



Ill. 7: Entrée of the Amazons, Chinese and the Turks. G.-B. Balbi, *Balet du Monde, accompagnée d'une comédie en musique l'un & l'autre donnez, à la resjouissance publique sur le sujet de l'heureux mariage de Leurs Majestez* (Bruxelles 1650), Royal Library Albert I, Brussels.

## ORIENTALISM, DESPOTISM AND 'GOVERNMENTALITY' Rereading the Harem as a Domestic Space in the French Opéra Comique *Soliman II ou les trois Sultanes* (1761)

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In the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the theatrical staging of the Oriental other seems to be the perfect way to discuss the organisation of powerrelations in the West. Since Montesquieu in his influential *De l'esprit des lois* (1748) so explicitly mapped despotism in the empires of the East, the Oriental other in performing arts reminds the West in one way or another of the dangers and threats of the despotic organisation of power. In this essay, I will examine how in the 18<sup>th</sup> century French opera-comique *Soliman II ou les trois sultanes* (1761) the Orient is constructed as a despotic space. Particular attention is paid here to the harem, which as the stereotyped domestic space of the Oriental other, allows

the West to penetrate most deeply in the organisation of powerrelations in the Orient. Characterized as a place of cruel behaviour, tyranny and enslavery, of degenerate mores and of sexual deviation, the harem functions as a negative example of this specific 'management' of power. This critique on the harem as 'mismanaged' space follows then the concept of governmentality which Foucault saw as an early-modern way of re-organizing the good relation between subject and power according to an economic logic.



Family pictures Roland Barthes from *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, 1973.

### Domestic Spaces

In his autobiographical essay *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (1973) the writer introduces himself with some private pictures. Those pictures are not only meant to give us an idea of his physical appearance and evolution. Still

more important is that those pictures refer to certain aspects of his work. On the other hand, his work might be seen as the delicate product of what I think must have been an 'Art of living'. Two of those pictures represent the same image of a cosy gathering around a teatable. The first picture dates from circa 1900 and shows us Barthes' grandparents sitting around a table on which there is a teatray with teacups and a hot samovar. They are looking straight into the camera. The second picture dates from the sixties, showing us Barthes himself and his elderly mother. In contrast to the first picture there is no posing here. The picture looks like a snapshot, a proof of every-day life, which always seems to suggest a natural status. In spite of those differences in time and *mise-en-scène*, the two pictures are linked by the act of tea-drinking itself. Commenting this photographies, Barthes writes: 'de génération en génération, le thé: indice bourgeois et charme certain'.<sup>1</sup> In the continuity of cosyness and homeliness around the teatable, Barthes sees an eventuality to draw up a genealogy of bourgeoisness.

This genealogy does not need to be limited to tea alone, but can also be



François Boucher, *Le café*, 1739

extended to coffee. This proves the following painting from 1739 *Le Café*, by François Boucher. Again the charming image of bourgeois cosyness and domesticity is constructed around a pot of coffee. What interests me is in how far this everyday-life scene is revealing an ideology; that is the ideology of the patriarchally structured and nuclear family, which in its informality, presents itself as a 'natural' habitat for mankind.<sup>2</sup> This informality is based on the private atmosphere of the scene. The outer world is shut out here in a most effective way. Windows, garnished with heavy curtains, only function as a source of light,

whereas the mirror, reflecting a closed door, insists on this privacy. With this isolation, the domestic space is opposed here to the public sphere, which is implied to be dangerous, dangerous because the public sphere is a theatrical place. It is the realm of social play, where everybody wears a mask and where nobody can be sure of the identity of the other.<sup>3</sup> In this nice livingroom the threatening disorder of the public sphere is eliminated. Here, everybody has his wellfixed and undoubtable place and identity: father, mother and children. This order makes the livingroom a safe space, where all possible tensions of the outer world are resolved in the tenderness and the virtue of the family and by which the family is finally sexually neutralized.

However oppressive and suffocating this isolation is or might become in the 19th century, it still is a splendid isolation. This splendour is constructed by concrete everyday-life objects: a clock, a mirror, candlelights, canns, china, furniture. All those objects have no other meaning than indicating how well managed this household is.

The well-ordered and safe space of the bourgeois family follows an economic logic. According to Jean Jacques Rousseau in his *Discours sur l'économie politique* this economic logic is not only the basis for a good household, but also for the organisation of the state:

"Economie ou Oeconomie, ce mot vient de oikos – maison, et de nomos – loi, et ne signifie originaires que le sage et légitime gouvernement de la maison, pour le bien commun de toute la famille. Le sens de ce terme a été dans la suite étendue au gouvernement de la grande famille, qui est l'état".<sup>4</sup>

In his essay *La Gouvernamentalité* (1978), Michel Foucault sees the introduction of the economic logic into the political discourse as fundamental for the concept of governmentality.<sup>5</sup> Governmentality is thus characterized as a way of conduct in which the relation between power and the subject of power is internalised. Internalised because only the well being and welfare of the subject can legitimate the relation of power. This internalisation, or better, this mutual dependence of power and subject, can be seen as a social contract. Governementality is thus contradictory to sovereignty in which the relation between power and subject is external. The prince, tyrant or despot legitimates his power only on the purpose to maintain this power, without any regard to the situation of his subjects. Summing up, the domestic space of the Boucher painting is more than just a social and moral space eliminating the dangers of the outer world of the Ancien

Régime. This domestic space functions, due to its underlying economic logic, also as a political arena suggesting an alternative to French absolutist state organisation. Even drinking a cup of coffee is more than the moment in which the family flocks together in its well-managed domestic space. As a privileged trade-object introduced in Western society in the 1660's, by the Turkish ambassador in France, Soliman Musa Ferraca, coffee can also be read as a meeting-point between East and West.<sup>6</sup>

### Feminine space

I now may introduce a second picture. In this painting, ordered by Madame de Pompadour, Carle Vanloo depicts a Sultane having a cup of coffee in the private atmosphere of the Harem. Nevertheless by bringing in this second picture, a new problem is raised. In spite of the fact the activity of drinking coffee and the enclosed space are similar to the Boucher painting, it is difficult to



Carle Vanloo, *Sultane prenant du café*, 1754

read in this harem-scene a morally purified and sexually neutralized space that could function as an example for the whole of bourgeois society. Why is it so difficult? Paradoxically, the reason can be found in the enclosed space itself, which the harem is. In the stereotyped staging of the Islamic Other, the harem is more than just the exemplary domestic space of Islamic society, moreover it always is the final point of focus in the construction of the Orient. Here the western gaze is pretending to penetrate most deeply in the secrets and mysteries of the Orient. In her study *Disorienting Vision. Rereading Stereotypes in French Orientalist Texts and Images* (2004) the late Inge Boer argues that out of the Western preoccupation with the harem, the Orient as a whole is represented as a feminine space characterized by the mix of sexual decadence and the despotic organisation of society:

“The whole array of exotic figures –eunuchs, deafmutes, old women guarding the harem women, and not in the least the despot himself – appealed to a fascination with questions concerning polygamy and female sexuality seen through the lens of despotism. The harem seems to be the knot that ties together notions about the other”.<sup>7</sup>

This knot is surely to be found in the Vanloo painting. The enclosure of the domestic space of the harem is not in the first place intended to eliminate the outer world, but is meant to keep women inside the domestic space. In this reversed strategy, the domestic space is no longer a safe place as it is in the Boucher-scene, but is becoming a luxury prison where women live more or less like slaves. Here the position of enslavement or subordination to male authority is not underlined by the presence of a eunuch, as is often the case, but is more subtly evoked by the relation between the black servant offering the coffee to the indolent Sultane. The servitude of the black woman can easily be transposed to the servitude of the Sultane towards her Sultan. It confronts us with a chain of slavery, in which only the despotic Sultan has no part.

Normally the presence of the eunuch in harem-scenes implies the threat of violence in case a woman in the harem would try to escape. The absence of the eunuch in the Vanloo painting does not mean that this harem-scene is liberated from this violence/escape logic. Here violence and escaping are internalised in the ‘dangerous’ and ‘unnatural’ passions of lesbianism, which in this painting are even more dangerous because of their interracial nature. The eventuality of lesbianism undermines the Sultan’s power, because of his being excluded from the love act. It is of course to be punished, by the Sultan himself or by the guards. So the suppression of women takes on a form by means of which force and

violence become justified methods to maintain the structure of power-relations. This structure which is based on a logic of violence, escape and sexual decadence has its Western pendant in the convent. In his novel *La religieuse* Diderot points out how this logic of violence, escape and sexual decadence is the natural outcome of the despotic way of ruling the convent, which consequently can only be avoided when despotism is replaced by a form of government in which the welfare and well-being of the subject is the only legitimation of power.<sup>8</sup>

### Marivaudage

The same plea for governmentality is also to be found in the French opéra comique *Soliman II ou les trois Sultanes* from 1761,<sup>9</sup> written by the renowned French librettist Charles Simon Favart. About the middle of the century, Favart reformed the young genre of the opéra-comique and made it into one of the most popular theatrical genres of the eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup> In the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the opéra comique itself was born out of the Parisian fair theatre after the expulsion of theatre of the Commedia dell'arte. With its jokes and grunts, dances and tumbles, leaps and burlesques, the opéra-comique was a direct descendant of the Commedia dell'arte. In the context of blurring out boundaries in other dramatic and theatrical genres in the mid-eighteenth century, Favart added more respectability to the opéra-comique by focussing more on the literary and dramatic possibilities of the genre. In this sense, 'comique', stands more for the presence of dramatic action, than for the comical as such. In making the genre respectable Favart was inspired by the comedies of Marivaux and especially by the so-called 'marivaudage'.<sup>11</sup> In those social comedies the conditions and possibilities of verbal communication are problematized in questions of how to speak, on what grounds to speak, with whom to speak, in what form, etc. In addition to a greater accent on the sentimental, this questioning of speech is the essential characteristic of Marivaux' comédies. Also in Favart's dramaturgy sentimentality is to be found combined with the urge to and the problems of speech. The problematics of speech indicate a shift from classic rhetorical style of seventeenth century comedy, to a more natural or realistic style of conversation, which follows social stratification. The pursuit of more realism in Favart's librettoes is also to be noticed in a visualisation of the drama in more and more detailed stage directions.

*Soliman II ou les trois Sultanes*, performed for the first time at the French court, was one of Favart's most succesful opéra-comiques, performed and translated throughout the whole of Europe. The intrigue is built on the great 16th century Ottoman Sultan Soliman the Second and the problems occuring in his

harem.<sup>12</sup> Like in the Vanloo painting, the Harem is represented by emphasizing its enclosure. In one of the stage directions we read:

"Les appartements intérieurs du serial n'ont point des portes fermantes, mais de riches portières de drap d'or, ou d'autres étoffes précieuses. Des eunuques noirs sont de garde nuit et jour à l'entrée en dehors, prêts à exécuter au moindre signal les ordres du grand seigneur ou du kishlar-aga".<sup>13</sup>

The mentioning of the rich golden draperies or other fabrics does not only underline the luxurious atmosphere of the harem, but is also meant to describe this domestic space as realistic as possible. At several occasions this is continued by giving an exact description of furniture or objects filling the harem, such as "une petite table d'or carrée, haute de six à huit pouces, et large d'un pied et demi environ" or "une soucoupe d'or garnie de pierreries avec deux tasses de porcelaine et une cuiller faite avec le bec d'un oiseau des Indes, très rare, lequel bec est plus rouge que le corail".<sup>14</sup> Those thoughtless descriptions of fabric, color, hight and largeness having only a self-referring function are nothing less than Barthesian 'effets de réel' which have to convince the reader of the realism of the text.<sup>15</sup> This strategy of realism however, as Mieke Bal argues in her study *'Reading' Rembrandt* (1991), makes the reader also susceptible to ideological manipulation while he might see the thoughtless description as an almost empirical proof of reality and not as a pure textual strategy.<sup>16</sup> This ideological manipulation by effects of reality takes the luxury and opulence of the harem out of the realm of the fairytale and turns the harem into a real place. By doing so the effects of reality might emphasize Western opinions on the extravagant and wastefull way in which the Islamic domestic space is managed.

From the 500 other women living in Soliman's harem, only three favorites play a part in this opéra-comique. First there is Délia, who comes from Central Asia. She prefers dancing to talking and when she talks it is to express her complete submission to male authority. In her eyes Soliman is no less than a god, master of thunder and fire, war and peace, women and love. Secondly there is the beautiful but, o so proud and jealous Spanish Elmire. Dissociating herself from the others as the Sultans favorite, she tries hard to keep this position. Using tricks and deception she wants to secure herself of the total and exclusive love of the Sultan. Thirdly there is Roxelane, a French girl, maybe not as beautiful as Elmire but a real coquette, who wears her heart on her sleeve. She has no intention whatsoever to subdue to Soliman's will, but from the beginning on clearly and loudly questions his power. This has not so much to do with Soliman himself, but in the first place with the despotic power he represents.

Her protests are expressed in leaving the harem without surveillance, by mocking the eunuch-guards as ridiculous and fat 'monstres', deprived from their manhood and left back as deplorable amphibies. Most of all however her protests are heard in the conversations she insists to have with the Sultan himself. Using a language, which, comparable to that of Voltairian heroines, is characterized by a mixture of common sense, played naivety and esprit, she constantly questions the authority of the Sultan and the despotic way he uses his power. In fact this questioning is nothing less than a lecture in governmentality. During her first meeting with Soliman, she sees a point to criticize him about the way he addresses a private word to his servant. He should talk clearly and loudly and address his speech directly to the subject he rules over. Speaking out does not only suggest honesty and integrity, but it recognizes above all the subject's right to know what is said. Only this way true communication between power and subject is possible, which is the basis for a contract-theory underlying state organisation. The clearly political dimension of this discussion on speech and the conditions of speech, is to be noticed in the fact that Roxelane immediately continues to take up her right to speak and to attack the despotic power-relations by which the domestic space of the harem is organised:

"Commencez, s'il vous plaît, par vous désabuser  
Que vous avez des droits pour nous tyranniser  
(...)  
Pourquoi de cent barreaux vos fenêtres couvertes?  
C'est de fleurs qu'il faut les garnir;  
Que dus sérail les portes soient ouvertes,  
Et que le bonheur seul empêche d'en sortir.  
Traiter vos esclaves en dames  
Soyez galant avec toutes les femmes,  
Tendre avec une seule; et si vous méritez  
Qu'on ait pour vous quelques bontés,  
On vous instruira. J'ai dit, je me retire:  
C'est à vous de vous mieux conduire;  
Voilà ma première leçon".<sup>17</sup>

The political dimension of her speech is further underlined by the remark of Soliman's servant, the eunuch Osmin, who says "Bon! Elle vous parle en souveraine."<sup>18</sup>

### Subversive space

But this is not the end of Roxelane's crusade against despotism. Moreover she wants to incite the other harem-women with her plea for changes. By acting that way, she turns the domestic space of the harem into a subversive space in which possibilities of (female) political resistance may threaten the Islamitic social order.

In another harem-scène by Carle Vanloo, we are again confronted with the clear distinction between inside and outside, as it is referring to the serail as an enclosed space of which physical escape is made impossible by the threath of the black eunuch-guard at the door.



Carle Vanloo, *Haremscene*, ca. 1750.

However, as we saw earlier, the blocking of physical escape does not mean escaping completely to be impossible. We already pointed at the internalisation of techniques of escaping in the always implicit suggestion of lesbianism in the harem. Attributing the suggestions of lesbianism to the product of the male gaze and to expressions of male sexual desire and/or anxiety, the gathering of women in the harem as presented in the Vanloo picture

can also be seen from another point of view. Based on the lecture of Lady Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* (written in 1717-1718, published in 1763)<sup>19</sup>, Inge Boer rereads the harem from a more female perspective, or from what she calls 'a look from within the harem'.<sup>20</sup> In this gaze the harem functions not so much as an explicit sexual place, but is rather seen as a place where women gather to talk, or to exchange news. The harem becomes a forum, a place of communication. Lady Montagu even describes it as the "women's coffee house, where all the news of the town is told, scandal invented".<sup>21</sup> This is of course a direct reference to the institution of the 18th century coffee house where, such as in the famous Café Procope in Paris, men came together to discuss philosophy, politics, social issues or art in a semi-public sphere.<sup>22</sup> In this rereading of the

harem, Inge Boer relates the femininity of this space not only to the passive presence of the women, but also to a concrete activity which is repeatedly mentioned in the description of the harem and the bath-houses in Lady Montagu's letters: the activity of braiding hair.<sup>23</sup> According to Inge Boer this "activity of braiding hair, embedded in other activities in the 'women's coffee house', takes part in the production of knowledge and works as a means of communication. The braiding of hair is something women perform on each other in their own spaces."<sup>24</sup> Boer continues by mentioning that as a means of communication, the activity of braiding hair, is not innocent at all, but is in fact a powerful instrument in the hands of women that questions the male despotic powerregime.

Associating hair-braiding to a questioning of male authority may look at first sight a bit far fetched, but when we turn again to Roxelane, we can see that the moment she incites the other women with her arguments against the despotic regime of Soliman, is also the moment when they make themselves beautiful before meeting the Sultan, the moment they are braiding each other's hair. That this seduction is a mix between eroticism and fear is to be seen in Osmin's description of the women's make up. He not only explicitly mentions the braiding of hair, but in his telling that the women do it on each other without the help of slaves, he interpretes it literally as a 'stratagème'<sup>25</sup> (a tactic of war), which makes us consider the braiding of hair as a means of communication and possible resistance. Make up and especially the braiding of hair is a dangerous women's play of showing and covering up. When a hair-ribbon falls down and is picked up by one of the Sultanes, her robe falls open and one can see a glimpse of her well formed body. Osmin comments:

"On vous laisse le temps de fixer un regard,  
A travers le tissu d'une gaze assez claire  
Sur une taille élégante et légère  
Qui s'arrondit sans le secours de l'art".<sup>26</sup>

After the implicit endangering of the Sultan's power by this make-up-scene, Roxelane starts getting more and more explicit in her political discourse. Time and again, as if it were in a tribunal and Roxelane is a prosecutor, she presses charges against the laws of tyranny and enslavery by which the despotic state is characterized and pleads for a government where power-relations are based on mutual agreement, dialogue and respect. By constantly referring to the law as a social agreement made by man, she expresses a dynamic world-view in which the world is seen as a work in progress, made by man. This secularized argument

undermines the absolutist or despotic state-organisation where power and subsequent laws are legitimated as a gift from God. That those laws are, as Soliman argues, inherited certainties and have always been there and, what is more important, form the basis of his throne, does not impress her at all. In return she gives him a description of her own country, France, which might be an example for the Sultan:

"Vous faites bien sentir quelle est la différence  
De ce maudit pays au mien  
Point d'esclaves chez nous; on ne respire en France  
Que les plaisirs, la liberté, l'aisance.  
Tout citoyen est roi, sous un roi citoyen".<sup>27</sup>

#### Each citizen a king

In this cry for a Citizen King under which every citizen is a king, we can evidently hear echoes of Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* where he pleads for a moderation of power built on the concept of governmentality or contract-theory and where he warns the French and other European absolutist monarchies not to slide down into the 'Eastern' politics of despotism. Foucault's statement that the discourse of governmentality followed an essentially economic logic is, according to the eminent 'dix huitièmiste' Jean Starobinski clearly and explicitly to be noticed in Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*:

"Montesquieu likes to measure the cost, the profit or loss, of every situation. The cost of exercising absolute power from afar is that of terrorizing the eunuchs who will in their turn terrorize the women of the harem. Not only is the price heavy, but it still leaves the master in anxiety. What is the value of security acquired at such a price? What is the value of professions of obedience obtained under such circumstances?"<sup>28</sup>

In Favart's *Soliman II ou les trois Sultanes*, this economic logic was not only to be perceived in the detailed description of the harem as a domestic space, but more clearly even and more generally in mentioning the constant problems Soliman was confronted with in managing this space. The costs of this management could be far more reduced if power and responsibility of power were divided in a way Roxelane suggests in her cry for a 'Citizen King under which each citizen is a king.' This reorganisation of power-relations however would mean the end of the harem as the domestic space of the Islamic Other. And

indeed, Soliman, astonished and highly impressed by the eloquent Roxelane, resigns to his despotic power by releasing all the women from the harem and by loving and marrying but one, Roxelane. So Roxelane will, next to her Sultan, be a guarantee for “la tendre humanité qui adoucit la rigueur des lois”<sup>29</sup>. At the same time however, and this is highly problematic, Roxelane also says “reprends tes droits, reprends ma liberté, sois mon Sultan, mon héros et mon maître.”<sup>30</sup> By saying so she turns the citizenship, which she was pleading for into a gendered category only applicable to men. Although Roxelane may have reorganised power-relations in the domestic space of the harem, she herself, as she states literally, becomes again “une esclave soumise.”<sup>31</sup> In the discourse of governmentality there is no place for women. Reigned by a loving and caring husband, she turns to find again her place in the domestic space of the bourgeois family, where she is made speechless and left alone.

The description of the Harem as the domestic space of the Islamic Other, based upon Western early-modern conceptions of the domestic space, can in this way be considered as what Inge Boer calls a palimpsest. She sees the metaphor as an particularly apt method for rereading a text: “A palimpsest is a parchment or the like from which writing has been partially or completely erased to make room for another text. But even when the writing is completely erased, it is still visible in the traces it leaves behind in the parchment.”<sup>32</sup> The traces I tried to uncover here in this Orientalist construction of the harem as a domestic space, are traces that lead to the questioning of power-relations in Western debates on the art of government. A debate in which the concept of governmentality and its economic logic, based on the welfare and well-being of the subject, functions as an alternative for the the implicit tendency towards despotism in the way power-relations were organised in the Ancien Régime. In its imagined Otherness then, the Orient provided a safe ground, where the art of government could be tested out in an explicit way without risking the wrath of Western tyrants.

## Notes

- 1 Roland Barthes, “Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes” in: *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris, 1995, III, s.p.
- 2 For the bourgeois family as a natural habitat for humankind, see André Burguière, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber (eds.), *A History of the Family. The impact of Modernity*, Cambridge, 1996; Peter Szondi, *Die Theorie des bürgerlichen Trauerspiels im 18. Jahrhundert. Der Kaufmann, der Hausvater und der Hofmeister*, Frankfurt a. Main, 1973; Richard Helgerson, *Adultrous Alliances. Home, State, and History in Early*

- Modern European Drama and Painting*, Chicago/London, 2000; Bram Van Oostveldt, *Tranen om het alledaagse. Het verlangen naar natuurlijkheid en de encensering van burgerlijke identiteit in drama en theater in de Oostenrijkse Nederlanden*, Gent, 2005.
- 3 See Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, Neuwied a. Rhein/Berlin, 1962 (1956); Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, London/Boston, 1974.
  - 4 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Discours sur l’économie politique” in: *Oeuvres Complètes*, Paris, 1823, p. 11.
  - 5 Michel Foucault, “La ‘gouvernementalité’”, in: *Dits et écrits III*, Paris, 1994, pp. 635-657.
  - 6 See Pierre Martino, *L’Orient dans la littérature française au XVII et au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, 1906, p. 348, cited in: Inge E. Boer (ed. by Mieke Bal), *Disorienting Vision. Rereading Stereotypes in French Orientalist Texts and Images*, New York/Amsterdam, 2004, p. 81.
  - 7 Inge E. Boer (2004), p. 47.
  - 8 Denis Diderot, *La religieuse*, in: *Oeuvres Complètes – Contes II*, Paris, 1994. See also Laurent Versini, “Introduction – La religieuse”, in: *Ibid.*, pp. 271-276. G.A. Chosson, “Hatred, Vengeance and Freedom or the Insurrection of the Passions in Diderot and Laclous Dangereuses”, *Romance Notes*, 42 (2002), nr.2, pp. 151-162.
  - 9 Charles Simon Favart, *Soliman II ou les trois Sultanes*, Paris, 1761.
  - 10 For the history and esthetics of the opéra comique, see Maurice Barthélemy, “L’Opéra-Comique des origines à la querelle des Buffons” in: Philippe Vendrix (ed.), *L’opéra-comique en France au XVIIIe siècle*, Liège, 1992, pp. 9-78. Manuel Couvreur, Philippe Vendrix, “Les enjeux théoriques de l’Opéra-Comique” in: Philippe Vendrix (1992), pp. 213-281. For the problematics of 18th century orientalist opera, see Willem Bruls, *Ontvoering, verleiding en bevrijding. De Oriënt in de opera*, Amsterdam, 2004, pp. 85-98.
  - 11 M. de Rougemont, “FAVART, Charles Simon” in: Michel Corvin (ed.), *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du théâtre*, Paris, 1998, I, p. 632.
  - 12 The popularity of Suleyman the Great and his wife Roxane or Roxelane on the Western stage is not limited to the 18th century. Already in 1561, the tragedy *La Sultane* by Gabriel Bounin, the tumultuous love-story between Sumezman and Roxelane is told. However, during the 17th and especially the 18th century, Roxelane changes from an Asian princess into a European princess that is abducted to the harem of Ottoman sultan. This particular theme of the abduction of Western women to the Orient becomes immensely popular in the 18th century and peaks in Mozarts *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1781). See Willem Bruls (2004).
  - 13 Charles Simon Favart (1761), p. 29.
  - 14 *Ibid.*, p. 26.
  - 15 Roland Barthes; “L’effet de réel” in: *Oeuvres Complètes II*, Paris, 1994, pp. 478-494. See also Jürgen Pieters, “De demon van de analogie. Bij het lezen van ‘Het werkelijkheidseffect’”, *Feit & Fictie. Tijdschrift voor de geschiedenis van de*

- representatie, 5 (2000), nr. 1, pp. 123-127.
- <sup>16</sup> I used the Dutch version of Bal's study, Mieke Bal, *Verf en Verderf. Lezen in Rembrandt*, Amsterdam, 1990, pp. 115-120.
- <sup>17</sup> Charles Simon Favart (1761), pp. 23-24.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- <sup>19</sup> Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (ed. by Robert Halsband), *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu I (1708-1720)*, Oxford, 1965.
- <sup>20</sup> Inge E. Boer (2004), pp. 49-74.
- <sup>21</sup> Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1965), p. 314 cited in: Inge E. Boer (2004), p. 62.
- <sup>22</sup> For the history of the Parisian coffeehouses as a semi-public sphere, see Thomas Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture in Eighteenth Century Paris*, Princeton, 1988. In his study *The Contested Parterre*, Jeffrey S. Ravel links the café also to the theatre itself, functioning as a 'foyer' nearby the theatre to discuss the latest play. See Jeffrey S. Ravel, *The Contested Parterre: Public Theatre and French Political Culture 1680-1791*, Ithaca/London, 1999, pp. 24-25.
- <sup>23</sup> Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1965), p. 327 cited in Inge E. Boer (2004), p. 64.
- <sup>24</sup> Inge E. Boer (2004), p. 63.
- <sup>25</sup> Charles Simon Favart (1761), p. 6.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- <sup>28</sup> Jean Starobinsky, "Exile, Satire, Tyranny: Montesquieu's Persian Letters", in: *Blessings in Disguise; or, The Morality of Evil*, Oxford, 1993, p. 80.
- <sup>29</sup> Charles Simon Favart (1761), p. 79.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- <sup>32</sup> Inge E. Boer (2004), pp. 18-19.

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