorist Muslim’:

It is only a slight overstatement to say that Muslims and Arabs are essentially covered, discussed, and apprehended either as oil suppliers or as potential terrorists [...]. What we have instead is a limited series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as, among other things, to make that world vulnerable to military aggression. (Said, 1981, 26)

Said believed that there is no real image of Islam anywhere, just like for any other faith, while Islam is an objective fact and is related to many other factors such as history and tradition. In its new version, the image that represents the Islamic world is primarily the opposite of all the things that are “normal” to the West. In this representation, any Muslim figure can symbolize all Muslims.³³

³³ Said made an example of how all Muslims are portrayed through only one influential figure by mentioning Ayatollah Khomeini as a fundamentalist Islamic leader and through the comparison, made by George Carpozi Jr., in *Ayatollah Khomeinis' Mein Kampf*, between Khomeini and Hitler. According to Carpozi, Khomeini was an Arab whose only difference with Hitler is that Khomeini pretended to be a man of God. “Like Adolph Hitler in another time, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini is a tyrant, a hater, a baiter, a threat to world order and peace. The principal difference between the author of *Mein Kampf* and the compiler of the vapid Islamic Government is that one was an atheist while the other pretends to be a man of God.” (Said, 1981, 30)

Such representations of Islam have regularly testified to a penchant for dividing the world into pro- and anti-American (or pro- and anticommunist), an unwillingness to report political processes, an imposition of patterns and values that are ethnocentric or irrelevant or both, pure misinformation, repetition, an avoidance of detail, an absence of genuine perspective. All of this can be traced, not to Islam, but to aspects of society in the West and to the media which this idea of "Islam" reflects and serves. (Said, 1981, 30)

Media, news, television, and movies are the main source of knowledge about Islamic countries and Muslims in the West, especially in America. The majority of the people choose mass media over books, lectures and specialized journal articles because their messages are short, memorable and easy to grasp, and they all convey standardized and stereotypical points. One of the movies mentioned by Said in *Covering Islam* that sums up these characteristics properly is *Terrorists Among Us: Jihad in America* (1994), by Steven Emerson. Emerson, as a former correspondent of CNN, claimed to have been a reporter on Islamic terror and that is the extent of his knowledge about Middle Eastern culture, politics and history. The film showed that many Muslims in America hold no threat, but there are some extremist groups that are dangerous to society. The battle now is inside the American borders, and the hidden camera footage shows how in American hotel conference rooms Muslim terrorists raise money for terrorist attacks inside America. Said argued:

Despite a few explicit statements in the film that most Muslims are peace-loving and “like us,” the purport of the film is to agitate against Islam as a sinister breeder of cruel, insensate killers, plotters, and lustfully violent men. In scene after scene — all of them isolated from any real context — we are regaled with fulminating, bearded imams, raging against the West and Jews most especially, threatening genocide and unending warfare against the West. By the film’s end the viewer is convinced that the United States contains a vast, intricate web of secret bases, conspiratorial plotting centers, and bomb factories, all of them intended for use against innocent, unsuspecting citizens. (Said, 1997, 76-77)

Emerson’s film ultimately blurs the lines between Islam, Jihad, and terrorism. The main goal of movies like *Jihad in America* is to arouse feelings of anger and resentment in Americans. For Said, this would help the Israeli official line to conceal their wrongdoings and military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and South Lebanon.³⁴

According to Said, Israel plays a specific role in mediating Western and particularly American views of the Islamic world since World War II. Said argued that Israel’s fanatic religious character is rarely mentioned in the Western press. “This kind of one-sided reporting is, I think, an indication of how Israel — the Middle East’s “only democracy” and “our staunch ally” — has been used as a foil for Islam.” (Said, 1981,

³⁴ After 9/11 Emerson published two books, *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living Among Us* (2003) and *Jihad Incorporated: A Guide to Militant Islam in the U.S.* (2006). In 2009 he wrote that “In the end the mainstream media refuses to recognize that the mainstream Islamic groups are actually radical organizations that teach and imbue their followers with a hatred of the United States and Israel [...]. These groups control the mosques, the Islamic newspapers, the Islamic schools, and the Islamic leadership.” (Emerson, 2009, 21)

34) Israel's military performance has been shown to Americans as defense against Islamic terrorism and for maintaining Western hegemony.

In these ways, three sets of illusions economically buttress and reproduce one another in the interests of shoring up the Western self-image and promoting Western power over the Orient: the view of Islam, the ideology of modernization, and the affirmations of Israel's general value to the West. (Said, 1981, 34)

The United States make their policies according to these images, and many academics and geopolitical strategists gather materials for public knowledge on Islam, oil, terrorism and the future of Western civilization that is corrupted and is embodied in the style of a cold-war ideology. What makes its way into the mass media is what could be the easiest message to remember; a message that is conveyed by memorable images.

In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said addressed an important characteristic of media and image-making, that is, the series of films, tv programs and articles that would bombard the audience with the same message at certain points to convey a precise political message. As Salman Rushdie observed in 1984, many films and articles about the British Raj, including the television series *The Jewel in the Crown* and David Lean's film *A Passage to India*, showing "affectionate recollections of British rule in India" came out at a time that coincided with the Falklands War. Rushdie noted: "the rise of Raj revisionism, exemplified by the huge success of these fictions, is the artistic counterpart to the rise of conservative ideologies in modern Britain." (In

Said, 1993, 22) Several critics disregarded Rushdie's point, which led him to use, in *Outside the Whale*, George Orwell's description of the intellectual outside and inside of a whale to portray the contemporary intellectual's place in the society:

If books and films could be made and consumed in the belly of the whale, it might be possible to consider them merely as entertainment, or even, on occasion, as art. But in our whaleless world, this world without quiet corners [in which] there can be no easy escapes from history, from hullabaloo, from terrible, unquiet fuss. (in Rushdie, 1991, 101)

The manipulation of public perceptions and political attitudes are among the main tasks of media. In the West, at least from 1960's, the stereotypical image of the Arab world has basically remained the same, which is nothing less than "crude, reductionist and coarsely racist"; represented as "sleazy camel-jockeys," terrorists, and offensively wealthy sheikhs." (Said, 1993, 42) Faced with the question of why the stereotypical and caricatural image works better for the media, Said believed that the reason is "the imperial dynamic and above all its separating, essentializing, dominating, and reactive tendencies." (Said, 1993, 42)

The importance of American media, and specifically of Hollywood movies, is related to the fact that the United States hold a great power since they own the main corporations producing and distributing cultural commodities around the world. This primacy gives America the chance to maintain its control over smaller cultures. In this context, Said acknowledged the study done by the first generation of critical theorists

like Adorno and Marcuse, as well as media critics like Herbert Schiller and Armand Mattelart:

Some of the work done by critical theorists – in particular, Herbert Marcuse’s notion of one-dimensional society, Adorno and Enzensberger’s consciousness industry – has clarified the nature of the mix of repression and tolerance used as instruments of social pacification in Western societies; the influence of Western, and particularly American media imperialism on the rest of the world reinforces the findings of the McBride Commission, as do also the highly important findings by Herbert Schiller and Armand Mattelart about the ownership of the means of producing and circulating images, news, and representations. (Said, 1993, 353)

The notion of culture industry, analyzed in the previous chapter, shows its close affinity with the role Said attributed to media in propagating, more specifically, Orientalism. This affinity cannot be easily extended to an overall acceptance by Said of Adorno’s work. Even more complicated, and not just for chronological reasons, would be to envision Adorno’s acceptance of some parts of Said’s political perspectives, especially those concerning Israel. Yet Said often praised Adorno’s work, especially in regards to his musical theory, and subscribed to his analysis of the manipulative and ideological effect of mainstream media. The task of this work, especially in the last chapter, is to integrate the notion of Orientalism in the framework of culture industry, showing how the images of Islamic culture are distorted in order to create a passive and acritical consideration of anything different

from the dominant cultural standards. One of the main affinity with Adorno, besides the consideration of media and culture industry, has to do with Adorno's notion of non-identity. The non-Western, 'oriental' perspective can be analyzed similarly to how Adorno addressed the attitude towards non-identity generated by Western rationality. In both Adorno and Said's theories, the non-identical does not represent a fixed and static principle that has to be acknowledged outside the obsession towards identity thinking. Speaking of a fixed "oriental culture" is just as deceptive as considering "Western culture" as more civilized and advanced. In this sense, Adorno's consideration of non-identity shows an analogy with Said's idea of the Orient. And this is why, in my opinion, Orientalism can be integrated into the concept of culture industry as a fundamental aspect of how ideology propagates itself in contemporary media, without running the risk of determining, between 'East' and 'West,' which one is 'best'. For both authors Western rationality is phagocytizing everything that is different with the primary purpose of creating terror in the masses towards what is non-identical to itself. To be more precise, we are dealing with a double purpose. On the one hand, determining a world-wide standardized taste functional to the success of capitalism, so that you can now desire the same commodities (including movies) whether you are in a remote eastern country or in a State within the US. On the other hand, this is fully functional to a passive and obedient attitude towards the dominant cultural standards, which conceal the real economic interests at the bottom of culture industry. Fear of diversity, or non-identity, proves to be one of the most efficient

instrument for creating passive obedience and for increasingly weakening the possibility of free and critical thought.

1.2 Neo-Orientalism, Islamophobia, and media post 9/11

'Neo-Orientalism' is a more recent term that is usually employed in literature and the social sciences to designate the Islamophobic representation of Islamic world after 9/11. Undoubtedly, the most important part of Orientalism is Islam, and after the 9/11 attacks the link between terrorism and Islam became stronger. The term "Islamophobia," fear of Islam and Muslims, is mostly used to describe a sentiment that grew in Europe and North America in recent years.

What are people afraid of when they fear Islam? Islamophobia is a notion that includes all the misinformation and stereotypes generating the perspective of vicious extremists, barbarians who are anti-democratic and anti-Semitic and, most importantly, representing the goal of all Muslims as determined to spread their culture and the Islamic law in the West; thus, Islamophobia is not simply hatred or fear towards Muslim extremists. Although these stereotypes are not new, Islamophobia is a term that infiltrated into literature after 2001. According to this view, Islam is not a faith, but an ideology comparable to Fascism and Nazism. For instance, in 2006 a group of writers and journalists such as Salman Rushdie, Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Irshad Manji published a manifesto entitled *Together Facing the New*

Totalitarianism. In this manifesto they addressed a new threat, which they call “Islamism”:³⁵

After having overcome Fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism, the world now faces a new global totalitarian threat: Islamism [...] Islamism is a reactionary ideology that kills equality, freedom and secularism wherever it is present. Its victory can only lead to a world of injustice and domination: men over women, fundamentalists over others [...] We reject the “cultural relativism” which implies an acceptance that men and women of Muslim culture are deprived of the right to equality, freedom and secularism in the name of a respect for certain cultures and traditions. We refuse to renounce our critical spirit out of fear of being accused of “Islamophobia,” a wretched concept that confuses criticism of Islam as a religion and stigmatization of those who believe in it. (In Shryock, 2010, 5)

Calling Islamophobia “a wretched concept”, the signees of this document believe that Islamophobia is just a propaganda by Islamic fundamentalists to silence Muslim and non-Muslim reformists.

Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber, in *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects*, argued that after September 11, 2001 the invisible citizens who were originally Arab, Muslim or South Asian became visible, and this visibility caused them to be subjects of violence and hate crime in Europe and

³⁵ This manifesto was written in response to the controversy sparked by the Muhammad Cartoons published in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* on September 30, 2005.

America. Soon after the attack, a dichotomy has been created in the media between bad or good Muslims and, unless proved otherwise, every Muslim was supposed to be bad, evil and a terrorist. Naber noted that September 11 was not the starting point of anti-Arab racism, but changed its function:

After decades of silence on Arab American issues in U.S. academia, September 11 sparked discourses on the "new targeted communities" that framed attacks against persons perceived to be "Arab," "Muslim," or "South Asian" in the public sphere as a "new" crisis – as if September 11 was a dividing line of history; as if the only "targeted communities" were Arabs and Muslims; and as if the Bush administration's anti-Arab, anti-Muslim state policies were not located within complex histories of European colonialism and U.S.-led imperialism in Arab homelands and decades of state-sponsored harassment of Arab American individuals, particularly those who are politically active. (Naber and Jamal, 2008, 4)

To further illustrate this point, we can refer to Zygmunt Bauman, who claimed that there is a disturbing figure threatening the order in the modern society: "the stranger". In *Liquid Modernity*, Bauman borrowed from Claude Levi-Strauss suggestions on two strategies that are used whenever we have to deal with stranger and otherness among us. The first one concerns "anthropoemic strategies": abolition of the "others", which involves "vomiting out" or exiling strangers. "The extreme variants of the `emic' strategy are now, as always, incarceration, deportation and murder. The upgraded, `refined' (modernized) forms of the `emic' strategy are spatial

separation, urban ghettos, selective access to spaces and selective barring from using them.” (Bauman 1993, p. 163) The second one regards “anthropophagic strategies”: abolition of the “otherness”, literary cannibalism or ingesting strangers. “This strategy took an equally wide range of forms: from cannibalism to enforced assimilation – cultural crusades, wars of attrition declared on local customs, calendars, cults, dialects and other prejudices and superstitions.” (Bauman 1993, p. 163)

Following this interpretation, both the other and the stranger could be blended into the national culture or they would be purged out or marginalized. Modern racism usually combines these two strategies. Adopting Bauman conclusions, Pnina Werbner argued that the logic of modern racism has three main parts:

- Self-purification = physical expulsion/elimination
- Subordination = physical exploitation of labor
- Assimilation = cultural destruction (Werbner, 2005, 6)³⁶

Werbner maintains that, in order to have a better grasp on what Islamophobia is, we need to rely on psychoanalytic theory and in particular on the work of Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha³⁷ and Ali Rattansi. Fanon believed that the colonizer and the colonized internalized subjectivities mirror each other's hates and fears. For Fanon, only the internalized colonial mentality can make the colonized believe in race. Even

³⁶ In *Islamophobia: Incitement to Religious Hatred: Legislating for a New Fear?*

³⁷ In the second part of this chapter I will discuss his ideas on post colonialism and media in more detail.

when Blacks speak of race and their right for equality, it is the interior white that talks for them: "The Negro is not. Any more than the white man" (Fanon, 1952, 180)

The way the West treats Muslims and the Arabs is very close to the dehumanizing and degrading treatment that colonized people gets from the colonizers. In colonial discourse, the primitiveness label and the imposed assimilation into the Western culture have carved out, inside the colonial subject's mind, an inferiority complex that is crucial in order for the colonizer to keep them in a permanent state of dependency. All discourses on different races, developed in a way to justify inequality and racial classification, cannot exist without the acknowledgment of the inferiority of a group. "If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process: primarily, economic; subsequently, the internalization – or, better, the epidermalization – of this inferiority." (Fanon, 1952, 4)

But can Islamophobia be considered as racism when Islam is not a race? The commonality between islamophobia and anti-Semitism or Negrophobia can be traced in Fanon's analysis of racism in *Black Skin White Masks*. Fanon showed that different racisms repeat the same pattern by using imaginary fear and anxiety. Regarding Negrophobia and anti-Semitism Fanon argued that:

If one wants to understand the racial situation psychoanalytically, not from a universal viewpoint but as it is experienced by individual consciousnesses, considerable importance must be given to sexual phenomena. In the case of the Jew, one thinks of money and its cognates. In that of the Negro, one thinks of sex. Anti-

Semitism can be rationalized on a basic level. It is because he takes over the country that the Jew is a danger. (Fanon, 1952, 123)

The process of racialization requires attributing sets of traits to a group of people which could be either physical or cultural. These traits are consistent within a range of attributes, from the skin color to language or religion. In comparison to Negrophobia and anti-Semitism, Islamophobia works more similarly to anti-Semitism, where fear mainly originates from cultural factors and, in a lesser form, from physical appearance. Anti-Semitism has always been an internal threat in Western society, but as soon as the rate of immigration and Muslim asylum seekers goes up, the West starts to inject the irrational fear of Muslims into media.

When xenophobia is considered as a natural psychological reaction against strangers, the media echoing mainstream political message – of being in danger of losing control of what is accepted as Western culture – and racist behavior can be legitimized. As an example of this pattern in the media, Arun Kundnani brought out the subject of asylum seekers and the media's perspective against their biased and racist views:

The issue of anti-asylum-seeker racism is then cut off from the issue of institutional racism as defined in the Macpherson report and none of the impetus to tackle the second is applied to tackle the first. This separation is essential to the tabloid campaign against asylum seekers - it is no surprise that Trevor Kavanagh, political editor of the Sun, wants to emphasise it: `Let's get one thing straight. It is not racist

to be alarmed by the flood of illegal asylum seekers pouring into Britain.' (Kundnani, 2001, 51)

As we saw earlier, Said's concern in *Covering Islam* was about a technologically produced new image of Islam, which changed from a remote backward religion into an internal threat. Clearly, film industry and especially Hollywood are not alien to this image-making and representation. Neo-Orientalist ideology has been popular in Hollywood especially since 9/11. The stereotypical image not only influences the public view, leading to the increase of hate crimes against Muslims, but it also has a direct impact on the American soldiers who are sent to the Middle East in a "war on terror".

What Said suggested in *Covering Islam* was that Iranian revolution in 1979 changed the way the West regarded all Muslim countries which, until then, were considered as undeveloped and weak societies. After the Iranian revolution a new group of orientalists such as Patricia Crone stepped forward with new thesis about the Orient. According to Crone, Islamic law, sharia, was characterized by a "profound hostility to settled states," (Crone, 1980, 62) and was created by men of tribal origin who defined God's law as "haqq al-'arab, the law of the Arabs, just as they identified his language as the lisan al-'arab, the normative language of the Bedouins, the consensus being that where God had not explicitly modified tribal law, he had endorsed it." (Crone, 1980, 63) She then concluded her argument with the statement that "this resulted in a tribal vision of sacred politics." (ibid.)

In neo-Orientalist literature, in addition to the backwardness of Islam, the inferiority of Islam in comparison to Western ideology is consistently portrayed. The neo-Orientalist discourse, especially after September 11, pushed the narrative of us/civilized and other/barbarian in mainstream media. Although the events of September 11 were among the most documented events in history, and the images seemed to belong to a fiction movie, the main difference between these events and a Hollywood action movie script was that America was not the winner of this battle. One of the counterattack policies of the Bush administration was to produce cultural commodities which could help boosting American nationalism and identity.³⁸

In *Orientalism and "saving" US state identity after 9/11*, Meghana Nayak described how this dichotomy of inferior other/strong us can help to rebuild the West's sense of self which was severely damaged after the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon.

In particular, 9/11's post-traumatic space requires US participation in an orientalist project that institutionalizes gendered and racialized violence through the infantilization, demonization, dehumanization and sexual commodification of the

³⁸ Douglas Kellner, in *From 9/11 to Terror War: The Dangers of the Bush Legacy*, while talking about the propaganda techniques used after 9/11 in the media mentions the role of the Bush administration on persuading Hollywood studios to cooperate with the government on War on terror: "There was also a well-publicized meeting in Hollywood on November 11 organized by Karl Rove, Bush's political advisor, who had made a career out of sliming political opponents and getting favors for corporate campaign donors. Rove met with the cinema community to discuss how they could aid in the war against terrorism, providing a PowerPoint presentation to the Hollywood moguls as if they were high school students. The industry leaders, mostly liberal Democrats, grimly posed for a photo op with the ultraright Bush operative Rove, who beamed at the lens during his moment of Hollywood glitter." (Kellner, 2003, 104)

“Other”. The US state project to “save” its identity intertwines religion, ideology and conflict so as to permanently etch within the American psyche a fear/loathing/paternalism regarding the “Orient” abroad and within. (Nayak, 2006, 31)

One of the most popular strategies of media to pump up a sense of nationalism, especially in the younger generation eligible to participate in war, is by showing hyper-masculinity of US soldiers in contrast to the dehumanized / evil or feminine look of the Muslims.³⁹ The media serve as propaganda machine for capitalism and, what in the end is most important, is how much capital could be gained, and the best strategy is the one that makes the most economic profit. The glossy and repetitive images of glorified and heroic soldiers fighting for “freedom”, “our way of life” and “humanity”⁴⁰ encourage many to participate in war, be fearful of Muslim immigrants and never ask themselves why is that necessary to send our troops to Iraq or Afghanistan, while their government is supportive of a country like Saudi Arabia, which is the birthplace of Wahhabism.

³⁹ In the third chapter of this thesis I will discuss in detail the most notable faces attributed to these stereotypes respectively in the Western media, Saddam Hussain, Abu Hamza al Masri and bin Laden.

⁴⁰ These are the words used on television by Ariel Sharon to describe the war ahead in the afternoon of September 11, 2001.

2. Homi K. Bhabha and Orientalism

2.1 Bhabha and critique of Orientalism

As previously mentioned, Homi K. Bhabha is one of the most influential scholars after Said working on postcolonial studies, and his writings could help us to get a better understanding of Islamophobia and the role of media in spreading the stereotypical image of Muslims. In *Edward Said: Continuing the Conversation*, Bhabha recalls how Said influenced him for the first time when he was a graduate student at Oxford. In an interview on *Diacritics*, Said admitted of “performing a kind of acrobatics between parallel lives, as avant-garde critic and Palestinian exile.” (In Mitchell, 2004, 9) Bhabha immediately identified himself with Said’s acrobatics and “learnt much from his ability to be otherwise engaged, both politically and philosophically, and yet to be capable of a critical assessment that was free and fair.” (Bhabha, 2005, 372)

For Bhabha, Said is a significant figure in colonial discourse analysis, in so far as his work “focused the need to quicken the half-light of Western history with the disturbing memory of its colonial texts that bear witness to the trauma that accompanies the triumphal art of Empire” (Bhabha, 1986, 149). Bhabha’s analysis of Said’s influential work *Orientalism* is, like many other critical analyses, closely related to Foucault’s concept of discourse. Bhabha acknowledges Foucault’s importance and, although in *The Location of Culture* he called Said too “instrumentalist” in his use of

Foucault's concept, suggests a way to extend Said's analysis into colonial discourse by concentrating on the way Orientalism becomes a tool of colonial power.

For Bhabha, colonial texts are not existing just for justifying colonization; most importantly, they are representations of a colonial discourse that plays an active role in processes of colonization.

[Said] rightly rejects a notion of Orientalism as the misrepresentation of an Oriental essence. However, having introduced the concept of 'discourse' he does not face up to the problems it creates for an instrumentalist notion of power/knowledge that he seems to require. This problem is summed up by his ready acceptance of the view that, representations are formations, or as Roland Barthes has said of all the operations of language, they are deformations. (Bhabha, 1994, 103)

In *Orientalism*, Said introduced many forms of dualism such as West/East or representation/real. Bhabha uses Said's models of discourse analysis in Orientalism to show that colonial discourse is not monolithic, but rather internally fragmented. Here Bhabha used the term ambivalence⁴¹ to characterize the relationship between colonizer and colonized. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha described the issue of ambivalence in Said's work: "Said is aware when he hints continually at a polarity or division at the very center of Orientalism. it is, on the one hand, a topic of learning,

⁴¹ According to Bhabha the origin of this notion primarily derives from Fanon and the Manichean dichotomy of two mutually-exclusive and opposing sides that that could not be integrated together.

discovery, practice; on the other, it is the site of dreams, images, fantasies, myths, obsessions and requirements” (Bhabha, 1994, 102)

According to Bhabha, the problem of Said’s book comes from

Said’s refusal to engage with the alterity and ambivalence of these two economies which threaten to split the very object of Orientalist discourse [...] He contains this threat by introducing a binarism within the argument which, in initially setting up an opposition between these two discursive scenes, finally allows them to be correlated as a congruent system of representation that is unified through a political-ideological intention which, in his words, enables Europe to advance securely and unmetaphorically upon the Orient. (Bhabha, 1994, 102)

Although Bhabha argued that Said himself presented the colonial discourse as if it is constituted ambivalently, he rejected Said’s belief that there is only one originating intention that created this ambivalence, which according to Said is “Western projection onto and will to govern over the Orient.” (Said, 1979, 95) For Bhabha, Said’s suggestion that the colonial power is only possessed by the colonizer is overly simplified and reductive.

Despite the ‘play’ in the colonial system, which is crucial to its exercise of power, I do not consider the practices and discourses of revolutionary struggle as the under/other side of ‘colonial discourse’. They may be historically co-present with it and intervene in it, but can never be ‘read off’ merely on the basis of their opposition

to it. Anti-colonialist discourse requires an alternative set of questions, techniques and strategies in order to construct it. (In Baker, 2003, 155)

Perhaps one of the most apparent differences between Said's and Bhabha's views on racial identity in colonial discourse is that, for Said, racial identity is formed from dichotomies such as Western/non-Western, or the Orient/the Occident, while for Bhabha "[t]he construction of colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial power through discourse, demands an articulation of forms of difference, which does not necessarily result in a binary form" (Bhabha, 1990, 72). That is why he introduced the notion of hybridity of an in-between space which exists among two sides of these dichotomies in colonial discourse.⁴²

Bhabha argued that hybridity is not a problem of identity between two different cultures, but rather a "problematic of colonial representation":

If the appearance of the English book is read as a production of colonial hybridity, then it no longer simply commands authority. It gives rise to a series of questions of authority that, in my bastardized repetition, must sound strangely familiar [...]

Hybridity is the name of this displacement of value from symbol to sign that causes

⁴² Hybridity is a concept first introduced by Bakhtin who, in *Discourse in the Novel*, defined a hybrid construction as: "An utterance that belongs, by its grammatical [syntactic] and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two "languages", two semantic and axiological belief systems. We repeat, there is no formal – compositional and syntactic – boundary between these utterances, styles, languages, belief systems; the division of voices and languages takes place within the limits of a single syntactic whole, often within the limits of a simple sentence. It frequently happens that even one and the same word will belong simultaneously to two languages, two belief systems that intersect in a hybrid construction - and, consequently, the word has two contradictory meanings, two accent." (Bakhtin, 1981, 304-305)

the dominant discourse to split along the axis of its power to be representative, authoritative. (Bhabha, 1994, 161)

2.2 Stereotype in Colonial Discourse

In *The other question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism* Bhabha's focus is on the role played by stereotype in colonial discourse. Here, post-structural and psychoanalytic theories borrowed from Fanon⁴³ and Lacan are employed by Bhabha to develop his ideas. Bhabha's concept of what he called "the stereotype-as-suture" (Bhabha, 1994, 115) is a form of fetishistic identification which, in creating discriminatory knowledges like colonial texts, attempts to glue back together the internally split meaning. Bhabha is interested in the way colonial discourse repeats its stereotypes; however, he does not regard the stereotype as a false belief that empowers the one doing the stereotyping. For Bhabha stereotypes do not simply only carry positive or negative aspects; what is more important is how meaning is created. Bhabha argued that

⁴³ Although Fanon had a major influence on Bhabha, it is however necessary to point out that Fanon's and Bhabha's use of psychoanalysis are completely different. Fanon, as a psychiatrist, used psychoanalysis in a clinical context, whereas, as Robert Young explained in *White Mythologies*, "Bhabha is much more undecided as to whether the structures of colonial discourse are 'analogous' to those articulated by Freud or whether, as is sometimes implied, they actually involve the psychic categories as described by Freud. Bhabha remains ambivalent on this question of the status of psychoanalytic concepts in his texts." (Young, 1990, 195)

the stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (which the negation through the Other permits), constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations. (Bhabha, 1994, 115)

Stereotype, as a primary instance of colonial discourse, has this ambivalence that allows it to have contradictions when representing the colonial subject. Here is Bhabha example of how stereotype works about black people:

It is recognizably true that the chain of stereotypical signification is curiously mixed and split, polymorphous and perverse, an articulation of multiple belief. 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. (Bhabha, 1994, 118)

Of course, this ambivalence is not only part of stereotypes, but also an aspect of the colonial discourse in general. Mimicry (repetition) and ambivalence are at the center of Bhabha's postcolonial theory. Bhabha's hybridity is mainly referring to a Derridean difference applied to colonial discourse. Consequently, Bhabha argued that "the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original

and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference” (Bhabha, 1994, 153)⁴⁴

In *Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse* Bhabha explained that mimicry is the desire of the colonizer to make a colonial subject that is almost the same as the colonizer. This colonial policy allows the colonizer to fully know and control the colonial subjects because of their similarity while, at the same time, there are still enough differences left, so that the colonizers can justify their long-term presence in colonial countries. The example used by Bhabha is that of an Indian educated in English; the mimic man here has lots of similarities with the colonizer but, not being “quite white”,⁴⁵ he is only a partial representation.

Mimicry at once enables power and produces the loss of agency. If control slips away from the colonizer, the requirement of mimicry means that the colonized, while complicit in the process, remains the unwitting and unconscious agent of menace – with a resulting paranoia on the part of the colonizer as he tries to guess the native’s sinister intentions. (Though of course the native may well have violent thoughts of rebellion, we are not here, it should be stressed, to talk about such orthodox forms of

⁴⁴ In his 1968 essay *Differance*, Derrida explained difference as: “it governs nothing, reigns over nothing, and nowhere exercises any authority...there is no kingdom of difference, but difference instigates the subversion of every kingdom.” According to Derrida, difference is opposed to a sense of presence. To put it simply whenever there is a signified there must be a signifier; whenever there is meaning there is this possibility to bring attention to the linguistic and discursive strategies on which such meaning depends.

⁴⁵ Bhabha changes the Freudian phrase “almost the same but not quite” into “almost the same but not ‘white,’”. (Bhabha, 1994, 128)

resistance, but mainly to describe a process which simultaneously stabilizes and destabilizes the position of the colonizer.)

Bhabha stated that racial stereotypes work similarly to fetishes in two ways. First, they have the same structure, as fetish is that fixation on an object that has the same role of racial stereotype in the colonial discourse. Second, there is a functional link between the fixation of the fetish and that of the stereotype. The anxiety about something that is lacking or different concerns an affirmation of completeness. That is why a stereotype has to be anxiously repeated and cannot fix itself to its subject but rather spreads as a fake and fetishized form of knowing.

According to Bhabha, stereotypical racial discourse is a “four-term strategy”, metonymic/aggressive and metaphoric/narcissistic:

The construction of colonial discourse is then a complex articulation of the tropes of fetishism – metaphor and metonymy – and the forms of narcissistic and aggressive identification available to the Imaginary. There is a tie-up between the metaphoric or masking function of the fetish and the narcissistic object-choice and an opposing alliance between the metonymic figuring of lack and the aggressive phase of the Imaginary. (Bhabha, 1994, 112)

Bhabha argued that the racial stereotype is never completely stable and that is because, in the colonialist representations, the colonized subject is an ambivalent figure, never stable on being similar or different. As a consequence of this slippery position, stereotypes must be frequently repeated in an anxious and useless attempt

to secure the colonized subject in the discourse of colonialism: “the same old stories must be told (compulsively) again and afresh.” (Bhabha, 1994, 111)

Bhabha’s work on stereotypes, influenced by his Lacanian reading of Fanon, demonstrates the importance of fantasy⁴⁶ in colonial and racial discourse. According to Bhabha, there are two sides in stereotyping: on one hand there is the anxiety to encounter with difference, on the other hand the attempt through fantasy to normalize the disturbance and stabilize an unstable identity.

There is both a structural and functional justification for reading the racial stereotype of colonial discourse in terms of fetishism. Fetishism, as the disavowal of difference, is that repetitious scene around the problem of castration. The recognition of sexual difference [...] is disavowed by the fixation on an object that masks that difference and restores an original presence. (Bhabha, 1994, 106).

However, Bhabha’s process of analyzing the issue of racism has encountered many critiques, mainly because Bhabha is against any effort to understand the reason behind any type of racism and ignores its economic and cultural roots. In Bhabha’s theory the racist also suffers from the same general existential condition as everyone, and the only way to overcome the root of this problem is to go through what Lacan

⁴⁶ As Evans explained in *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*: “while Lacan accepts Freud’s formulation on the importance and on its visual quality as a scenario which stages desire, he emphasizes the protective function of fantasy. Lacan compares the fantasy scene to a frozen image on a cinema screen; just as the film may be stopped at a certain point in order to avoid showing a traumatic scene which follows, so the fantasy scene is a defense against castration.” (Evans, 1996, 61)

called “subjective destitution”. (Lacan, 1967, 6) As Andrew Mc Lavery-Robinson explained in *Homi Bhabha: An Introduction and Critique*:

Politically, Bhabha's analysis means that little can be done about racism, other than endlessly criticizing and deconstructing it. Dialogue is impossible. Productive conflict is impossible. Militantly fighting racism should be avoided because it reproduces antagonism. Economic change is largely off the agenda. A racist (or even a complacent liberal) can only be faced with a stark demand to lose their ego and undergo abjection. If they refuse approach is thus a very unsympathetic and zero-sum way of framing the issue. (Mc Lavery-Robinson, 2020, 425)

2.3 Bhabha on Media

According to Bhabha, in a postcolonial world, the work of art has to show the underlying structures of thoughts of the relationship between words, stories, images and the world, and has to “affirm a profound desire for social solidarity.” (Bhabha, 1994, 27)

Bhabha’s work in postcolonial theory had two major influence on media and film theory: first, the notion of racial stereotypes that we saw earlier had a significant impact on media; second, Bhabha’s concept of a “Third Space”, which he introduced in *Commitment to Theory*, had an important influence in the field of the so-called “Third Cinema”.

It is evident that racism is more common among people with little contact with members of other groups in society and depend on media representations and their unrealistic stereotypes and, as we saw earlier, for Bhabha stereotype is not a fixed point of reference:

[T]o judge the stereotyped image on the basis of a prior political normativity is to dismiss it, not to displace it, which is only possible by engaging with its effectivity; with the repertoire of positions of power and resistance, domination and dependence that constructs colonial identification subject. (Bhabha, 1994, 95)

Bhabha makes some references to movies and racial stereotypes in *The Location of Culture* (1994), and his debate with Stephen Heath on Orson Welles's *Touch of Evil* (1958) is one of them. *Touch of Evil* is a film noir set in a fictional border town between Mexico and the US, where a Mexican narcotic officer, Miguel/Mike Vargas, is the investigator of a case of bomb explosion on the border that killed an American construction tycoon and his girlfriend. In a two-part article written for *Screen* in 1979 Stephen Heath analyzed the film frame-by-frame. Eight years later Bhabha published the essay *The Other Question: the Stereotype and Colonial Discourse* in the same magazine, arguing that in Heath's analysis there were features of a colonialist fantasy which prove the importance of post-colonial studies as an academic discipline. Bhabha noted how Heath's attention to the stereotypes helps us seeing the circulation of racial otherness: "Despite the awareness of the multiple or cross-cutting determinations in the construction of modes of sexual and racial differentiation there

is a sense in which Heath's analysis marginalizes otherness." He then called Heath's conclusion reductive, stating:

Vargas is the position of desire, its admission and its prohibition. Not surprisingly he has two names: the name of desire is Mexican, Miguel... that of the law American, Mike. The film uses the border, the play between American and Mexican [...] at the same time it seeks to hold that play finally in the position of purity and mixture which in turn is a version of law and desire. (Heath, 1979, 93)

Bhabha argued that Heath's comments on racial and cultural differences – and what he called a play between law and desire – is a neocolonialist discourse that would confirm the authority of US national identity.

On that basis [of Heath's mode of analysis], it is not possible to construct the polymorphous and perverse collusion between racism and sexism as a mixed economy – for instance the discourses of American cultural colonialism and Mexican dependency, the fear/desire of miscegenation, the American border as cultural signifier of a pioneering male "American" spirit always under threat from races and cultures. (Bhabha, 1994, 98-99)

According to Bhabha, knowledge of the colonized empowers the colonizer, and colonial discourse makes the colonized subject on one hand entirely knowable and visible and, on the other hand, a social reality that is at once an 'other'.

Bhabha also worked in the field of film theory and Third Cinema.⁴⁷ His most important essay, which later on was published with the title *The Commitment to Theory* in *The Location of Culture*, was first prepared for the “Third Cinema Conference” in Edinburgh (1986). The essay is divided in two parts, with Bhabha beginning the essay by rejecting the view of theory as necessarily representing the “elite language of the socially and culturally privileged,” and affirming that an academic critic is inevitably “within the Eurocentric archives of an imperialist or neo-colonialist West.” (Bhabha, 1994, 28)

Bhabha dismissed the binarism between theory and politics and, although he argued that Anglo-American hegemony spreads through the academic institutions just like the mass media, he rejected the idea that the new languages of theoretical critique simply reflect hegemony. He then asked what is the function of a committed theoretical perspective once the cultural and historical hybridity of the post-colonial world is taken as a place of departure. Here is his answer:

Political positions are not simply identifiable as progressive or reactionary, bourgeois or radical, prior to the act of critique engagée, or outside the terms and conditions of

⁴⁷ Third Cinema or Third World Cinema, is an alternative cinema mainly from Latin America and Africa as opposed to commercial cinema or Hollywood (First Cinema) and art cinema or European films (Second Cinema). The term was first used by Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, after their groundbreaking documentary *La hora de los hornos* (*The Hour of the Furnaces*, 1968) and their manifesto *Hacia un tercer cine* (*Toward a Third Cinema*, 1969). As Teshome Gabriel explained in *Third Cinema in the Third World*: “although Third Cinema films are made chiefly in the Third World, they may be made anywhere, by anyone, about any subject, and in a variety of styles and forms, as long as they are oppositional and liberationist.” (Gabriel, 1982, 2-3)

their discursive address. It is in this sense that the historical moment of political action must be thought of as part of the history of the form of its writing. (Bhabha, 1994, 33)

According to Bhabha the binary oppositions between reality and appearance or theory and practice are false, as they are always connected in some ways in the process of negotiation. Bhabha called this “temporality of negotiation and translation” (Bhabha, 1994, 38) and identified two advantages for it:

First, it acknowledges the historical connectedness between the subject and object of critique so that there can be no simplistic, essentialist opposition between ideological miscognition and revolutionary truth. [Second,] the function of theory within the political process becomes double-edged. It makes us aware that our political referents and priorities – the people, the community, class struggle, anti-racism, gender difference, the assertion of an anti-imperialist, black or third perspective – are not “there” in some primordial, naturalistic sense. Nor do they reflect a unitary or homogeneous political object. They “make sense” as they come to be constructed in the discourses of feminism or Marxism or the Third cinema or whatever, whose objects of priority – class or sexuality or “the new ethnicity” – are always in historical and philosophical tension, or cross reference with other objectives. (Bhabha, 1994, 38)

Bhabha argued that the non-unitary nature of culture requires us to imagine a “third space of enunciation,” which is not an actual space, but rather something produced by the openness of signs, symbols and culture that can be “appropriated, translated, historicized, and read anew.” (Bhabha, 1994, 55) It is a space of hybridity

in and between cultural differences. We can conclude these observations on Bhabha's essay by arguing that, because of the deconstruction of so many identities and transcendence binarisms, talking about identities seems problematic.

In Bhabha's terms, in the process of enunciation there is a split between two different types of time: the traditional cultural demand for a fixed model and reference (mythical time) and the space for negotiating new cultural demands, changes, resistances (time of uncertainty, time of liberation).⁴⁸

Bhabha then elaborated more on this idea of a "double time" in his essay on *DissemiNation*. He argued that "the nation's people must be thought in double time," and offered a model in which people could be considered both as historical objects of nationalist pedagogy and as subjects of a process of signification in the present.

There is a homogeneous time of a pedagogy of the nation that narrates the people as a historical sedimentation. As Bhabha explained: "In place of the polarity of a pre-figurative self-generating nation 'in-itself' and extrinsic to other nations, the performative introduces a temporality of the 'in-between'." (Bhabha, 1994, 212) And from the space created by double temporality of pedagogy of the nation, minority

⁴⁸ Bhabha quoted Fanon in order to explain the time of cultural uncertainty: "But [native intellectuals] forget that the forms of thought and what [they] feed on, together with modern techniques of information, language and dress, have dialectically reorganized the people's intelligences and the constant principles (of national art) which acted as safeguards during the colonial period are now undergoing extremely radical changes [...] [We] must join the people in that fluctuating movement which they are just giving a shape to [...] which will be the signal for everything to be called into question [...] it is to the zone of occult instability where the people dwell that we must come." (Bhabha, 1994, 51)

discourses emerge. As of how media and especially films could play a role in questioning the pedagogy of the nation, Bhabha mentioned *Handsworth Songs* (1986) directed by John Akomfrah and produced by Black Audio and Film Collective. This film is about racial inequality and the riots of 1985 in Birmingham's Handsworth. According to Bhabha culture acts directly on politics and, in the case of the film's treatment of the Handsworth riot of 1985, he argued "the racism of statistics and documents and newspapers is interrupted by the perplexed living of Handsworth songs." (Bhabha, 1994, 223) For Bhabha, the film is haunted by two moments:

First, the arrival of the ship laden with immigrants from the ex-colonies, just stepping off the boat, always just emerging – as in the fantasmatic scenario of Freud's family romance – into the land where the streets are paved with gold. This is followed by another image of the perplexity and power of an emergent peoples, caught in the shot of a dreadlocked rastafarian cutting a swathe through a posse of policemen during the uprising. (Bhabha, 1994, 223-4)

Handsworth Songs, as an example of Third Cinema films, uses a lot of the archival footage of the arrival of migrants happily singing the English national anthem. These images on one hand show these immigrants as the pedagogical narrative of the sedimented nation and, on the other hand, their current reality in a position of minority.

Based on what we discussed earlier regarding the relation between Adorno's and Said's theories, we can partially object to Bhabha's criticism of Said by reminding that,

while Said sometimes affirmed a form of Oriental subjectivity in a more fixed sense, he followed more an Adornian position in the consideration of non-identity as a dialectical and negative concept to be constantly reminded of when constructing identities. Orient, as Said insisted in many parts of his works, whether Arab, Islamic or in any other connotation, is a cultural construction which plays an ideological role in the imposition of stereotypes functional to the affirmation of the supremacy of a Western model of social and political domination. His ultimate goal was to eliminate altogether the notions of Orient and Occident, not so as to achieve an identity between the two, but to show that both definitions are ideologically constructed. Following Adorno, the respect for the moment of non-identity remains the fundamental step that should be taken in order to counteract the disastrous effect of a form of rationality that is obsessed with its own, artificially created identities. In this way, Orientalism can be successfully integrated in the consideration of culture industry as a remedy against identity thinking, by enriching its conception with an aspect of dominant ideology, namely, the one concerning Islamophobia, which was neglected, primarily for chronological reasons, by the original conception given by Adorno and Horkheimer. In recent times there has been a proliferation of post-colonial studies related to critical theory⁴⁹ which have shown the fundamental importance of a globalized social and political theory.

⁴⁹ Among the most recent works, a special mention should be made to the work of Ina Kerner and Rocio Zambrana.

The main thesis of this work is that the link between Orientalism and critical theory proves to be particularly relevant in analyzing the contemporary forms of the ideological use of media, as well as in integrating the conception of culture industry with an increasingly powerful ideology of rejection of differences. The analysis developed by Bhabha concerning stereotypes turned out to be a precious aid for this task. Once again, this does not imply a simple absorption of Said's work into the original purposes of critical theory, a task that would be complicated by the anti-post-structuralist position of the Frankfurt School.

In the following chapter we will analyze how, in contemporary mainstream movies production, the Orientalist stereotypes are being used in a more or less obvious manner. What we aim to show is that Orientalism turns out to be an excellent "critical model", as Adorno would call it, for demystifying powerful forms of racism and rejection of non-identities.

Chapter III

Culture Industry and Orientalism in Movies

In the first chapter I discussed what Adorno called pseudo-individualism in cultural commodities, as it is presented in its various forms, from music to novels to television shows and films. This characteristic of culture industry allows for a pattern to repeat itself, from a music piece to another and from one movie to a whole genre of movies. This hidden patterns and messages in culture industry are the birthplace of all stereotypes in media.

After going through the studies of Adorno and Marcuse in the first chapter and Said and Bhabha in the second chapter, we can summarize that stereotypes – whether in the form defined by Adorno, in the Orientalist version discussed by Said or in the ambivalent racial aspect discussed by Bhabha – all share same characteristics, and one of the most important traits of them is that they must be easily repeatable and interchangeable between different races and cultures.

In second chapter I also discussed Meghana Nayak's idea on how America use the dichotomy of inferior other/strong us as a way to rebuild a sense of self after the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, primarily through the three most used images of Arabs in media, the dehumanized, the feminine and the evil.

1. Stereotypes concerning Muslims in media

Here we will analyze the most used stereotypes of Muslims in mainstream media, which can be grouped in the following categories: a) Feminine and Exotic Villain; b) Dehumanized, Semi-beast Villain; c) Physically Impaired Monster.

a) Feminine and Exotic Villain

After 9/11 the most used images in media and press portraying Muslims were revolving around those of bin Laden, who became like a celebrity, with his widespread pictures from newspapers and magazines to daily news on television, to documentary and fiction films. Even after his death the images published of him usually portrayed him as a religious figure, often times in light colored clothes and serene look on his face. Even the pictures of Bin Laden's death were not as gruesome or showing if he went through much suffering before his death; unlike the portrayal of Saddam Hussain, who was presented as a fallen exotic villain.

From the very beginning bin Laden's image was always depicted as more feminine, rather than as a monstrous villain, and after 9/11 his image turned into an inferior male who, as a form of humiliation, could be abused by other males. Shortly after 9/11 many cartoons came out, and in one of them a caricature of Osama bin Laden was presented as being anally penetrated with a U.S. bomb; a bomb headed to Afghanistan with the words "High Jack this Fags" written on it. Another cartoon

showed bin Laden being sodomized by the twin towers with the following slogan underneath it: “The empire strikes back. So, you like skyscrapers, huh, bitch?”

The stereotype of an inferior, effeminate or homosexual man is commonly used in media in order to humiliate a person or a group of people. As Adorno mentioned in *How to Look at Television* concerning the artist figure as less than a real man and as homosexual, here a terrorist leader is presented in a similar fashion; a pattern that is recurrent in media, and which we will more thoroughly discuss later in relation to the movie *300*, where the Persian king Xerxes is depicted as inferior to Spartans with his heavy makeup, feminine look and homosexual tendencies.

b) Dehumanized, Semi-beast Villain

Another stereotypical image of Muslim terrorist can be traced in the pictures of Saddam Hussain or Muammar al-Gaddafi after they were captured and tortured to death. Contrary to what media showed regarding the death of bin Laden, Saddam Hussain’s pictures were very gruesome and pertaining to a fallen monster: dirty and punished just like a hunted animal. The headlines in media after the capture of Hussain in 2003 were all showing him in disheveled look with a messy and long gray beard. The detail that most of the press put in their headlines was that they found him hiding in an underground pit, as for example in the Los Angeles Times which wrote: “Hussein Captured: Army Finds Him Hiding in Pit.” Several media quoted Gen.

Raymond Odierno, who captured Hussein with his troops, saying: “He was caught like a rat.”

In Western culture, dirt, underground holes and rats are commonly symbols of evil. After Saddam’s capture, the once mighty dictator who was endorsed by the US turned into a fallen villain who would appear in the media as a semi-beast monster. In 2004 Gary Varvel published his caricature of Saddam in the *Indianapolis Star* showing him as rat with his face trapped in a box, while Daryl Cagle’s famous cartoon *Saddam Skin Rug* shows George W. Bush in a hunting uniform and helmet, standing on top of a bearskin rug that has Saddam’s face and a bear’s body.

Comparison of an animal to a person or a group of people is one of the oldest traits of dehumanizing strategies, as evident in Nazi’s portrayal of European Jews as rats or vermin. Later we will discuss a similar pattern in the movie *300*, where the animal characteristics of soldiers and the half human/half beast uber-immortal concern the Persian army.

c) Physically Impaired Monster

Another famous representation of the Muslim terrorist is the one of Abu Hamza al-Masri, a Muslim cleric who was extradited to the US from the UK on terrorism charges related to 9/11. He was blinded in one eye and one of his hands was amputated and replaced by a hook. The media usually referred to him as Hook-handed Hamza or simply The Hook. The media emphasis on Hamza’s disability, which

gave him a villain look - although in an obviously less sympathetic manner than for Captain Hook in Peter Pan – could be seen in every headline of the news and in every picture that was published of him.

The humiliation of disabled body is evident in many headlines in the press, such as the one from *The Sun*: “Sling Your Hook” or “Hook and a Hooker.” The images used in media with their focus either on Hamza’s severed eye or his hooked hand usually made him look like a character of a horror movie, and they only would pander the stereotype that physical disability is humiliating, while at the same time affirming a connection between physical appearance and the inner monstrosity. Once again, this stereotype would appear also in the movie 300 and its depiction of the Persians.

2. Studies in Prejudice, Right Wing Authoritarianism and Social Dominance Orientation

Before getting into a more detailed analysis of the movie 300, it is helpful to mention the studies of the Frankfurt School on prejudice, as well as the later studies inspired by them, and how prejudiced personality affects the general attitude towards ethnic minorities, immigrants or Muslims. Adorno’s *Authoritarian Personality*, as well

as other studies by his colleagues in *Studies in Prejudice* of 1950, was an influential psychological contribution to the understanding of prejudice.⁵⁰

The concept of authoritarian personality was first theorized by Erich Fromm combining ideas of Freud, Marx and Max Weber. Fromm was the leading author of a study which remained unpublished, *The Working Class in Weimar Germany: A Sociological and Psychological Study*. In this work, he conducted a survey in 1931 among workers in Weimar Germany and showed that even members of the Communist party among the workers and white-collar employees often exhibited characteristics of authoritarian personality.

The theory concerning the authoritarian personality in its complete form took shape in 1950, in the work edited by Max Horkheimer and Samuel H. Flowerman in *Studies in Prejudice* in form of five projects.⁵¹

In his study, Adorno argued that authoritarianism is not a personal pathology, but it has a broad social context, and he stated that the ideology and mentality of the anti-Semite is mainly cultivated by the objective character of our society. Adorno and his

⁵⁰ Although the studies in 1950's by the members of Frankfurt school showed that authoritarianism, measured by the F scale, was directly related to ethnocentrism, anti-Semitism, and fascist tendencies, however, in 1960's and afterward new studies by others, such as Pettigrew, Altemeyer and Heaven, showed some shortcomings in the psychometric system of the F scale.

⁵¹ The studies gathered in this volume were: *The Authoritarian Personality* by Adorno; *Dynamics in Prejudice: A Psychological and Sociological Study of Veterans* by Bruno Bettelheim and Morris Janowitz; *Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorder: A Psychological Interpretation* by Nathan W. Ackerman and Marie Jahoda; *Rehearsal for Destruction: A Study of Political Anti-Semitism in Imperial Germany* by Paul Massing; and *Prophets of Deceit* by Leo Löwenthal and Norbert Guterman.

colleagues viewed the authoritarian personality as a complex syndrome of behaviors consisting of nine elements:

1. Conventionalism: a desire to support the norms established by the ingroup or those in positions of authority.
2. Authoritarian submission: an uncritical acceptance of the ingroup or those in positions of authority.
3. Authoritarian aggression: intolerance and rejection of those who violate conventional values.
4. Anti-intraception: the perception that creative and imaginative individuals are a 'threat'.
5. Superstition and stereotypy: the tendency to think rigidly and believe that much of what happens to us is 'mystically' determined.
6. Power and 'toughness': identification with the leader; an emphasis on strong-weak, leader-follower distinctions.
7. Destructiveness and cynicism: a generalized hostility particularly to the weak and members of outgroups.
8. Projectivity: a belief that there are wild and dangerous forces operative in the world.
9. Sex: an emphasis on 'sexual goings-on'.

Adorno argued that it is possible to measure prejudice by understanding authoritarian personality regardless of any specific ethnic group, and with his colleagues he developed the fascism (F) scale to measure the prejudiced personality. Although some disagreements were later developed about the validity of the F scale, it nevertheless inspired many psychologists to study the prejudiced personality. The study, which went through a hiatus for two decades in 1960's and 1970's, came back

to life in 1981 with the publication of Robert Altemeyer's *Right-wing Authoritarianism*.⁵²

Altemeyer defined Right-wing Authoritarianism, or RWA, as having three dimensions which could vary in each individual:

1. 'Authoritarian submission – a high degree of submission to the authorities who are perceived to be established and legitimate in the society in which one lives; 2. Authoritarian aggression – a general aggressiveness, directed against various persons, which is perceived to be sanctioned by established authorities; and 3. Conventionalism – a high degree of adherence to the social conventions which are perceived to be endorsed by society and its established authorities'. (Altemeyer, 1981, 148)

According to Altemeyer, RWA has both a genetic and a social component. People with high RWA have poor cognitive functioning. According to Altemeyer, authoritarians, because of their high tendency to obey authorities, have poor capacity for analytical thinking and are easily attracted to right-wing radical political movements. Various studies on RWA shows the direct connection between RWA and different kinds of prejudice. For instance, the study conducted by Geoffrey Haddock

⁵² Altemeyer in *The authoritarian specter* (1996) explained that Right-wing authoritarianism does not mean the support for right political movements, but to support for any legitimate authority in any given society or community.

in 1993 showed the connection between RWA and homophobic behavior. Most importantly it has been shown that RWA is a significant predictor for war support.

Another development of Adorno's theory led to the construction of another scale, the 'Social Dominance Orientation', first was proposed in 1992 by Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto, which has a major difference to Altemeyer's RWA. While Altemeyer's authoritarianism is based on social learning, SDO is based on a theory of social dominance. Most societies are group based with clearly defined social hierarchies. Those at the top of the hierarchy - like male, white, rich - use attitudes that would maintain their dominance over other groups. What Altemeyer counted as differences between RWA and SDO relates, for example, to how in SDO sex differences are valid; something not present in RWA, which is important since men score higher in SDO. Another difference regards the fact that RWA is related to religious fundamentalism, while SDO is not. Also, RWAs do not think of themselves as prejudiced, while SDO's accept that they are. And finally, RWA is related to traditionalism, while SDO is not.

What is the relationship between RWA or SDO - which were influenced by the Authoritarian Personality theory - with Islamophobia and the Muslim immigrants post 9/11? Prejudice toward immigrants and being defensive against "outsiders' invasions" could be explained by SDO, along with how the invasion would cause disorder in the established class system. At the same time, as we saw earlier, conventionalism is one the most valued dimensions of RWA, and in this case immigrants disrupt national identity and traditional values, which are mandatory in RWA personality.

In the study conducted by John Duckitt in 2006 titled *Differential effects of right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation on outgroup attitudes and their mediation by threat from and competitiveness to outgroups*, he argued that both SDO and RWA are motivated by a dual process of prejudice. On one hand feeling that immigrants are going to put conformity and social stability in danger make right-wingers express negative attitudes and, on the other hand, the risk of competition make the social dominators fight for what they think as their right to have dominance and superiority over others. On the threatening character of ethnic minority group, he wrote:

In practice, RWA and SDO will not always predict prejudice against different groups because the same groups often may be seen as both socially threatening and socially subordinate so that both RWA and SDO will predict negative attitudes to them, although for different reasons. This is typically the case for ethnic minority groups because they are invariably low in power and status and also often deviate from majority group values and norms. Directly competing outgroups (enemy or rival groups) also should elicit both RWA and SDO motivated prejudice because direct intergroup competition should activate both competitive desires to establish dominance and threat perceptions. (Duckitt, 2006, 686)

Stereotypes portrayed in mainstream media reinforce a certain, authoritarian personality by weakening the critical sense in the audience, creating a form of passivity which is functional to the acceptance of prejudices.

In popular cinema, with its tendency toward integrating serial forms that are conventionalized among the public and its tendency toward providing psychic relief, using the mechanism of the stereotype is particularly necessary. Kracauer was one of the first critics to articulate an intellectual resentment toward the stereotypes of popular film. He believed that the fantasies congealed in these patterns contradict a rational, factual, truthful view of the world. Kracauer considered the “limited number of typical themes” that recurred frequently in the average popular movie of the 1920s and early 1930s to be an alarming relapse into the realm of “mythological delusions.” Most of these films and the stereotypes crystallized therein gave form to fantasies, in which unreal desires, wishes, and sensibilities were expressed. These fantasies, according to Kracauer, are largely based on the desires of the (then new) class of what he called the “salaried masses”. Kracauer considered such imagination as coming before an impartial, open view of reality—and coming before reason. Representing a “relapse into mythology,” these fantasies served the “ideological needs of an audience oriented towards the political Right.” (Kracauer, 1927, 308)

After Kracauer many concepts and theories of mass deception in media were developed,⁵³ and as I discussed in the first chapter, one of the most famous of them

⁵³ Kracauer’s works that primarily address these issues are *Ornament der Masse (The Mass Ornament)* and *Die Angestellten (The Salaried Masses)*, which were published in 1927 and 1930 respectively. In his works Kracauer, contrary to critical theorist, did not put any blame on the concept of Enlightenment but he located the problem with capitalism as he argued: “they fail to grasp capitalism’s core defect: it rationalizes not too much but rather too little.” (Kracauer, 1963 ,81)

is the concept of “culture industry” by Adorno and Horkheimer. In the concept of culture industry, the overemphasis on the systemic character of culture industrial production allows Adorno to outline a new quality in the capitalist infiltration of society: besides its complete seizure of the sphere of material goods, it also literally seizes the cultural realm by “transfer[ring] the profit motive naked onto cultural forms.” (Adorno, 1963, 99) Rather than responding to a sincere interest, the pretended orientation on the concerns and demands of the public is yet another manipulative sales strategy. For “[t]he masses are not the measure but the ideology of the culture industry.” (Adorno, 1963, 99) They are barely taken into consideration as potential consumers. Hence, production by the culture industry differs fundamentally from popular art forms that emerge spontaneously from the people themselves and thereby express a certain resistance to subjection. Instead, the products of the culture industry are strategically planned from above and deliberately designed for the market. Consequently, they are also antipodal to veritable art in an Adornian sense.

Forms of binarism that Western philosophy is based on range from general binaries such as light/dark, white/black, to some more complicated and culturally biased as man/woman, the colonizer/colonized and, in this case, the self/other. This binary opposition takes a prominent place within psychoanalysis, feminist, postcolonial and queer theory. The Self – when it is conceived as white male – is regarded in positive terms. On the contrary, the Other – be it female, black, non-Western – is viewed in

negative terms. Said, in his numerous strategic and provocative references to Adorno, demonstrates how the absence to which the Other has been consigned can be transformed into negation and repudiation of imperialist Western values.

According to Adorno any form of racism, although derived from different historical genealogies of power, can be understood at the level of a breakdown in the conceptualization of class conflict. The stereotypes concerning Jews and Muslims are in fact a substitute and, at the same time, a symptom of the failure of revolutionary subjectivity. In the projection of the model of resentment developed by Adorno and Horkheimer, the Jew - but this can be extended to the Muslim - becomes a substitute, a projection based on a general sense of resentment, and this resentment serves as a diversion from the class conflict. The oppressed must turn their resentment towards ever new categories of "inferiors", to divert their revolutionary potential from the source of their oppressive situation, which must instead be found in the production process.

The photographed images produced by a technical apparatus are devoid of any determinate meaning to be disclosed; they are simply the result of an automatic recording. What makes them meaningful comes after, through montage, their juxtaposition with sound and music, their rhythm etc. Non-intentional and seemingly objective, the images incline themselves to any imposed meaning or explicit message, while their visual similarity with the depicted objects seems to confirm the degree of reality and thus the validity of the imposed signification. This is one of the reasons

why propaganda movies are so efficient, and why the commercial productions of the culture industry have such a strong impact on the collective perception of reality: because of their visual likeness with the empirical world, and because of their “inherent tendency to adopt the tone of the factual report,” (Adorno, 1944, 118) they appear as immediate duplication of the reality. Blurring the differences between life and its representation until reality itself appears as a series of images, those films form the perception of society in a particularly persuasive way, and the associated identification scheme and logic of signification smoothly worm their way into the consciousness of the masses. For “[f]ar more strongly than in the theatre of illusion, film denies its audience any dimension in which they might roam freely in imagination – contained by the film’s framework but unsupervised by its precise actualities – without losing the threat; thus it trains those exposed to it to identify film directly with reality.” (Adorno, 1944, 99-100) The problem of an externally introduced meaning into an artwork – which for Adorno discredits it as such – is not limited to totalitarian propaganda films and the “pseudo-realism of the culture industry.” (Adorno, 1951, 141)

Despite all the critiques to Said’s work - the ones that I already mentioned on the second part of the chapter two or the ones that I will discuss in the next part - it is undeniable that his studies on Orientalism paved the way for many scholars after him not only in postcolonial and subaltern studies, but also in media studies. The long

tradition of stereotyping Muslims is still very much active in contemporary movies, and we will show it by analyzing a recent “blockbuster” production: 300.

3. *300*: same story in repetition

The movie *300* (2007) portrays the Battle of Thermopylae of 480 BC, which has two most famous cinematic versions: Rudolph Maté’s *The 300 Spartans* (1962) and the aforementioned Zack Snyder’s *300* (2007), which adapted Frank Miller’s graphic novel of 1998.⁵⁴

While creating his graphic novel and also as the executive producer on Snyder’s film, Miller had been inspired by *The 300 Spartans*. In his five-issue comic book titled *Honor, Duty, Glory, Combat, and Victory*, Miller depicted the battle based on fantasy and not actual historical facts, and the cinematic version is even more overshadowed by mythmaking than the comic books. But why is it important to talk about the ideology behind an action/commercial movie? The goal of my study is to show the impact of these type of movies on a social and political level and their reinforcement of group narcissistic behavior in both the West and the East.

⁵⁴ There are numerous movies, TV shows and computer games that use the Battle of Thermopylae as their main or sub story. Some of the more famous examples are: *Go Tell the Spartans* (1978), *Last Stand of the 300* (2007), *Meet the Spartans* (2008) and the sequel of the movie *300*, *300: Rise of an Empire* (2014)

Whether Snyder used the battle of Thermopylae intentionally or not as ideological device against Iranians and, to a larger extent, the East during the time of administration of George W. Bush, we don't exactly know, but for sure this was not the first time that this tale was used as means for propaganda. On February 2, 1943, the German Sixth Army had surrendered after five-month of war at Stalingrad. Three days earlier, Nazi Germany had celebrated the tenth anniversary of the day Adolf Hitler came to power. That year, instead of Hitler, Hermann Göring made the speech which was broadcasted directly in Germany and also in Stalingrad for German soldiers. In his speech Göring referred to battle of Thermopylae, using Friedrich Schiller's poem and changed the words Sparta to Germany and Thermopylae to Stalingrad:

My soldiers, thousands of years have passed, and before these millennia, there stood in a narrow pass in Greece an infinitely brave and bold man with three hundred of his men; and an overwhelming majority attacked and attacked anew again and again. Stupendous masses of fighters were available to Xerxes, but the three hundred men did not yield and did not waver, they fought and fought a hopeless fight. Hopeless, but not meaningless! And then the last man fell. [...] If you come to Germany, tell them that you saw us lying at Stalingrad as the law commanded, that is to say, the law of our people's security. And this law each of you carries within your breast, the law to die for Germany, for the life of Germany is the hope of all laws. (Craig, 1973, 373)

For a propaganda machine like Nazi Germany, which used to emphasize the affinity between Arian Germans and classic Greek heroes, the battle of Thermopylae was an optimal choice in the 1943's speech reported above, but it was definitely not the only time that Thermopylae was used in Nazi Germany. In 1945 (the twelfth and the last anniversary of Nazi Germany) there was the premiere of *Kolberg*, Nazi Germany's last film, by Veit Harlan. *Kolberg*, as Klaus Kreimeier said, is "a megalomaniacal, death-hungry, fight to the last man production." (Kreimeier, 1999, 276) Goebbels (the head of Nazi propaganda and also of the German film industry) wanted Harlan to include a flashback to the story of Leonidas and the three hundred Spartans and asked Harlan numerous times to include a "Leonidas scene" in the film for symbolic reasons.

In 1937, French historian Henri Lichtenberger, in his book *L'Allemagne Nouvelle* (in English *The Third Reich*), included a chapter titled "Spartanism". The Spartanism, as Lichtenberger defines it, can be found in every aspect of Nazi regime, from the Nazis' military to youth organizations. The chapter on Spartanism in the English version is divided by five parts: 1. The Spirit of Sparta; 2. Spartan Regimentation; 3. The Labor Camps; 4. The Army; 5. The Role of the Brown Militia. Lichtenberger argued that the Spartanism could be found from early stages of preparing the young children in the National Socialist youth organizations.

If we compare the last completed movie of Nazi Germany (*Kolberg*) and Snyder's movie *300*, we can find numerous similarities between them. For example, we can see the similarities between the speech that queen Gorgo makes in *300* in front of the

Spartan council and the Major Gneisenau speech in *Kolberg*. The passage from 300 reads:

We're at war, gentlemen. We must send the entire Spartan army to aid our king in the preservation of not just ourselves, but of our children. Send the army for the preservation of liberty. Send it for justice. Send it for law and order. Send it for reason. But most importantly, send our army for hope. Hope that a king and his men have not been wasted to the pages of history. That we are made stronger by their actions and that your choices today reflect their bravery...The Persians will not stop until the only shelter we will find is rubble and chaos.

Then the Major Gneisenau speech in *Kolberg* reports:

Prussians! Germans! A heavy fate burdens your city and our unhappy fatherland. [...] No love is holier than the love for one's country; no joy is sweeter than the joy of freedom. But you know what is in store for us if we do not honorably win this fight. For this reason, whatever sacrifices may be demanded of each, they do not outweigh the sacred values for which we must fight and win unless we want to cease being Prussians and Germans.

Both movies use similar language, slogans and glorification of patriotic death for the fatherland without surrender, which is one of the main tenets of Nazi mindset. Both movies use the same tale of hero/enemy, but the difference is that in *Kolberg* the enemies are the communists, while in *300* the Persian army stands for the Muslim

world. The repetition of the same story as an ideological device for the propaganda reminds us of Adorno, who wrote:

It may well be the secret of fascist propaganda that it simply takes men for what they are: the true children of today's standardized mass culture, largely robbed of autonomy and spontaneity, instead of setting goals the realization of which would transcend the psychological status quo no less than the social one. Fascist propaganda has only to reproduce the existent mentality for its own purposes; it need not induce a change – and the compulsive repetition which is one of its foremost characteristics will be at one with the necessity for this continuous reproduction. (Adorno, 1991, 150)

3.1 Animals, monsters and disability

Earlier in this chapter I discussed how in media, especially after 9/11, the stereotypes that are used for Middle Eastern or Muslims could be divided in three main categories. Here in the movie I am going in depth through the characters that represent the feminine, disabled and beastly monsters. Orientalism functions as a machine that gathers symbols and ideologies and distributes them in a way that become believable. Orientalism did not invent Muslim monsters, but the ideological system of orientalism makes it easier to render all the fantasies about the East credible. In the movie *300*, the monstrosity of the Persians is primarily based on racial difference: Persians are not normal because they are not Spartans and the only

disfigured member of Sparta, Ephialtes, has enough physical monstrosity in him to betray Sparta and be lured by Xerxes with disfigured lesbians of his harem. Murray, in "Zach Snyder, Frank Miller and Herodotus: Three Takes on the 300 Spartans", writes:

While the graphic novel portrayed the Persians as effeminate (in contrast to the overly masculine Spartans), and in the case of the Immortals, sinister, the film presents them as demonic, monstrous and mutant-like. The narrator further brings fantasy-like beasts into his account: the mammoth elephants of the graphic novel are even bigger and are joined by a giant rhinoceros in the film. The film further supplies Persian magicians that hurl sparkly grenades, the Immortals let loose the savage and gigantic Uber Immortal, and the axe-man, with whom a displeased Xerxes executes his generals, turns in the film into a mutant-like creature with Paleolithic-like axe appendages for hands. (Murray, 2007, 52)

The monsters' purpose in the representation of war is to show how the 'enemy' could be in comparison to the 'friendly', the 'barbaric' to the 'civilized', the 'other' to 'us'. Persian monsters, portrayed in the film with missing limbs and some with goat heads, combined with hideous sexual behaviors and constant moans, create a circus-like harem which could belong only to nightmares. Bodily dysmorphia in Ephialtes or the Persians create also an image of untrustworthiness. In countless movies, disabled villains vindictive about their "fate" try to destroy a world inhabited by "normals". From Dr. Strangelove to Captain Hook, the common representation of the disabled person as a criminal or a monster creates a trait of stereotypes that Erving Goffman

calls the fundamental nature of stigma, in which the stigmatized person “is seen as somehow less than human. That is, the person is identified by this trait, which dominates other aspects of his or her being, robbing him or her of social identity.” (Goffman, 1963, 8)

These comparisons between physical appearance are the same tropes used by the Nazi regime in their propaganda against the Jews. One of the most famous examples of these analogies between Aryan beauty and physical dysmorphia of the Jews is anti-Semitic propaganda film titled *The Eternal Jew (Der ewige Jude, 1940)* by Fritz Hippler. In the film there are images of Greek statues with the voice over of the narrator saying that the beauty of the Nordic man is eternally incomprehensible for the Jews. In another scene, mixing the footage taken from Polish ghettos with rats running around the sacks of grains in a storage, the narrator explains how Jews, just like rats, tend to appear in large hordes and how they are cowardly but cruel at the same time.⁵⁵

As we discussed, earlier German Nazi government always tried to make a connection between pure Aryan Germans and classic Greek heroes. In the movie *300*, the difference between the Spartan body, all muscular and perfect and, on the other side, the non-descriptive Persian body of Xerxes or the grotesque body of Ephialtes

⁵⁵ As I mentioned earlier in this chapter comparison between the Jew and rats is one of the most famous analogies that Nazi propaganda machine used to characterize the Jews with.

shows the exact dynamics of what in the Nazi regime was considered the “normal” us in opposition to the “abnormal” other.

Xerxes’ femineity, with his heavily made up face and numerous body piercings, is representative of the feminine villain. Male body piercing has more of a feminine sexual connotation in Western culture. As Sasha Roseneil explained in *Practising Identities: Power and Resistance*, certain piercings are arguably more resistant of masculinized norms than others:

Nipple and navel piercings, on the other hand, can be said to involve not only a remapping of the body's ‘erotogenic sensitivity’, but also to symbolically high-light, or draw attention to, ‘feminine’ parts of the body that would otherwise remain ‘phallicly disinvested’ also the men's facial piercings also contribute to their feminized or androgynous appearance. (Roseneil, 1999, 66)

Going back to Adorno and his colleagues’ theory concerning the authoritarian personality, their quest originated from the attempt to find an explanation for why large numbers of people followed a government that ended up in a massive genocide, detecting a personality type that is especially prone to unthinking obedience to authority. As we have seen, Adorno believed that the tendency for rigid obedience to conventional thinking leads people with authoritarian personalities to view the world in stereotypical terms; conventionalism and authoritarian submission combined with

authoritarian aggression leads them to be prejudiced against people who violate conventional norms or who are condemned by authority figures.

In the 1930's, the National Socialist Racial and Political Office (NSRPA) produced many films to point out to Germans the cost of maintaining asylums for the incurably ill and insane. The films such as "The Inheritance" (Das Erbe, 1935), "The Victim of the Past." (Opfer der Vergangenheit, 1937), and "I Accuse" (Ich wage an, 1941) showed disabled people as burdens to society and therefore justified the "euthanasia program". Theo Morel, Hitler's physician, in 1939 wrote a note about the need for a law authorizing the "Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life". In the name of social Darwinism, Morel suggested that they should take over and kill people who suffered from inherited mental or physical "malformations", because such "creatures" required long-term care and they aroused "horror" in other people.

Subsequently, exterminating the unwanted other or monster creatures began from August 18, 1939. Every doctor or midwife was obliged to register and inform about the malformed newborn children. But in reality, the murders did not stop with children with Down's syndrome, paralysis, deafness or blindness. In practice, other undesirable members of society were included to the list such as elderlies.

As tragic as it might be, the same method still works out for some of the Hollywood movies by representing a group of people as enemies and unworthy by depicting them as physically deformed or, as Morel said, of "the lowest animal level". This type

of representation creates a sense of relief in the audience because they do not see the other group as composed of human beings, but as unrecognizable monsters, thus, killing them by the Spartan version of “Superman” not only is a heroic act but also, after Leonidas is killed, it becomes their duty to finish the job and taking over to wipe up the rest of these animals from the face of the Earth.

3.2 Missing point

In an interview by Christopher Sharrett, Frank Miller addresses the accusations against his movies by saying:

You know, when... I see someone use words like “homophobic”, “homoerotic” or “racist” in their review, I kind of just think they don’t get the movie and don’t understand. It’s a graphic novel movie about a bunch of guys that are stomping the snot out of each other. As soon as you start to frame it like that, it becomes clear that you’ve missed the point entirely. (Sharrett, 1991, 33)

But the movie *300*, as soon as it was shown in cinemas, riled up many critics and rightly so, not because nobody did not get the point of this movie, but because it celebrates the same values of the fascist⁵⁶ propaganda movies. The crucial point that Snyder and Miller conveniently miss, in order to produce a movie with the budget of

⁵⁶ There is definite difference between the historical Fascism of the 1920s to 1940s and following fascism, the ideological and cultural kind that is derived from the historical Fascism or as Roger Griffin in *The Nature of Fascism* (1991) called it “generic fascism”.

65 million and earning 500 million from the box-office, is the message that it sends to Americans about the fight against the Arab world.

The influence of propaganda movies has always been the same throughout history; only the cause and the enemy change. Something that remains constant is that these types of movies boost the group narcissism into their audience and unify them for a cause that might create a catastrophe. A common enemy or threat can distract public attention and represent a crucial role in organizing survival strategies that depend on behavioral patterns that are a fundamental part of human nature. The scheme adopted by Nazi propaganda is still very relevant in contemporary times since, as Petrucciani observes: "It is precisely because prejudice, racism and antisemitism have their roots in social frustration and anguish, which the domination of great capitalism and of great apparatuses continues reproducing also in late modernity, that it is impossible to think that the problems connected to them have been overcome with the end on Nazism."⁵⁷ (Petrucciani, 2007, 49)

The binary oppositions in age, race, religion or culture can be factors that arouse resentment toward other groups. As Sam Keen explains in *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination*: "Nations need enemies. Governments use the idea of a common enemy as a method of social control, of reinforcing values

⁵⁷ My translation.

of the dominant system, and of garnering participation in the maintenance of those beliefs” (Keen, 1986, 13)

If in the 1980s Ronald Reagan identified the Soviet Union as “the focus of evil in the modern world,” (Keen, 1986, 31) by 1990, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the image of a new enemy was introduced to Americans as “a new foreign devil.” (Said, 1997, p. xxviii)

It is important to show that you cannot simply forget and dismiss the past if the cause still exists. Racial, cultural and religious stereotypes work in a same manner, whether the target is Jews, Communists or Arabs. As Adorno stated in *The Meaning of Working Through the Past*: “[T]he danger will still exist. The past will have been worked through only when the causes of what happened then have been eliminated. Only because the causes continue to exist does the captivating spell of the past remain to this day unbroken.” (Adorno, 1947, 103)

4. Orientalism as Culture Industry

After analyzing the use of stereotypes concerning “Orientals” in mainstream media production, it is quite important to show how a counter-discourse of Orientalism has been developed in Muslim world. The body of knowledge about the West in the East - or “Occidentalism”, as Juan R. I. Cole explained in *Invisible Occidentalism* - is not just the stereotypical image of the West in the East; it is the knowledge that was gathered

together both by how the Orient formed the image of the West and also by the image that the Occident depicted of themselves in their literature:

Occidentalism was not the mirror-image of Orientalism, but rather an extension of the Western power to shape images. Westerners often fashioned a representation of the Orient, which they then substituted for the actual thing, so that they created a representation of themselves as the Orient. What is interesting here is that by reporting it to Orientals whom they were wooing as clients, they managed to have their portrayal written up in Persian and widely disseminated. (Cole, 1992, 15)

According to Bernard Lewis the interesting point of Islamic historiography is that, although there were always long confrontations between Muslims and Christians from Spain and Sicily to Levant, “there was a complete lack of interest and curiosity among Muslim scholars about what went on beyond the Muslim frontiers in Europe.” (Lewis, 1982, 142) In fact, by the end of the eighteenth century, there was no literature in Persian or Arabic on the West. Lewis later explained that in Arab countries and in Iran “the awakening of Muslim interest in the West came much later and was the result of an overwhelming Western presence.” (Lewis, 1982, 170)

Gustave E. von Grunebaum, in *Modern Islam: The Search for Cultural Identity*, argued that the desire to get familiar with foreign cultural phenomena - outside one's own civilization - is mostly one of the characteristics of the post-Renaissance West, and the reason why later on in Persia as well as Arab countries scholars began to

gather scientific knowledge about Europe was the fear of the West and also as a symptom of acculturation:

Somewhat surprisingly to our point of view, the Muslim East has never developed anything comparable to Western "Orientalism"; thus it seems an important innovation and, if you wish, a significant symptom of acculturation when an Iranian scholar-politician like Dr. Fakhr al-Din Shadman (who in 1948 published a book with the characteristic title *The Subjection of Western Civilization* [Taskhir-i tamaddun-i firangi]) calls for firang-shinasi, that is, for a study of Western civilization in all its aspects. (von Grunebaum, 1962, 234)

Even though for Said Orientalism is a one-way exchange that "had no corresponding equivalent in the Orient itself" (Said, 1978, 204), it is important to analyze how Eastern academics criticize and react to western culture and how the media used this knowledge as a counter discourse of Orientalism and spread their own sets of stereotypes about the West. But first we should see why Said rejected the idea of Occidentalism.

Said based his conclusion on two factors; the first is related to the fact that, in order to have a field symmetrical to Orientalism, it would be required for the East to have a comparable number of travelers and scholars going to Europe. As Said noted: "Leaving aside the fact that Western armies, consular corps, merchants, and scientific and archaeological expeditions were always going East, the number of travelers from the

Islamic East to Europe between 1800 and 1900 is minuscule when compared with the number in the other direction.” (Said, 1978, 204)

The other factor in Said’s negation of Orientalism is based on the Foucauldian notion of power/knowledge which, following his interpretation, means that there is always an imbalanced relation in Orientalist discourse that leads to silencing the Orient. But as I discussed in the previous chapter, in *Orientalism* Said raised a question about how humane the division of human reality into different cultures, histories, traditions, societies and races could be. Is it possible for one to avoid dichotomizing, restructuring, and textualizing when they are interpreting foreign cultures and traditions? As James Clifford suggested in *The Predicament of Culture*:

Said frankly admits that alternatives to Orientalism are not his subject. He merely attacks the discourse from a variety of positions and, as a result, his own standpoint is not sharply defined or logically grounded. Sometimes his analysis flirts with a critique of representation as such. But the most constant position from which it attacks Orientalism is a familiar set of values associated with the Western, anthropological human sciences and vague recommendations of personal, authentic, sympathetic, humanistic knowledge. (Clifford, 1989, 261)

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the Iranian revolution marked a very important date in history, not only for postcolonial or subaltern studies, but also for many leftist scholars in the West. Said’s analysis on this topic could be divided in two parts. The first part addresses the time period of 1979 and 1980, during which he

published two articles: *Islam, Orientalism And the West: An Attack on Learned Ignorance* (1979) and *Iran and the Press: Whose Holy War?* (1980). In these two articles he attacked the coverage of US media and the way both the revolution and its leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, were portrayed in the West. The second part occurs between 1980 and 1981, in which Said published two articles, *Islam through Western Eyes* (1980), and *Inside Islam: How the Press Missed the Story in Iran* (1981), as well as and a book titled *Covering Islam* (1981). In this second phase Said deliberately ignored the criticisms around Iran's situation after Khomeini got into power, and only focused on how US media represented Islam and Iranian revolution as a manifestation of Islamic threat.

Among the many articles which were published during the time between when Khomeini was in exile in France and when he went back to Qom and established his government as Islamic Republic, a special mention should be done about 1979 Michael Walzer's article in "New Republic", *The Islam Explosion: Religion is Reemerging as a Political Force Throughout the Third World*, in which he called Khomeini a "clerical fascist." Said directly attacked Walzer and this article in *Covering Islam*, accusing him of following an Orientalist script. Said argued that any violent act in Muslim countries was going to be linked to Islam, and they all have three factors in common: "first of all that they show a persistent pattern of political power encroaching on the West; second, that they are all generated from a frightening moral fervor; and third, that these events shatter the thin colonialist façade of liberalism,

secularism, socialism, or democracy.” (Said, 1981, 41) Said argued that canonical representations of Islam by academia or media have less to do with truth than with the geopolitics of power.

In 1979 Said published his first article on Iran in *Time Magazine* titled *Islam, Orientalism and the West: An Attack on Learned Ignorance*, where he argued that the politics of Palestine, Algeria, Egypt and Iran were misunderstood as an expression of a shared Islamic mind. Said believed that Islam had very little to do with the Iranian revolution, and the hostility towards the West in the Middle East, and even more the Western treatment towards Muslim countries, should be interpreted by downplaying the role of Islam. As he stated: “If Iranian workers, Egyptian students, Palestinian farmers resent the West or the U.S., it is a concrete response to the specific policy injuring them as human beings.” (Said 1979, 16) In response to western media that would represent Khomeini as clerical fascist, Said considered him as an oppositionalist leader, and “a part of a long tradition of opposition to an outrageous monarchy.” (Said 1979, 16) However, while attacking western media, Said refused to analyze any of Khomeini’s speeches and points of views.

The second article of the first phase of Said’s writing about the representation of Iranian revolution in media is, as we mentioned, *Iran and the Press: Whose Holy War?*, which he published in 1980 in *Columbia Journalism Review*. In this article Said went through many examples in which western media represented Iranian revolution and its leaders as uncivilized and barbaric and real threat to western democracy. In this

article too Said defended Ayatollah Khomeini, and argued that the media hostile towards Islam was depicting Khomeini with ignorance, and addressed the US media behavior as very alarming regarding the fact that they were not capable of learning about the world, raising this question: “Why did no reporter seem to avail himself of the crucial material contained in the Summer 1979 issue of *Race and Class* —for example, the material on Ali Shariati , an Iranian friend of Algerian revolutionary Frantz Fanon, who with Khomeini was the major influence on the revolution?” (Said, 1980a, 33)

Two main critiques to Said’s attack on the media’s ignorance about Khomeini and Shariati can address the fact that, firstly, while he accused the West of not having capability on learning before reporting, Said himself never quoted any of Khomeini or Shariati’s writings and never shared their ideas. The other critique addresses the fact that Said never mentioned that, along with many other intellectuals who helped to develop the revolutionary ideas before the Iranian revolution, Shariati’s books went under sever censorship, and some of them got banned from being republished in Iran after the establishment of Islamic Republic.

What marked the second phase of Said’s writings on Iranian revolution and the misrepresentation of Islam in media could be traced in his conscious choice on not defending Khomeini after he saw many of his leftist colleagues taking their distances from him. However, Said chose not to harshly criticize Khomeini, and preferred not to write about him in detail while only focusing on US media’s depiction of the Iranian

revolution as Islamic. One of the most prominent figures who distanced himself from the Iranian revolution was Foucault. On March 24, 1979, an article written by leftist journalists Claudie and Jacques Broyelle appeared in *Le Matin* against Foucault, entitled *What Are the Philosophers Dreaming About?* The title was a playing with the words used by Foucault in his October 1978 article in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, *What Are the Iranians Dreaming About?* The Broyelles wrote:

Returning from Iran a few months ago, Michel Foucault stated that he was "impressed" by the "attempt to open a spiritual dimension in politics" that he discerned in the project of an Islamic government. Today there are little girls all in black, veiled from head to toe; women stabbed precisely because they do not want to wear the veil; summary executions for homosexuality; the creation of a "Ministry of Guidance According to the Precepts of the Quran"; thieves and adulterous women flogged. Iran has had a narrow escape. When one thinks that after decades of ferocious dictatorship under the shah and the SAVAK, this country almost fell into the trap of a Spanish-type solution, of a democratic parliament, this news is proof enough of that country's good fortune. (Broyelle, 1979, 247-48)

Foucault responded to the article two days later, in March 26 in the same magazine. In his response he wrote: "because throughout my life I have never taken part in polemics, I have no intention of beginning now." Further on he wrote:

This expression and the practice it designates remind me of something and of many things, against which I have fought. I will not lend myself, even 'through the press,' to

a maneuver whose form and content I detest. 'You are going to confess, or you will shout long live the assassins.' [...] I would be willing to debate here and now the question of Iran, as soon as Le Matin will give me the opportunity. (Foucault, 1979, 249–50).

Foucault's response was far from satisfactory, and Le Matin's editors added a note at the end of the article that "we expect to publish an article by Michel Foucault after the March 30 referendum in Iran." But Foucault never published any other article on this subject in Le Matin. By April some news got into the media about numerous summary jury trials and executions in Iran. Foucault published an open letter to Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan in the April 14 issue of *Le Nouvel Observateur*. In the letter Foucault mentioned the talk that he had in September 1978 with Bazargan, in which Bazargan explained to him three reasons why an Islamic regime could be compatible with human rights. Foucault recalled the points, the first of which dealt with the fact that having a spiritual dimension in politics did not mean a "government of mullahs". The second point was that Islam could address questions that neither communism nor capitalism had been able to resolve. Third, Bazargan said that "by invoking Islam, a government would thereby create important limitations upon its basic sovereignty over civil society, due to obligations grounded on religion." (in Afary and Anderson, 2005, 260-263) Foucault argued that he was skeptical that this limitation could be possible, and began his critique by raising his concern about the trials in Iran, openly showing his deep disappointment of what happened after the Iranian revolution.

In a later article published in the same year, *Is It Useless to Revolt?*, Foucault sounded once more his disapproval of what was happening in post revolution Iran, while Said called these articles outdated, trying to bring the focus to the western media instead of analyzing the outcomes of the revolution in Iran. In this context, we can see how the second phase of Said's writings on Iran started with his article *Islam Through Western Eyes*. Here Said briefly touched on the subject of the executions in Iran, and affirmed that there could be no defense on what Khomeini did after establishing his government, stating: "What is the Islamist apologist to say when confronted with the daily count of people executed by the Islamic Komitehs or when – as reported on September 19, 1979 by Reuters – Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini announces that enemies of the Islamic revolution would be destroyed?" (Said, 1980b, 488)

But right after this comment, he immediately shifted the attention to how Americans are obsessed with Islam and how, because of their hostility towards Islam, they bold some Muslim figures in the media like Khomeini and Qaddafi, generalizing all Muslims as violent, aggressive and, all in all, terrorists:

To the extent that Islam is known about today, it is known principally in the form given it by the mass media: not only radio, films and Tv but also textbooks, magazines and best-selling, high-quality novels. This corporate picture of Islam on the whole is a depressing and misleading one. What emerges is that Ayatollah Khomeini, Col. Muammar e-Qaddafi, Sheik Ahmad Zaki Yamani and Palestinian terrorists are the

best-known figures in the foreground, while the background is populated by shadowy (though extremely frightening) notions about jihad, slavery, subordination of women and irrational violence combined with extreme licentiousness. (Said, 1980b, 490)

Said's last article on Iran, *Inside Islam: How the Press Missed the Story in Iran*, came out in January 1981. There, Said brought up Michael Walzer article *The Islam Explosion*, and argued that "Walzer has convinced himself that when he says the word Islam he is talking about a real object called Islam, an object so immediate as to make any mediation of qualifications applied to it seem supererogatory fussiness." (Said, 1981, 27) Here too, though, Said did not reject Walzer's perspective with a solid counter argument.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, Said put together most of his criticism about the role of media in misrepresenting Islam and Muslim countries in his book *Covering Islam*. Among the many topics that he went through in this book the most important one regards the warning against the power of media in creating stereotypical images, showing how these labels and stereotypes work:

We must take the labels seriously. To a Muslim who talks about "the West" or to an American who talks about "Islam," these enormous generalizations have behind them a whole history, enabling and disabling at the same time. Ideological and shot through with powerful emotions, the labels have survived many experiences and have been capable of adapting to new events, information, and realities. (Said, 1981, 10)

The aspect which Said never addressed in his work regards the question on whether the other side, the “East,” is using the same methods to generate an image of “monstrous West.” When Said meticulously went through each incident that ended in the Iranian revolution, as well as how in the West Islam had become synonymous to fundamentalism, he never discussed the formula used in Muslim countries in order to feed their propaganda machine. This aspect deserves to be furtherly discussed.

5. Iranian Islamic Propaganda Organization and Media

Before the revolution, Iranian clergy were opposed to national and international cinema mainly for its depiction of women, of open consumption of alcohol and, in general, for what was seen as promoting western lifestyle and morality. Following Ervand Abrahamian’s perspective, one of the issues that helped Khomeini getting into power was the force of the clergies which, until the mid-1970’s, never sounded their opposition against the Shah:

After the revolution, Ahmad Khomeini – the Ayatollah’s influential son – admitted that the vast majority of the akhunds (clergy) had been apolitical until the mid-1970’s, neither opposing Shah nor openly supporting him, but had eventually joined the revolutionary movement mainly because the regime had failed to attack moral decadence and clean the streets of unseemly social filth. (Abrahamian, 1982, 474)

This “social filth” which was on the streets was detected both in films and television, and that is why, during the demonstrations which led to the revolution, 180 movie theatres were set on fire as a protest to what symbolized western cultural invasion. After the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the national radio and television went under severe conservative control and, from that point on, the head of the national broadcasting organization was directly appointed by the Supreme Leader. The only factor that allowed cinema to still exist after the revolution was what Khomeini put as a precondition for it. Cinema could exist only when it is put into use by Islam. The responsibility of categorizing films as religiously approved or not was given to the Art Centre of the Islamic Propaganda Organization. One of the most important genres of religious films that could easily meet the requirements of the Centre was the so called “Sacred Defense”, namely, the war movies about eight years’ war between Iran and Iraq.

In February 1983 a filmmaking code was approved by the government for the supervision and censorship of movies. Any film that wanted to get the exhibition permit had to be checked according to these rules: No film shall (1) Weaken the principle of monotheism and other Islamic principles or insult them in any manner. (2) Insult directly or indirectly the prophets, imams, the Velayat-e Faqih (supreme jurisprudent), the ruling council or the jurisprudents. (3) Blaspheme the values and personalities held sacred by Islam and other religions mentioned in the constitution. (4) Encourage wickedness, corruption and prostitution. (5) Encourage or teach abuse

of harmful and dangerous drugs or professions which are religiously sanctioned against such as smuggling, etc. (6) Encourage foreign cultural, economic and political influence contrary to the 'neither West nor East' policy of the government. (7) Express or disclose anything that is against the interests and policies of the country which might be exploited by foreigners. (8) Negate the values of self-sufficiency and economic and social independence.⁵⁸

By 1996 some other rules and restrictions were added, so as to incorporate the fact that no film shall be shown using clothes which could create a new trend in wearing Western clothes, or giving the negative characters in films names which have Islamic roots.

5.1 Stereotypical representations of Iranian heroes and Western Monsters

In Iranian cinema there are countless examples of retorsion against what is considered as misrepresentation of Muslims (and more specifically Iranians) in Western media. As Naficy mentioned in his book *A Social History of Iranian Cinema*:

In no small measure were these mediawork representations affected by the antagonistic mutual nomenclatures with which Iranian and American governments demonized one another, and by proxy their other's nationals. The Islamic Republic's national mediawork alternately labeled the United States "world- devouring

⁵⁸ Translated from official censorship guidance of Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

imperialism" (estekbar- e jahankhar) or the "Great Satan"; called the latter's regional ally Israel, the "Zionist State"; and labeled the exiles abroad and the disaffected secular intellectuals at home its "fifth column." (Naficy, 2011, 274)

Two of the most commonly stereotypical characters used in Iranian Cinema are the religious war hero and the Western spy. As we are going to discuss, they have a special role in one of the most important genres of films in Iran, which is Iranian war films or the cinema of "Sacred Defense." The Occidental dichotomies used in Iranian media are usually based on binaries like enemy/friend and hero/traitor.

The first stereotypical character, the religious war hero, is presented as "the volunteer army force" (Basiji). This heroic character is the key character in any sacred defense movie. The term Basiji is referred to volunteer forces that went to the front line of the war, not because of professional or military obligation, but because of their religious beliefs. The Basiji character embodied all the sacred dispositions of a true Muslim, such as unquestionable faith in God, modesty, altruism and, most of all, readiness for martyrdom. Unlike the heroes in American movies, with standard muscular body type and inborn hero characteristics, the character of a basiji was usually depicted as an ordinary young man, usually of lower economic status. In Shi'ite ideology martyrdom is a method of liberation. The culture of martyrdom and self-sacrifice is mainly derived from Imam Hussein (the third Imam in Shia Islam), with his martyrdom in the battle of Karbala; an event that is annually mourned in every Shia region and specially in Iran. In all the movies with Basiji characters, young people were

encouraged to participate in war and actively seek martyrdom (shahadat talabi) in the hope to exchange their worthless material life with an everlasting life in paradise.

The second stereotypical character is the Western spy. This character appears mostly in conspiracy genre movies, and primarily depict American or Israeli individuals coming to Iran in disguise with the plan of sabotaging the Islamic regime. The first media coverage of spy characters in Iran was in 1979, when Iranians took over the American embassy in Tehran and held fifty American diplomats and staffs of the embassy as hostages for 444 days. Clearly, the Iranian account of this event was completely different from its western media coverage. From the beginning, Iranian media called the American embassy a nest of spies and, accordingly, the Iranian regime would represent the hostages as spies.

With the beginning of the war between Iran and Iraq in 1980, and throughout the post-war representations, the portrayal of American and Israeli spies remained a central theme in Iranian cinema. These characters are usually introduced as male or female spies that would dress with a code that is otherwise forbidden for other characters in the movies, such as wearing a necktie or a bow tie for actors, or wearing heavy makeup and wigs for actresses. There are commonly some scenes in these movies that show their deviant attitudes, such as drinking alcoholic beverages or dancing and partying. Typically there are two types of evil plan for these characters: they either enter into governmental or military base in Iran and cause a threat for national security or, more frequently, they worms their way into universities and

cultural gatherings, and by spreading the culture of the decadent West, they try to discourage youth about their Islamic beliefs and traditional culture.

The Sacred Defense War Movies (sinema- ye defa'-e moqaddas) as a genre has a relevant role in the regime's ideology. In September 1980 Iraq invaded Iran and, shortly after the beginning of the war, the war genre of movies began to come out, at first mostly in form of documentary movies and, after a few years, in the form of action-packed films. Since war has been imposed on Iran, the war movies based on this conflict were called "Sacred Defense" (defa-ye moghaddas). The main goal of Sacred Defense movies was to show the religious and spiritual side of the war. All of the movies that were made during and after the war time - both documentary and fiction - were honoring martyrdom and union of the self with God. Martyrdom is the ending for most sacred defense films, which is meant to be both tragic and glorious. The term Sacred Defense, after the end of the war with Iraq, remained in Iranian culture not only as a war genre of films, but also addressing all cultural activities that were honoring the war in the years after its end. In *Memory, Mourning, Memorializing: On the Victims of Iran-Iraq War*, Ghamari-Tabrizi explained how after the war the Sacred Defense cultural activities became an excuse to gain political popularity, stating:

Not only did the eight-year-long 'Sacred Defense' play a constitutive role in the emergence of the postrevolutionary regime, but its legacy also continues to inform the political strategy of competing factions [...] Although the state affords entitlement

programs and benefits to veterans and their families, these services have been progressively diminishing since the end of the war. In many cases, eligibility for services has been turned into a device for party politics and the political mobilization of the veterans. (Ghamari-Tabrizi, 2009, 112)

After the war ended the state tried to hold onto Sacred Defense values, but the more they tried, the more public interest in these values diminished. The main reason for this decrease of public interest was caused by the excessive utilization of martyr's image in political agendas. In later years this disinterestedness was replaced by detest towards the martyrdom and Islamic values, and originated many jokes about war veterans and martyrs.

The war documentaries and fiction war movies rarely showed stereotypical images of Arabs or anti-Arab racism, which was normal in the Pahlavi era's films, but they showed an anti-western image. The movies of the first period of Sacred Defense cinema, before the end of the war, was full of stereotypical anti-American sentiments. One of the firsts and well received conspiracy films of this era is *Blade and Silk* (Tigh va Abrisham), directed by Masud Kimiai in 1986, in which the Western block plots to send twenty tons of heroin to Iran in order to weaken its war effort by turning young men into drug addicts. At the beginning of the film a voiceover on a footage of a meeting in Bangkok tells us that the plan of Western countries is to send twenty thousand kilos of heroin in Iran to weaken the Iranian army. Later on, back in an Iranian prison, we get to know a young couple that are there for smuggling drugs and

they refuse to tell interrogators who is their boss or what is their plan. However, when the woman commits suicide in the prison under mental pressure, her partner cooperates with the police and tells them about the organization behind the drug cartel, so that in the end, by the heroic act of police, they can arrest the people involved in this evil plan. In the movie the main focus is on how young people who studied outside of Iran were caught in the trap of Western culture and were easily taken advantage of by American and Israeli secret services. The evil West targets the young impressionable people, and by making them dependent on drugs forces them to forget the Islamic values and eventually take their lives away. On the other side of the spectrum, instead, there are the Iranian police forces that put their lives in danger in order to destroy the evil plot of the West and prevent the drugs to get into the front line of the war. *The Blade and Silk*, as one of the pioneers of Iranian conspiracy movies after the revolution, combined all these stereotypical images in a linear and unimaginative way, but it paved the way for the series of movies produced afterwards which would repeat the same cliches. Just like their Western counterparts, as we saw in the previous part, this repeatable pattern characteristic of culture industry applies to Islamic propaganda movies too.

After the presidential election in 2009, there was a revival of conspiracy genre films depicting the events that lead to the “Green Movement” demonstrations in Iran. *The Final Project* is a post-2009 election film by Hamed Kolaheh-dari which tells the story of the events that occurred during the elections. Following the cliches of conspiracy

films, *The Final Project* portrays the lives of four young students in the heat of the political brawls after the election of 2009. The film was produced by the brother of the deputy of cinema in the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance, Ruhollah Shamghadri. Again, the story revolves around ex-basijis now working as cops, foreign agents and naive young students. Before the cast of the movie was finalized, a rumor came out that there was going to be a role in the movie based on Neda Aghasoltan, and how her death was planned beforehand by foreign secret services. This news got so many people riled up that they attacked the actress who was chosen to play the role on social media, to the point that the actress resigned from playing in the film. However, the controversies around the film did not finish even after its premier at Fajr film festival. The first screening of the film was accompanied with a severe rejection from the audience, with many people leaving the theatre before the ending of the film, while those who remained booed the film at the end. When the movie was released in cinemas it was boycotted by the supporters of the Green Movement and, as a countertactic, the state gave free tickets of the film to anyone who would purchase other tickets at cinemas, or would randomly give prizes to the audience of the movie.

The plot of the film revolves around the life of four students during the demonstrations of 2009 in Iran. At the end of the semester, while these four students chase their professor outside the university to have a chance to talk to him about their projects, they find themselves in the safe house of foreign agents, and their naivety is

the reason why that they fall prey of these agents. Meanwhile, to the police that were watching the safe house, the students become suspects. The film has one of the weakest plots when compared to other films of conspiracy genre. *Final Project* also wants to address the events that lead to shooting of Neda Aghasoltan in a discreet manner. With Aghasoltan's death, the image of the martyr that used to be reserved for Iranian male basijis was jeopardized, and the state would employ any means to make sure that the martyr's title would be reserved for the ones that give their lives for Islamic values. Although the director, at the press conference after the premier of the film, denied any ties between the plot of the movie and the death of Aghasoltan, the movie contains a scene where one of the students gets killed by a sniper in the middle of the street by the American secret service, showing the director's intention of portraying the green movement as manipulated by foreign forces to destabilize the Iranian government.

The villains of the film are both Iranians who are supporters of the ex-Shah and Mujaheddins that used to live abroad and got back to Iran for corrupting the Islamic regime as Western spies. These agents were smuggled into Iran just before the presidential elections to use the electoral battle between Ahmadinejad and Mousavi for their own purposes. After the clear victory of Ahmadinejad in the election, these spies train the young students to mingle with the demonstrators and to provoke them to engage in violent acts such as throwing incendiary bombs at vehicles and buildings. As unsurprising conclusion of the film, the hero, a young employee of the Iranian

intelligence services, ruins the plan of the spies while all the deceived students and the evil spies die.

The analysis of these influential Iranian movie productions shows how stereotypes have a double-edged purpose. While the analysis of culture industry addressed the way in which prejudices are enforced on Western mainstream media, it is also quite important to realize that the same “tricks” are used in a parallel, “Oriental culture industry.” The purpose remains the same: creating acritical masses that can be easily manipulated for maintaining the status quo. The pessimistic outlook on these ideological uses of media concerns the fact that, with the progression of time and technology from the early theorization of critical theory, the situation has not improved in any consistent manner. Today, on both sides of the spectrum, whether Western or Oriental, the use of stereotypes has become even less refined, demonstrating a possibly lower standard in the ability of recognizing its falsity. I am addressing this as pessimistic in light of the recent movie production, at a mainstream level, which is regressing to increasingly more basic forms of stereotyping. If the Iranian productions may appear as more naïve in comparison to the majestic Hollywood productions, we should not forget that the record of box offices in Western cinema is represented by “superheroes” (primarily borrowed from comics) who, by themselves, can save the world from a catastrophe which has causes outside of anyone’s control. The audience needs to be scared by these threats, but should never realize what is actually causing them. In Western production they should not be lead

to think that it is capitalism that is causing the catastrophe, but rather it is the evil plot of insane evil forces, while in its Oriental counterpart, at least concerning Iranian movies, it is the foreign intelligence attacking the core, traditional values, without realizing that beyond these values lies both the oppression of the population and the interest – primarily economical – of a caste that controls the economy.

6. Combining Orientalism and Culture Industry

As discussed throughout this work, what I wanted to demonstrate is that Orientalism can be a very fruitful concept which can be integrated in the analysis of the early stages of critical theory concerning culture industry. Orientalism has in fact the ability of showing an extremely relevant aspect of how ideology operates today. The stereotypes used to portray middle easterners are a clear example of how culture industry works. Unveiling the mechanism through which stereotypes are enforced on the audience, in particular concerning movies, is a first step for counteracting the effects of an ideology which exacerbates the fear towards what is different, non-identical. Homologating the audience to the dominating perspective is still the main purpose of mainstream media, since it reduces the spaces for experiencing alternative and critical models of thought. Adorno's analysis of the ideological function of media is still of the utmost importance for recognizing the methods through which a passive audience is kept as such. The use of stereotypes has maintained its function of

reducing personal and independent forms of thought, and the stereotypes concerning Oriental culture reinforce the inability of recognizing the peculiarities of anything different from what is forcibly familiar.

Going back to what was discussed at the beginning of this study, Adorno's theory is also quite helpful in regaining some optimism concerning the role of movies. If today their ideological use is the most common, this does not imply in any manner that it is in the nature of movies as such that they have to be ideological. Although precluded to the large audience, there is a consistent artistic production of movies that runs in the opposite direction of ideology, that shows and makes us appreciate the differences in culture and traditions, even if just relegated to minoritarian film festivals and awards. The main concern is that the spaces for artistic productions in this field are getting increasingly smaller, and the battle with blockbusters is absolutely unfair. This is not a new topic in the debate concerning aesthetics. The audience, precisely because of the ideological function of culture industry, is precluded from appreciating what is artistic, since they consider that type of production as too "difficult", or even boring. This pattern is similar to Adorno's analysis concerning artistic music; a point that was directly supported by Said. For Adorno pop music, as the result of the same process generated by culture industry, had no artistic relevance, and actually worked in the opposite manner of what is artistic. Instead of fostering autonomous thought, it made the audience regress to a standardized and gross taste. At the same time, real artistic music, which in

contemporary times he primarily identified in atonal compositions, had basically no exposure to the masses, which were increasingly less capable of relating to them. The question remains the same: who is capable today of relating to real art? Certainly not the acritical masses, whose taste is almost completely accustomed to the commercial products of culture industry, since its purpose is to increase profit and to impose a standardized taste, fully functional to the reproduction of the economic system. The vicious circle of production and imposition of standardized taste represents the real purpose of the products of cultural industry. The new technologies of communication make this circle increasingly effective. Adorno's defense of atonal music can be extended to artistic production in general, including the one related to movies. This is because atonal music offers a deep critique of alienation by addressing the principle of identification that regulates rationality. Its dissonance shows the basic flaw of reason, its identifying principle, which in music corresponds to the unity of homogeneous sounds, so consistently abused in pop music, with its tedious repetition of the same melodies. Atonal music represents a moment of openness to non-identity, and it achieves that precisely through its compositional form. Adorno's theory at this point is unavoidably exposed to the risk of elitism. How many people in the "administered world" can fully grasp the social tensions embodied in the dissonances of atonal music? Certainly not the "standardized" masses. Yet, the critique of Adorno's elitism in aesthetics cannot regress to the defense of the ideological products of cultural industry. The problem with Adorno's high standards

of culture cannot be resolved by lowering these standards because this would only accelerate the process of creation of acritical masses.

How is it possible, then, to come out of the alternative between an elitist conception of art and avoiding the ideological cultural standardization? Here it seems that we have achieved a circularity in Adorno's thought. A change in material conditions of production would liberate human capacities of critical thought, and yet critical thought is a prerequisite for changing the relations of production. Adorno's solution cannot be understood without recognizing the importance of his Marxist background. The solution lies in solving what he addresses as the "spell of labor." Art has the ability, and even the duty, of breaking this spell, of emancipating itself from the domination that characterizes the capitalistic mode of production and its consequent commodity fetishism. A fundamental step for this emancipation is the recognition of the mechanisms through which the commodification of art occurs, and most importantly of why and how culture industry operates. Orientalism represent a key aspect of the stereotypes used by culture industry, not only because of an increasingly strong separation between two worlds, the East and the West, but because it exposes the terror towards non-identity which characterizes rationality. It exposes us to the appreciation of the differences, and not the fear towards them. In no way, as I expressed with the analysis of both Orientalism and, more specifically, with the possible ideological use of media on both sides, this implies a naïve defense of the Oriental model as "better," but the purpose remains the recognition of

differences devoid of any intolerance and, most importantly, arrogance. As it happens with music, movies can emancipate from the spell of commodification, and serve as a vehicle for acknowledging, rather than antagonizing, differences.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrahamian, Ervand. *Iran between Two Revolutions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982.

Adorno, Theodor W.. «A Social Critique of Radio Music». *The Kenyon Review*, vol. 7, n. 2, 1945; pp. 208-217.

---. *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper, 1950.

---. *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1951. [Translated by E.F. Jephcott: *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*. Surrey: Gresham Press, 1979].

---. «How to Look at Television». *The Quarterly of Film Radio and Television*, vol. 8, n. 3, 1954; pp. 213-235.

---. *Eingriffe: Neun kritische Modelle*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1963. [Transl. by H. Pickford: *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998].

---. *Dissonanzen: Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1968. [Transl. by G. Manzoni: *Dissonanze*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1990].

---. *Prismen. Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970. [Transl. by C. Mainoldi: *Prismi. Saggi sulla Critica della Cultura*. Torino: Einaudi, 1972].

---. *Ästhetische Theorie* (ed. by G. Adorno and R. Tiedemann). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970. [Transl. by C. Lenhardt: *Aesthetic Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975].

---. *Negative Dialectics* (transl. by E.B. Ashton). New York: Seabury Press, 1973a.

---. *Philosophy of Modern Music* (transl. by A.G. Mitchell and W.V. Blomster). New York: The Seabury Press, 1973b.

---. «The Stars Down to Earth: The Los Angeles Times Astrology Column». *Telos*, n. 19, 1974; pp. 13-90.

---. «Letters to Walter Benjamin», in Theodor Adorno; Walter Benjamin; Ernst Bloch; Bertolt Brecht; Georg Lukàcs. *Aesthetics and Politics*. London: Verso, 1980.

---. «Transparencies on Films». *New German Critique*, n. 24/25, 1982; pp.199-205.

---. «Subject and Object», in Andrew Arato; Eike Gebhardt (eds.). *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*. New York: Continuum, 1982.

---. *The Culture Industry* (ed. by J.M. Bernstein). New York: Routledge, 1991.

---. *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard Leppert, translated by Susan H. Gillespie. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002.

Adorno, Theodor W.; Eisler, Hanns. *Composing for the Films*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947.

Afary, Janet; Kevin B. Anderson. *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Altemeyer, Bob. *Right-Wing Authoritarianism*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1981.

---. «The Other “Authoritarian Personality”». *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 30, 1998; pp. 47-92.

Arato, Andrew; Eike Gebhardt (eds.). *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*. New York: Continuum, 1990.

Ashcroft, Bill; Ahluwalia, Pal. *Edward Said*. London: Routledge, 2001.

Baker, Houston. *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.

Bhabha, Homi K.. *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge, 1990.

---. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Bhabha, Homi K.; Mitchell, W.J.T. (eds.). *Edward Said: Continuing the Conversation*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Benjamin, Walter. *Angelus Novus. Saggi e Frammenti* (trad. it. di R. Solmi). Torino: Einaudi, 1962.

---. *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1935. [Transl. by H. Zohn: *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. Illuminations*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968].

---. «The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility (Second Version)», in W. Benjamin. *Selected Writings: Volume 3, 1935-1938* (ed. by H. Eiland and M.W. Jennings, transl. by E. Jephcott, H. Eiland, and others). Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2006.

Benjamin, Walter; Adorno, Theodor W.. *The Complete Correspondence 1928–1940* (ed. by H. Lonitz, transl. by N. Walker). Cambridge: Polity 1999.

Bratu Hansen, Miriam. “Mass Culture as Hieroglyphic Writing: Adorno, Derrida, Kracauer.” *New German Critique*, no. 56, 1992.

---. *Cinema and Experience. Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.

Broyelle, Claudie; Broyelle, Jacques. «What Are the Philosophers Dreaming About?». *Le Matin de Paris*, March 24 1979.

Buck-Morss, Susan. *The Origins of Negative Dialectics*. New York: The Free Press, 1977.

Clifford, James. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Cole, Juan. «Invisible Occidentalism: Eighteenth-Century Indo-Persian Construction of the West». *Iranian Studies*, vol. 25, n. 3-4, 1992; pp. 3-16.

---. «Marking Boundaries, Marking Time: The Iranian Past and the Construction of the Self by Qajar Thinkers». *Iranian Studies*, vol. 29, n.1-2, 1996; pp. 35-56.

Cook, Deborah. *The Culture Industry Revisited: Theodor W. Adorno on Mass Culture*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996.

Cowan, Michael. «The Heart Machine: “Rhythm” and Body in Weimar Film and Fritz Lang's Metropolis». *MODERNISM / modernity*, Vol. 14, n. 2, 2007; pp. 225-248.

Craig, William. *Enemy at the Gates: The Battle for Stalingrad*. New York: Reader's Digest Press (distributed by E.P. Dutton & Co.), 1973.

Crone, Patricia. *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference* (transl. by A. Bass). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Duckitt, John. «Differential effects of right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation on outgroup attitudes and their mediation by threat from and competitiveness to outgroups». *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 32, n. 5, 2006; pp. 684-696.

Evans, Dylan. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. London/New York: Routledge, 1996.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin White Masks* (transl. by C.L. Markmann). New York: Grove Press, 1967.

Foucault, Michel. «À quoi rêvent les Iraniens?». *Nouvel Observateur*, n. 726, October 16 1978.

---. «L'Esprit d'un monde sans esprit», an interview with Claire Briere and Pierre Blanchet, in *Iran: La révolution au nom de Dieu*. Paris: Seuil, 1979.

---. «Michel Foucault et l'Iran». *Le Matin de Paris*, March 26 1979.

---. «Lettre ouverte à Mehdi Bazargan». *Nouvel Observateur*, n. 752, April 14 1979.

---. «Is It Useless to Revolt?» (transl. with an introduction by J. Bernauer). *Philosophy and Social Criticism*; vol. 8, n. 1, 1981; pp. 1-9 (first published in *Le Monde*, May 11 1979).

---. *Discipline and Punish* (transl. by A. Sheridan). New York: Pantheon, 1980.

Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. London: Leonard & Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1930.

Gabriel, Teshome. *Third Cinema in the Third World*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1982.

Ghamari-Tabrizi, Behrooz. «Memory, Mourning, Memorializing: On the Victims of Iran-Iraq War, 1980–Present». *Radical History Review*, n. 105, 2009; pp. 106-121.

Giacchetti Ludovisi, Stefano (ed.). *Nostalgia for a Redeemed Future: Critical Theory*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008.

--- *Critical Theory and the Challenge of Praxis*. London: Routledge, 2016.

Giesen, Rolf. *Nazi Propaganda Films: A History and Filmography*. London: McFarland, 2003.

Gilloch, Graeme. *Walter Benjamin*. London: Polity Press, 2001.

Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes On The Management Of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963.

Griffin, Roger. *The Nature of Fascism*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Heath, Stephen. «Film and System, Terms of Analysis. Part II». *Screen*, vol. 16, n. 2, 1979; pp. 91-113.

Hellings, James. *Adorno and Art Aesthetic Theory Contra Critical Theory*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Horkheimer, Max. *Kritische Theorie. Eine Dokumentation*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1968. [Transl. by M. O'Connell: *Critical Theory. Selected Essays*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1972].

Horkheimer, Max.; Adorno, Theodor W.. *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente*. Amsterdam: Querido, 1947. [Transl. by J. Cumming: *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1972].

Huyssen, Andreas. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

Jamal, Amaney; Naber, Nadine. *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008.

Jay, Martin. *Adorno*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.

---. *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

---. *Dialectical Imagination*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996.

Jenemann, David. *Adorno in America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

Kang, Jaeho. *Walter Benjamin and the Media: The Spectacle of Modernity*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2014.

Keen, Sam. *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination*, New York: Harper Collins, 1986.

Kellner, Douglas. «Review of *The Jargon of Authenticity* by T. W. Adorno». *Telos*, n. 19, 1974; pp. 184-192.

---. *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1984.

---. *Media Culture*. London/New York: Routledge, 1995.

---. *Media Spectacle*. London/New York: Routledge, 2003.

Kennedy, Valerie. *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.

Kracauer, Siegfried. *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (ed. and transl. by T. Y. Levin. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Kreimeier, Klaus. *The Ufa Story: A History of Germany's Greatest Film Company, 1918-1945*. New York: HiU and Wang, 1996.

Kristensen, Lars (ed.). *Marx at the Movies*. London: Palgrave, 2014.

Kundnani, Arun. «In a Foreign Land: The New Popular Racism». *Race & Class*, vol. 43, n. 2, 2001; pp. 41-60.

Lacan, Jacques. *Proposition of 9 October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School*, Translated by Russell Grigg, Analysis Number Six, 1995 and at the website of the London Society of the New Lacanian School.

Leiris, Michel. «L'ethnographe devant le colonialism». *Les Temps Modernes*, n. 58, 1950; pp. 357-374.

Lewis, Bernard. *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982.

Lichtenberger, Henri. *The Third Reich* (ed. and transl. by K.S. Pinson). New York: The Greystone Press, 1937.

Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. New York: Vintage Books, 1955.

---. «Repressive Tolerance», in Robert Paul Wolff; Barrington Moore, Jr.; Herbert Marcuse. *Critique of Pure Tolerance*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1965.

---. *One-dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1966.

Mc Lavery-Robinson, Andrew. *Homi Bhabha: An Introduction and Critique*. Morrisville: Lulu Press, 2020.

Naficy, Hamid. *The Making of Exiled Cultures: Iranian television in Los Angeles*. London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

---. *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

---. «Islamizing Film Culture in Iran: A Post Khatami Update», in R. Tapper (ed.). *The New Iranian Cinema: Politics, Representation and Identity*. London/New York, I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2002.

---. *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 3: The Islamicate Period, 1978–1984*. Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2011.

---. *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 4: The Globalizing Era, 1984–2010*. Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2011.

Nayak, Meghana. «Orientalism and 'saving' US state identity after 9/11», *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, vol. 8, n. 1, 2006; pp. 42-61.

Nelson, Jack Adolph. *The Disabled, the Media, and the Information Age*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994.

Petrucciani, Stefano. *Introduzione a Adorno*. Bari: Laterza, 2007.

---. *A Lezione da Adorno*. Roma: Manifestolibri, 2017.

Pratto, Felicia; Sidanius Jim; Stallworth Lisa M.; Malle, Bertram F.. «Social dominance orientation: A personality variable predicting social and political attitudes». *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 67, n. 4, 1994; pp. 741-763.

Roseneil, Sasha. *Practising Identities: Power and Resistance*. London: MacMillan, 1999.

Rushdie, Salman. «Outside the Whale», *Granta*, n. 11, 1984; pp. 125-138.

Said, Edward W.. «The Future of Palestine: A Palestinian View», in Abdeen Jabara; Janice Terry (eds.). *The Arab World from Nationalism to Revolution*. Wilmette: Medina UP International, 1971.

---. *Beginnings: Intention and Method*. New York: Basic Books, 1975.

- . *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
- . *The Question of Palestine*. London: Vintage, 1979.
- . «Islam, Orientalism and the West: An Attack on Learned Ignorance». *Time*, April 16 1979.
- . «Iran and the Press: Whose Holy War?». *Columbia Journalism Review*, vol. 18, n. 6, 1980a; pp. 23-33.
- . «Islam through Western Eyes». *The Nation*, vol. 230, n. 16, 1980b; pp. 488-492.
- . «Inside Islam: How the Press Missed the Story in Iran». *Harper's Magazine*, January 1981.
- . *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. New York: Vintage Books, 1981.
- . «The Burdens of interpretation and the question of Palestine». *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 16, n. 1, 1986; pp. 29-37.
- . *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf, 1993.
- . *Peace and its Discontents*. New York: Vintage, 1995.
- . *Out of Place: A Memoir*. New York: Knopf, 1999.
- . *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Said, Edward W.; Hitchens, Christopher (eds.). *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*. London: Verso, 1988.

Sharrett, Christopher. «Batman and the Twilight of the Idols: An Interview with Frank Miller», in Roberta E. Pearson; William Uricchio (eds.). *The Many Lives of the Batman*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Shryock, Andrew. *Islamophobia/Islamophilia: Beyond the Politics of Enemy and Friend*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World As Will and Representation*. New York: Dover Pub, 1969.

Schweinitz, Jörg; Schleussner, Laura. *Film and Stereotype: A Challenge for Cinema and Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

Spivak, Gayatri. «Can the subaltern speak?», in Cary Nelson; Lawrence Grossberg (eds). *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988.

Von Grunebaum, Gustave E.. *Modern Islam: The Search for Cultural Identity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962.

Walzer, Michael. «The Islam Explosion: Religion is Reemerging as a Political Force Throughout the Third World». *The New Republic*, December 8 1979.

Werbner, Pnina. «Islamophobia: Incitement to Religious Hatred: Legislating for a New Fear?». *Anthropology Today*, vol. 21, n. 1, 2005; pp. 5-9.

Wiggershaus, Rolf. *Die Frankfurter Schule: Geschichte. Theoretische Entwicklung. Politische Bedeutung*. München: Hanser, 1986. [Transl. by M. Robertson: *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995].

Young, Robert. *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*. London: Routledge, 1990.

Žižek, Slavoj. «Zero Dark Thirty: Hollywood's gift to American power». *The Guardian*, January 25 2013.