# A Cinematographic Image of Istanbul in Post-2000 Hollywood Cinema in the Context of Orientalist Discourse: A Semiotic Visual Analysis of The International and Skyfall Movies

*Oryantalist Söylem Bağlamında 2000 Sonrası Hollywood Sinemasında İstanbul'un Sinematografik İmgesi: The Internatıonal ve Skyfall Filmlerinin Göstergebilimsel Görsel Çözümlemesi*

## ABSTRACT

Cinema holds a crucial role as an influential conveyor of culture and a tool for shaping mass perceptions. Orientalism, rooted in the Western perspective on and positioning of the East, initially utilized written materials and paintings in its quest for dominance. However, with the advent of cinema, orientalist discourses found a new medium-a powerful messenger capable of influencing large masses beyond the realms of oral traditions, written culture, and painting.

The shifting geopolitical climate following the September 11 Attacks intensifies the East-West conflict, with Orientalism and Hollywood playing pivotal roles. The primary objective of this study is to investigate how Hollywood Cinema visually depicts Istanbul within the orientalist perspective post-September 11. In the scope of this study, the universe comprises films produced in Hollywood after 2000, specifically set in Istanbul, and is delimited to identify visual of the orientalist elements. Following this approach, the films *The International* directed by Tom Tykwer and *Skyfall* directed by Sam Mendes, undergo a semiotic analysis. By selecting images from these movies, the study aims to analyze and explain the meanings reflected by the signs. Consequently, the study initiates by defining orientalism and orientalist discourses, then proceeds to elucidate their relationship with cinema. By scrutinizing the chosen films, the research unveils the orientalist-based reflection of Istanbul's image in Hollywood..

**Keywords:** Orientalism and Cinema, Hollywod, Istanbul.

## ÖZET

Sinema, etkin bir kültür aktarıcısı ve kitleleri etkileme konusunda önemli bir yere sahiptir. Oryantalizm, Batı'nın Doğu'yu görme biçimi, konumlandırması ve ona tekrar şekil vermektedir. Batı'nın Doğu'ya karşı olan bu güç arayışı kapsamında ortaya çıkan oryantalizm temelinde, yazılı materyaller ve resim ön plana çıkan birer araç görevlerini üstlenmişlerdir. Sinemayla birlikte oryantalist söylemler, sözlü ve yazılı kültür ile resim sanatından sonra geniş kitleleri etkileyebileceği yeni mesaj ileticisi üzerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır.

11 Eylül Saldırıları sonrası değişen iklim, Doğu-Batı çatışmasını körüklemektedir. Bu çatışmalarda gelinen noktada Oryantalizm ve Hollwood etkin bir rol oynamaktadır. Çalışmanın amacı, 11 Eylül sonrası Hollywood Sineması'nın oryantalist bakış bağlamında İstanbul'un görsel tasvirinin nasıl olduğu sorusuna yanıt aranmaktadır. Çalışma bağlamında 2000 sonrası yapılmış, Hollywood yapımı, İstanbul'da geçen ve oryantalist öğelerin saptanabildiği sınırlılığı çerçevesinde filmler evreni oluşturmaktadır. Buna göre, Tom Tykwer'in yönettiği *The International* ve Sam Mendes'in yönettiği *Skyfall* adlı filmler seçilerek göstergebilim temelinde çözümlenmektedir. Filmlerden görüntülerin seçilmesiyle, göstergelerin yansıttıkları anlamlar çözümlenmeye ve açıklanmaya çalışılmaktadır. Bu nedenle çalışmada öncelikle oryantalizm ve oryantalist söylemler tanımlanmakta, sonrasında sinemayla olan ilişkisini açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Ele alınan filmler yoluyla Hollywood'da İstanbul imgesinin oryantalist temelli yansıtılışı ortaya konulmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Oryantalizm ve Sinema, Hollywood, İstanbul.

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## INTRODUCTION

Cinema has served diverse purposes since its inception, acting not only as a conduit for emotions but also as a powerful instrument for cultural dissemination, mass influence, and societal mobilization. The impact of cinematic messages hinges on the nuanced interpretation of both real and connotative meanings by the audience. As we delve into the intricate interplay between cinema and culture, we will explore the specific lens of Orientalism and how it has manifested in cinematic narratives. Building upon the historical tools employed by Orientalism, cinema emerged as a potent vehicle for conveying intended messages, leveraging the compelling power of visual

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storytelling. The aftermath of the September 11 Attacks triggered a profound global transformation, notably impacting the dynamics between East and West. This transformation, influenced by the vagueness in certain definitions, led to a complex confrontation with the entire East, perpetuated and amplified through mass media. The ensuing shift in perceptions is particularly discernible in Hollywood film narratives, signaling a noteworthy evolution in the portrayal of the other on the cinematic stage.

This study aims to unravel the intricate influence of orientalism and orientalist discourses on cinema, particularly within the realm of Hollywood, along with the cinematic equivalents of these discourses. To achieve this goal, the study will begin by establishing a foundational understanding of orientalism and its various expressions. By elucidating the nuanced expressions and definitions of orientalism, we seek to comprehend the intricate relationship between orientalism and cinema. This exploration will serve as a lens through which we can observe the manifestation of orientalist discourses in films. The study addresses specific research questions, delving into selected Hollywood films to unravel how orientalism is reflected in cinematic narratives. Additionally, a brief overview of the chosen methodology will provide insights into the analytical framework applied to scrutinize these cinematic representations.

When evaluated together with the invention of photography and the step-by-step formation of the moving image, cinema has captivated the interest of people. With the advent of photography, individuals curious about distant places found satisfaction in the visual offerings of painting and photography. In this context, the subject presented, influenced by the perspective of the painter or photographer, could profoundly impact or guide the viewer. Similar to these art forms, cinema, with its fictional narrative, continues to captivate audiences. Moreover, cinema has the power to make changes from content to art direction in line with its own narrative.

Turkey, especially Istanbul, holds a position that exposes it to Western orientalism and its associated discourses due to its geographical location. Consequently, there have been studies conducted on orientalism in Turkey, both domestically and internationally. Upon reviewing articles and theses, it is evident that research covers a range of topics, including orientalist discourses, Hollywood cinema, directorial interpretations of films through an orientalist lens, and the portrayal of Turkey in Western films shot in Istanbul.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how Hollywood Cinema visually depicts Istanbul within the orientalist perspective post-September 11. This problem is further examined through sub-problems, investigating the visual portrayal of Istanbul and the East in Hollywood productions after 2000, and exploring the visual positioning of Istanbul and Islam in these depictions. In the scope of this study, the universe comprises films produced in Hollywood after 2000, specifically set in Istanbul, and is delimited to identify visual of orientalist elements. From this universe, films that could be considered in terms of sample and were not large in number were selected using the non-probabilistic sample selection method. Following this approach, namely *The International* and *Skyfall*, have been selected.

Cinema stands out among various art forms because it has the unique ability to produce and interpret meaning by incorporating elements from other branches of art. In this study, semiotics was employed to analyze the selected movie and explore the signs within it. Cinema studies, which did not evolve into a distinct language until the 1950s and 1960s, propose the development of cinema as a language by redefining the semioticians' comprehension of written and spoken language (Monaco, 2005: 154). Cinema semiotics holds a significant influence on contemporary film theories and criticism (Özden, 2014: 137). It provides a suitable critical approach for evaluating the fundamental semantic material of films. This role in grounding cinema studies on an objective basis enables the critical evaluation of films through an objective lens. Embracing the symbolic dimension of cinema further ensures the foundation of objective criticism (Wollen, 2017: 136).

**Orientalism**

Orientalism, as a field of study, emerged in the early 14th century, notably marked by the initiatives of the Church Council of Vienna. This council took a significant step by establishing chairs in various universities dedicated to the teaching of oriental languages and cultures. Orientalism, in this context, can be understood as a response to the demands of trade, competition, and military conflict (Turner, 2002: 67). The imperative to understand and engage with the East was not only a scholarly pursuit but also intricately tied to the economic and geopolitical dynamics of the time.

The term Orientalism encompasses a wide range of disciplines related to the East, including eastern culture, grammar, and history, designating scholars in these fields as orientalists. Specific domains such as linguistics, cultural studies, and historical research fall under the umbrella of Orientalism. However, Macfie contends that the meaning of Orientalism has undergone a transformation in light of new debates that have surfaced (2002: 3-6).

Macfie highlights the pivotal role of scholars such as Malek, Tibawi, Turner, and Said in reshaping the meaning of Orientalism. These authors, through their influential works, challenge the conventional understanding of Orientalism as solely an academic field and instead frame it as a new form of racism (Macfie, 2002: 3-6). Collectively, these scholars contribute to a reevaluation of Orientalism, shedding light on its connection to broader issues such as racism. In particular, Edward Said's *Orientalism*, published in 1978, played a pivotal role in changing the meaning of the term. By critiquing the uniformitarianism of the West, the book prompted a reevaluation of Western thought and the emergence of new fields of research.

While not the inaugural work in its domain, *Orientalism* significantly captured scholarly attention, underscoring its enduring influence in the field. One distinctive feature that sets it apart is its comprehensive representation of key figures from French and English backgrounds, spanning novelists, poets, politicians, linguists, historians, travelers, and colonial administrators (Rubin, 2007). The commonality observed here suggests the prevalence of a pluralist perspective. This phenomenon, as expounded by Gramsci's concept of hegemony, involves the adoption of certain views as superior to others (Rubin, 2007: 24-25). In essence, hegemony signifies the dominance of particular ideologies or perspectives that are deemed authoritative, influencing and shaping broader societal beliefs and norms. Similar to the dominance of certain ideas, cultural forms also exhibit a hierarchical structure where some prevail over others.

This form of cultural leadership, conceptualized by Gramsci as hegemony, is indispensable for those seeking to comprehend the intricacies of Western cultural life (Said, 2003: 7). From this perspective, there arises a critical inquiry into the formation of ideas deemed as truths. Said contends that this concept serves as a means for the West to exert dominance over the East, reconstructing it in a manner that establishes the West as the ruling authority (Said, 2003: 6). The intricate interplay between power and the production of knowledge is the crux of Said's exploration, challenging the purported objectivity of the knowledge generated. This scrutiny unveils a symbiotic relationship between imperialism and the realms of political and cultural production, highlighting their collaborative role in shaping narratives and reinforcing power structures.

The West possesses the ability to redefine definitions in alignment with its own values and interests. When juxtaposed with local cultures, these are often measured and valued against Western cultural standards, resulting in eventual suppression (Durukan, 2004: 71-72). What further compounds this dynamic is the implementation of a meticulously organized dehumanization program, as articulated by Durukan. This program operates systematically, contributing to the othering and depreciation of non-Western cultures.

Said introduces Orientalism in three distinct senses. The first sense characterizes Orientalism as an academic pursuit, encompassing anyone engaged in writing, teaching, or researching the Orient—be they anthropologists, sociologists, historians, or philologists. In this academic context, their work is labeled as Orientalism. The second sense of Orientalism delves into a mode of thinking rooted in an ontological and epistemological distinction between the 'Orient' and the 'Occident.' It signifies a conceptual framework that shapes perceptions and understanding based on this East-West dichotomy. The third and final sense broadens the scope to an institutional perspective. Starting from the end of the eighteenth century, Orientalism is viewed as a common institution dealing with the Orient. It involves making determinations, legitimizing views, describing, teaching, settling, and ruling in a Western style. Essentially, Orientalism becomes a tool for dominating, restructuring, and establishing authority over the Orient (Said, 2003: 12-13).

It is contended that Orientalism transcends its role as a mere field of technical knowledge, serving as a tool wielded by the West to otherize non-Europeans and justify exploitative practices. In this framework, Orientalism not only offers a collection of technical insights but also presents a meticulously crafted set of differences, often perceived as the antithesis of Europe. Of crucial importance is the attention drawn to the concept of divided identity within this construct. The delineated differences function as a division between the self and its opposite, establishing an opposition that facilitates the construction of an imaginary and undivided self.

By strategically placing the East in a perceived state of backwardness and degradation, Europe satisfies its inherent need for order and authority. This deliberate positioning not only fulfills a psychological requirement within Europe but also plays a pivotal role in consolidating its dominance over non-Western societies. Importantly, this act of 'othering' contributes to the establishment and reinforcement of a distinct Western identity (Mitchell, 1991: 166). It is crucial to note that Western expressions, rather than presenting a realistic portrayal, are often shaped by perceptual contents in the representation of the East. These perceptual constructs, in turn, exert influence across diverse realms, including politics, media, and human rights. Notably, the East is consistently depicted as exotic, erotic, and inherently fascinating in these representations (Turner, 2002: 21).

Beyond mere curiosity, the West harbored a profound desire to reposition and reshape the East. This sentiment was particularly pronounced among Western romantics seeking refuge from the tribulations induced by the Industrial Revolution. The East, in their perception, emerged as an untarnished and distinctive geography, sparking a fervent desire to experience it firsthand (Germaner & İnankur, 1989: 21). Despite functioning as a refuge for Western romantics seeking escape, the East underwent a complex transformation in their hands. It became not only a sanctuary but also a source of inspiration that was consumed and re-created through the lens of Western romanticism.

One of the foundational conflicts inherent in Orientalism revolves around the nuanced interplay of the other, encapsulating the intricate East-West conflict. Across the history of human, the other has been perceived through a dual lens—as both mysterious and alluring, as well as intimidating and frightening. This perpetual tension, rooted in the complex dynamics of perception, shapes and defines the discourse within Orientalism. The strategic positioning of the East by the West, marked by the assignment of the role of the other, sparks ongoing debates. This categorization, designating the East as the Other, becomes a pivotal expression in the economic, social, and cultural realms, demanding meticulous management and surveillance. Shodmatova (2018: 13) underscores the significance of this dynamic, emphasizing the multifaceted dimensions in which the East is subjected to scrutiny and control. As mentioned previously, locations that were once shrouded in mystery and deemed exotic can undergo a redefinition as dangerous places, contingent upon the prevailing time and purpose. This continual redefinition of the other is a dynamic process, consistently transmitted and solidified, eventually gaining a distinct place in the collective consciousness and becoming a tangible reality.

For the West, the East transcends being merely a neighboring region; it holds a pivotal place as the site of Europe's largest and oldest colonies. Additionally, the East is recognized as the cradle of civilizations, a cultural rival to Europe, and a recurring image of the other. This intricate relationship, as elucidated by Said (2004: 11), underscores the multifaceted and enduring significance of the East in Western perspectives. The perpetuation and actualization of these images are sustained through the production of various works. This mechanism underscores how the discourse of Orientalism not only shapes perceptions but actively contributes to making the East open for the West. Orientalism, as wielded by the West, possesses the transformative power to divide, reproduce, and shape the East according to its preferences. This process involves the creation of the other by Westerners, a deliberate act that extends beyond mere representation. It includes granting this constructed other a voice, teaching it how to think, and ultimately deciding its independence.

Said (2004: 21) illuminates this phenomenon, emphasizing how the West strategically employs Orientalist discourses to legitimize its control and exploitation of the other. This discourse not only paves the way for colonialism but also serves as a justification for the modernization, subjugation, and exploitation of the East. The crucial question that arises is why the West consistently finds itself in the decision-making position. The answer lies in the power dynamics inherent in media representation, shaping and defining the East in accordance with the Western perspective.

It is through media channels that the West positions and portrays the East, wielding a significant influence in shaping perceptions and justifying its dominant role. In cinema, television, and news photographs, the East is consistently depicted as part of crowds, emphasizing a collective identity over individuality, often portrayed through images of mass anger. In cinematic narratives, the East is frequently relegated to roles such as slave traders, lecherous individuals, drunkards, camel drivers, and scoundrels. These portrayals reinforce a narrative of inferiority, primitiveness, and deviance attributed to the East. Concurrently, the West is presented with opposing adjectives of superiority, sophistication, and rationality, perpetuating a stark and dichotomous East-West dichotomy (Said, 2003: 300). With a firm grip on media power, the West not only shapes narratives but also asserts its entitlement to the decision-making position.

It is crucial to highlight that the media, perpetuating the legacy of Orientalism, persistently defines the East not based on its intrinsic qualities but rather in a condescending manner, emphasizing what it is not. This mission involves making the shortcomings of the East visible and operating in alignment with the interests of the West. Keyman, Mutman and Yeğenoğlu (1996: 10) shed light on this ongoing process, underscoring the media's active role in framing the East through a lens of condescension and Western-centric perspectives. The transmission of culture has persisted throughout history, employing diverse means ranging from oral traditions like cave paintings, tales, and songs to written instruments. Written forms, in particular, have played a significant role in this transmission.

Today, the media stands as a prominent contemporary channel for cultural transmission, dutifully perpetuating the culture of the society it belongs to and actively participating in the ongoing process of shaping it. Presently, the

media continues to characterize the East as different and inferior to the West, effectively employing the adjective other to reinforce these distinctions. This process of othering extends beyond media narratives to include spatial representations, notably in mapping. The ambiguity surrounding terms like the Middle East or the Far East prompts critical inquiry into the questions of 'where' and 'according to what'. Keyman, Mutman and Yeğenoğlu (1996: 8-9) illuminate that beneath these divisions and distances lies a deliberate attempt to marginalize and portray the West as distinct and, arguably, more civilized.

Moreover, the distortion in maps further perpetuates geopolitical biases. Europe is frequently positioned at the center of maps, contributing to the misrepresentation of geographic sizes. Notably, Africa, when depicted, is often shown disproportionately smaller than its actual size. This cartographic distortion serves to reinforce notions of centrality and prominence for Europe and North America. Durukan (2004: 32) brings attention to the consequences of this deliberate cartographic manipulation, shedding light on the ways in which visual representations contribute to geopolitical imbalances. As previously discussed, the impact of culture and its modes of transmission is paramount. What is communicated through these channels gradually solidifies into the normative fabric of a society. Over time, the transmitted values and narratives become ingrained and take on a dogmatic character, shaping the collective mindset and influencing societal norms.

The act of defining or marginalizing others as the 'other' is not a phenomenon exclusive to the 19th century; it has roots in older civilizations. However, what distinguishes the phenomenon, particularly in the context of the East and West, is the alignment of cultural differences with the political and economic superiority of the West. This confluence enhances and amplifies the prominence of the concept, as cultural distinctions become intertwined with and reinforced by Western political and economic dominance (Durukan, 2004: 61-62). In the Middle Ages, the East-West dichotomy was intricately linked with religious narratives. Stereotypes prevalent during this period depicted the East as synonymous with Islam, characterized by perceptions of being wild, polygamous, engrossed in magic and sorcery, and indulgent in sexual pleasures. These stereotypes, as highlighted by Erkan (2009: 116-118), underscore the enduring nature of biased portrayals that transcend historical epochs.

The Age of Enlightenment marked a transformative period in the perception of the East. During this era, there was a significant redefinition, shifting the perspective from viewing the East as places to be avoided to recognizing them as destinations to be explored. The myth of the East was meticulously crafted during the 19th century, serving as a construct for travelers. It involved amalgamating and solidifying the East with an image of a region whose governance system was scrutinized, prompting contemplation, and allegedly incapable of self-governance. This process added a new stereotype to the already complex tapestry of perceptions surrounding the East (Erkan, 2009: 116-118). The West's interpretation and recreation of the East are distinctly shaped by its own objectives. Rather than a genuine desire to understand and learn about the East, the West's curiosity can be likened to a child's fascination with a new toy-driven more by a self-centric exploration rather than a genuine pursuit of understanding the intricacies of the East.

Non-European societies often face the phenomenon of having their positive attributes ignored, with attention primarily directed towards their perceived deficiencies. Notably, any form of deprivation within these societies is frequently framed as a testament to Europe's developmental progress. This skewed perspective, as observed by Dirlik (1996: 100), underscores a Eurocentric lens that tends to overshadow the rich and diverse qualities present in non-European societies.

The concept of the other extends beyond mere differentiation in cultures; it is often strategically utilized to instill fear, prompting societies to recognize, assert, and protect what they have. This duty of protection, as observed throughout history, can escalate to the point of war and, in extreme cases, the justification of killing the perceived 'other' if deemed necessary. Orientalist texts, in this context, play a pivotal role in not only shaping the concept of the 'other' but also in determining and solidifying Western identity. The central problem in a process purported to culminate in enslavement and exploitation over time is veiled within the concept of the other (Uluç, 2011: 39). Instead of a simple dichotomy of 'us and others,' the evolution of this concept extends to 'us and enemies' within the intricate dynamics of conflict. Beyond economic motivations driving wars, those perceived as the 'other' are effectively positioned as adversaries. From a Western mindset, this entails a duty to protect not only oneself but also one's own culture, further emphasizing the complex interplay between identity, conflict, and the preservation of cultural values.

The persistent notion that the East is incapable of self-governance and its continued identification with despotism remain prevalent in contemporary discourse. Examining the processes aimed at introducing democracy to Eastern countries reveals the functional role these two terms play, shedding light on how deeply ingrained these stereotypes are in shaping perceptions and policies.

Orientalism's association with Islam is a subject of critique, particularly for its consistent emphasis on identifying flaws within Islamic society, politics, economy, and culture, often neglecting the nuances of civil society. This aspect of Orientalist discourse, as highlighted by Turner (2002: 58), underscores the need for a more nuanced and balanced understanding of Islamic societies that transcends the traditional Orientalist lens.

A noteworthy aspect is the frequent association of Islam with the East, perpetuated by the West's equation of Islam with Orientalism, leading to the marginalization of individuals adhering to this faith. Despite the difficulty in neatly categorizing Islam within the framework of Orientalism, it stands as a major cultural force in Europe and constitutes an indispensable part of the cultural fabric in regions such as Spain, Sicily, and Eastern Europe (Turner, 2002: 46). Orientalism operates as a systemic approach rooted in accentuating differences, relegating Islam to an exclusively Eastern religion and confining Christianity to the West for the sake of maintaining a perceived continuity.

Notwithstanding the historical reality of Islam and Christianity sharing common ground in realms such as science, philosophy, and culture, Orientalism persists in underscoring their differences, fostering division, and emphasizing separation (Turner, 2002: 60). These inherent differences fostered by Orientalism lead to a distinctive comparison, not between Islam and Christianity, but between Islam and the West. Within this comparison, the West, asserting itself as a bastion of modernity, greatness, and cultural richness with its unique origins, tends to cast Islam into a narrative of primitiveness and backwardness (Said, 2000: 87). From this perspective, the negative view against Islam not only influences attitudes toward the religion but extends to encompass all Eastern countries. Since at least the late 18th century and persisting into the present day, the Western world's response to Islam has been profoundly shaped by ideas that persist as 'Orientalist.' These ideas, which have become ordinary but retain their impact, revolve around two distinct and imaginarily demarcated geographical realms. The first, larger and perceived as 'different,' is termed the Orient or the East. The second, known as 'ours,' represents the Occident or the West. This dichotomy forms the foundational narrative of Orientalist thought, influencing perceptions, policies, and interactions between the West and Islam.

Within the framework of Orientalism, Islam, perceived as belonging to the East, was initially appraised as a monolithic entity. Subsequently, it faced a unique trajectory, marked by distinctive hostility and fear, reflecting the complex dynamics that have shaped the relationship between the West and the Orient. While there are undoubtedly numerous religious, psychological, and political reasons contributing to this perception, the primary factor is the Western view of Islam as a significant rival to Christianity and a perceived threat to the latter (Said, 2000: 80). In the perpetuation of this constructed hostility, a continuous stream of images is relentlessly imposed on the audience through the media.

**Orientalism and Cinema**

Orientalism permeates diverse branches of art, with its influence evident in various forms. This artistic disposition, initially observed in paintings where European artists depicted the East in an exotic and captivating manner, extends its discourse into architecture, porcelain decoration, literature, dance, and music. Today, a new realm of artistic expression for Orientalism emerges with the advent of photography and cinema, seizing the opportunities they bring. It is crucial to recognize that cinema, beyond being a mere artistic tool, also serves as a powerful medium. What initiates as the mobilization of photographs unfolds into a dual role, serving both artistic expression and propaganda.

Cinema not only fueled but also harnessed people's curiosity towards news and new phenomena. Taking the World War II period as an illustrative example, audiences flocked to cinemas seeking updates on the war's progression, inadvertently being exposed to wartime propaganda. The audience was compelled to adopt the notion that the opposing countries were nothing more than enemies, actively seeking their destruction, and that seizing their lands was imperative. Whether in times of war or peace, the perpetuation of the 'other' phenomenon serves the purpose of both maintaining societal order and reinforcing a sense of privilege. In Western societies, Orientalism becomes a pivotal tool. Through the cinematic medium, the portrayal of the Orient not only sparks curiosity but also plays a role in marginalizing its people. Cinema, particularly as a powerful facet of media, remains a potent tool in shaping and perpetuating images of the East even in contemporary times.

Radio, television, cinema, and other communication channels wield a significant influence in shaping perceptions of identity, race, nationality, and gender. The media not only molds our notions of self-identity but also constructs the identity of 'the other' through its representations. By determining who holds power, the media not only legitimizes the perspectives of the powerful but also perpetuates the status quo, ensuring those lacking power remain in their marginalized positions (Erkan, 2009: 20). Viewed as conduits for the replication of social ideology, mass media possesses an ideological dimension intertwined with electronic colonialism.

The rejection, forgetting, and alteration of cultural products originating outside the West, with a preference for imported items, represent a core challenge in third-world countries. Films incorporating orientalist elements are argued to not only define but also legitimize the Western perspective of the East, encoding this view in various ways (Said, 2004: 60). Consequently, discourses that were once prevalent in fields such as literature gain heightened visibility in audiovisual media, providing them with an easily accessible platform for transmission.

D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*, often cited as one of the earliest examples of orientalist films in the history of cinema, dates back to 1916 (Karlıoğlu, 2020: 75). Comprising four distinct parts, the movie delves into the theme of human intolerance across different epochs. Notably, it channels orientalist discourse by featuring content that supports the Ku Klux Klan's assertion of white superiority, incorporating a portrayal of belly dance in the section covering the Babylonian War, and presenting images that reinforce the notion that women exist primarily to please men. While director Griffith maintains that his intention was not to marginalize Eastern peoples, the film is often labeled as orientalist due to its depiction of these societies in harem settings and scenes of turmoil (Hamilton, 2013). Cinema, fundamentally a composition of visual elements, incorporates auditory components to complement and reinforce its visuality. In films crafted predominantly with visual elements, it becomes crucial to be attuned to the sometimes overt and sometimes subtle meanings conveyed by these signs.

Another noteworthy film from 1921, *The Sheik*, is recognized as another work steeped in Orientalism. The storyline revolves around the life of a Western woman who enters into matrimony with an Arab Sheikh. Throughout the narrative, the film delves into the conflicts between the Western woman, the Arab sheikh, and Eastern culture (Dajani, 2000: 4). The orientalist elements within the film center on perpetuating the perceived Eastern theme, showcasing exoticism, Arab and Muslim depictions, and the vast desert landscapes. This film, significant for unveiling early prototypes of Eastern representations, not only succeeds in this endeavor but also serves as an inspiration for subsequent films (Dajani, 2000: 4). The box office triumph of the movie paved the way for its sequel, *The Son of the Sheik* (1926). The film's success lies in its ability to portray the East as a fairy tale and present desired representations to the audience. It is asserted that this film played a pivotal role in solidifying the foundations of orientalist representations in the minds of audiences, shaping perceptions even for those who have never visited the East or have limited knowledge of it (Karlıoğlu, 2020: 78). By highlighting the characters of the cruel sultan or sheikh in films produced in the North African region between 1911-1962, it actively contributes to the construction of binary oppositions. In doing so, it positions itself against societal stereotypes depicting the use of brute force and the enslavement of women, often associated with the European male character (Kömeçoğlu, 2002: 45-46).

In *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Steven Spielberg, 1981), we see traitor Arabs, while *The Year of the Dragon* (Michael Cimino, 1985) portrays Chinatown gangsters. Similarly, *True Lies* (James Cameron, 1994) depicts almost an entire nation as inclined towards Jihad. These instances serve as examples of the persistent presence of orientalist discourses in cinema (Bernstein & Studlar, 1997: 1-4). Cinema goes beyond mere entertainment; it also serves as a powerful political tool. While Hollywood, as an institution, carries a dual identity, both cultural and industrial, it has the ability to mobilize vast resources for productions of different genres, from war films to dramas (Valantin, 2006: 8). Cinema, by continuously renewing the image of the enemy through othering, serves as a powerful tool to ensure that Western society remains cognizant of the other. Notably, Hollywood cinema shoulders this mission, disseminating the sanctions and ideas of Western ideology on a global scale (Güngör, 2011: 68). The aftermath of the Iraq War in 2003 witnessed a resurgence in Hollywood film production, focusing on themes of patriotism, national security, and America's pursuit of global dominance. These films often legitimize American actions by portraying external threats such as terrorism, anarchism, and communism (Valantin, 2006: 213). It is crucial to emphasize that within the orientalist discourse, the East is often linked with terrorism, positioned as subordinate to the West, and portrayed as lacking the ability to govern itself.

Hollywood continues to underscore differences in its films, employing the East as a lavish backdrop that significantly influences our perceptions of the world and our value systems, ultimately impacting our characterizations as either good or bad, positive or negative (Erkan, 2009: 21). In *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Arab men are relegated to the background, depicted as faceless masses performing tasks deemed undesirable by Western researchers. This portrayal aligns with orientalist texts, portraying native men as indolent, cowardly, and fatalistic, while Western characters are presented as individuals possessing both scientific and physical prowess. The film depicts Westerners claiming ownership of the chest, thereby depriving Egyptians of their historical heritage and relegating them to ignorance, a narrative that serves to legitimize the subjugation of native knowledge (Erkan, 2009: 135-140). Once again, the discourse linking the salvation of the East to the West comes to the forefront.

Analyzing the representation of women in the orientalist discourse reveals the portrayal of the Eastern woman as a subordinate, in a servile position, obedient to every command of the man. The identification of one of the movie

characters with American nationality sets them apart from the rest and elevates them to an untouchable status (Erkan, 2009: 134-135). While a Western woman may enjoy an untouchable status, her Eastern counterpart continues to be relegated to the position of the other.

Another instance of the orientalist discourse in cinema is evident in the movie *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* (Mike Newell, 2010). Set against an Eastern backdrop, the movie is replete with characters such as magicians and sorcerers. This portrayal reinforces the stereotype that Eastern characters are distanced from science, engaging in magical pursuits instead of rational endeavors. Despite her royal position, the princess in the movie is depicted as a passive figure devoid of agency, aligning with the orientalist discourse that often portrays Eastern women in such subservient roles (Shodmatova, 2018: 42). As evident, orientalist discourses are molded and reexamined to suit specific objectives. The depiction of the East remains consistently negative, portraying it as synonymous with chaos, disorder, a lack of law, and an inability to self-govern. These globally watched films not only perpetuate this image but also influence the audience, solidifying it within their perceptions. Another aspect worth scrutinizing is the extent to which individuals in Eastern societies, often portrayed as 'the other' in these films, are cognizant of the assigned roles and characterizations. Exploring this issue, albeit requiring a dedicated study, could unveil the reach of electronic colonialism.

## Cinema and Semiotics

Cinema functions as a powerful medium of communication, imbuing meaning into individuals' connections with their environment. It serves as a reflection of its time, encapsulating facets of history, economy, culture, and society. The language of cinema is rooted in images, arranged sequentially to form indicators. These indicators, with both apparent and underlying meanings, embody the visible, objects, and abstract concepts within a society (Lotman, 2012: 13).

The sign, comprising the signifier and the signified, involves the creation of a concept through an auditory image, necessitating a purpose in signifying the meaning-transmitting combination (Barthes, 2005: 48). Signs, characterized by a signifier and a signified, serve as pointers to understanding, reference, and context, as seen in everyday examples like traffic rules and beam color. Through these symbols, individuals attribute meanings to objects and auditory images.

While signifiers constitute the plane of expression, the signified make up the plane of content. Each plane comprises two layers: form and substance. Form encapsulates the description of the entirety of linguistics in an inclusive, simple, and consistent manner, avoiding reliance on any non-linguistic preconditions. Substance, in contrast, encompasses all linguistic features that necessitate non-linguistic preconditions for description (Barthes, 2005: 48). Most semiotic systems encompass narrative elements like objects, body movements, and images. These elements contribute to the construction of meaning and understanding, serving as objects of utility derived by society for specific purposes. For instance, clothing is worn for protection, food is consumed for nourishment, and a raincoat is utilized to shield against rain (Barthes, 2005: 49). The raincoat also functions as a sign, indicating the weather conditions. Drawing from Saussure's example, if we consider the word *mug* as a basis, it serves as a sign—a written or auditory image composed of the letters m-u-g. The mental representation it evokes, the concept of a mug, is the signified.

The semiotic sign, as proposed by Saussure and others, comprises the signifier and the signified. Metz, however, contends that there is no inherent distinction between the two-part signifier and the signified, making cinema easily understood but challenging to articulate. From the viewer's perspective, interpreting and explaining signs constitute the task at hand. Saussure posits that the relationships binding linguistic elements generate their own meanings and unfold on two distinct planes, corresponding to two forms of mental activity (Barthes, 2005: 61). The comprehension of the sign is bifurcated into the serial plane and the syntagmatic plane. The serial plane pertains to selection and involves the filmmaker's choices of signs of the same kind, exercised at their discretion. On the other hand, the syntagmatic plane concerns the arrangement of signs to produce meaning. Whereas the serial plane involves choices during the shooting, the syntagmatic plane entails the amalgamation of the selected shots through editing to create a coherent and meaningful whole.

Semiotics explores sign systems prevalent in daily activities, encompassing all communication events, including everyday language. It delves into the entirety of languages, symbols, and norms to construct signs (Guirand, 1994: 17). Semiotics revisits language, extending beyond simple symbols to encompass wholes that hold sociological significance. While images, behaviors, and objects inherently carry meaning, they unite with language, forming a cohesive sign (Barthes, 2005: 28). Language not only constructs meaning but also emphasizes discursively variable forms of interpretation.

There are two surfaces of signification, and denotation is the reflection of the object in the real world in the mind. The sign has a certain literal meaning and there must be a connection between the signifier and the signifier. Connotation, on the other hand, is the interaction state when the sign meets the excitement and cultural selves of the audience (Barthes, 2005: 50-51). Apart from the literal meaning of the image on the screen, this situation of interpretation in cinema combines with the social and cultural criteria of the viewer as the self, and leads to different interpretation and understanding.

Cinema constitutes a unified entity, crafting its own language. The cinematic language is shaped through the purposeful synthesis of images and sounds, giving rise to the distinction between the visible and the meaningful. Codes are established in the production of meanings, providing a framework to convey significance through signs. Metz identifies five cinematic coding methods that convey messages to the audience: visual image, speech, music, sound, and writing. These codes, emerging in cinema where these methods combine to become expressive tools, are grouped into three types. Cinema-specific codes include scene transitions. Codes that do not originate from cinema are those with cultural meanings or references. Codes shared by cinema with other arts are those common to various art branches. Semiotic criticism, achieved through code analysis, operates on a first level where codes are examined based on psychological, sociological, cultural, and aesthetic meanings. Additionally, there is a second level where the cinematic style presented through codes is analyzed (Eberwein, 1990: 132). With the establishment of evaluation criteria that facilitate the discovery of meaning, films transition from being consumable objects to possessing a structure where meaning is reproduced beyond the filmmakers (Özden, 2014: 140).

## ISTANBUL IN HOLLWOOD MOVIES IN THE CONTEXT OF ORIENTALIST DISCOURSE AFTER 2000

### The International

### Abstract Information about the Movie and Synopsis

**Director:** Tom Tykwer

**Producer:** Charles Roven, Richard Suckle, Lloyd Phillips

**Writer:** Eric Warren Singer

**Year:** 2009

**Colour:** Colourful

**Running Time:** 118 mn.



**Starring:** Clive Owen, Naomi Watts, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Haluk Bilginer

Interpol detective Salinger and Manhattan Assistant District Attorney Whitman are tasked with investigating a bank that finances a range of activities from money laundering to terrorism, from arms trafficking to destabilizing governments. When necessary, the bank eliminates obstacles, even if they include its own employees. Germany, Luxembourg, France, Italy, Italy, the United States and Turkey are the countries visited throughout the movie. Istanbul is seen for approximately 15 minutes throughout the movie.
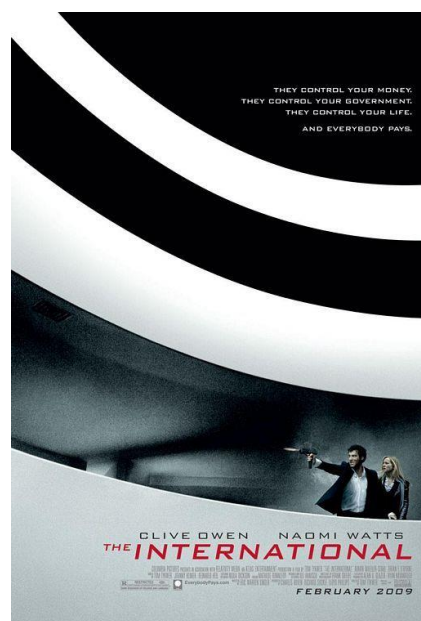
**Figure 1:** *"The International"* poster of the movie

### Signs of Orientalist Discourse

Before proceeding to the analysis in terms of Orientalist discourses, the study discusses the contrasts and sign analyzes in the movie in the light of the information in the semiotics sub-heading.

### Semiotic Analysis

**Table 1:** Oppositions of *"The International"*

| Hot | Cold |
|---|---|
| Dangerous | Safe |
| Backward | Modern |
| East | West |
| Islam | Christianity |
| Dirty | Clean |
| Old | New |
| Active | Calm |
| Male | Female |
| Messy | Tidy |

**Table 2:** Semiotic analysis of *"The International"*

| Sign | Signifier | Signified |
|---|---|---|
| Object | Eminönü | Informing the audience about location and religion, Islam |
| Object | Mosque restroom | Dirty, worn-out upholstery, left behind |
| Object | Clothes at funeral | Suitable for daily use |
| Object | Basilica Cistern | Mysterious, exotic, secret dealing |
| Object | Mosque courtyard | Murder, danger, not being safe in the place of worship |
| Human | Crowd | Eastern crowd, disorder, unemployed |
| Human | Family | Family members in casual clothes |
| Object | The Quran | Islam |
| Object | Hookah, Woven carpet, Pottery, Ceramics | Eastern visual identity |
| Human | Crowded and male-dominated | Value in Eastern people, male-dominated understanding |
| Object | Weapon | Dangerous, no safety |
| Object | Istanbul view from the roof | Complexity, no escape |
| Object | Gun and Mosque in the background | Reinforcing the dangerous situation through the East and Islam |

## Authority-Discourse

The film stops in Istanbul after shooting in a number of countries. So much so that, after Germany, Luxembourg, France, Italy and the United States, the country where the film will have its finale is Turkey. Throughout the movie, various criminal and dangerous situations have occurred in these countries. Particularly the conflict scenes shot at the Guggenheim Museum[3] in New York - in a life-size replica - show a clear approach in that crime is not specific to the East and can also take place in the leading countries of the West.
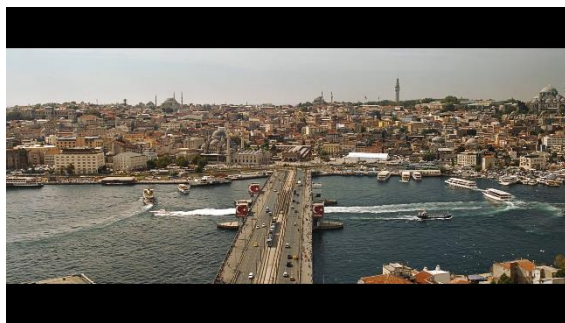
**Figure 2:** *"The International"* frame from the movie     **Figure 3:** *"Harbour Scene in Istanbul"*

Istanbul is used for approximately 15 minutes in the film. In the scene, which starts with a plan that sees Eminönü from the front, it is noticeable that mosques, ferries and the flag stand out (see Figure 2). Along with the first display, location information is given to the audience through visual elements. The East and Islam are integrated and presented to the audience. While the West defines its identity with the existence of the East, it positions Islam against Christianity in order to reinforce this. In the process of othering the East, the discourse created by adding another layer in terms of religion is reinforced. This shot also draws attention by using a predominantly yellow color tone instead of the gray color tone that is dominant throughout the film. In Italian painter Hermann David Salomon Corrodi's work *Harbor Scene in Istanbul*, Istanbul is depicted with a yellow-like color tone and at an angle from Galata to Eminönü, similar to the one in the movie (see Figure 3). It seems that these color tones used in the film preserved their existence in the transition from orientalist painting to cinema. Through this color, which

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[3] The museum, opened in 1959, has a collection exhibiting works from impressionism, post-impressionism, early modern and contemporary art.

evokes desert and dust, the orientalist discourse standardizes the countries considered as Eastern and ignores the characteristics that may differ from each other.



**Figure 4:** *"The International"* frame from the movie

In Figure 4, the characters who need to meet secretly during the funeral prayer, as per the story, do this in the toilet of the mosque. The environment presented during the meeting of the film characters is shown as a mossy tap and pipeline, a dirty, old and neglected area. In Orientalism, the East is presented as places where cleanliness is not important, dusty, and left behind because they cannot keep up with the times. It can be seen that there are choices in the elements designed here that are suitable for this discourse.
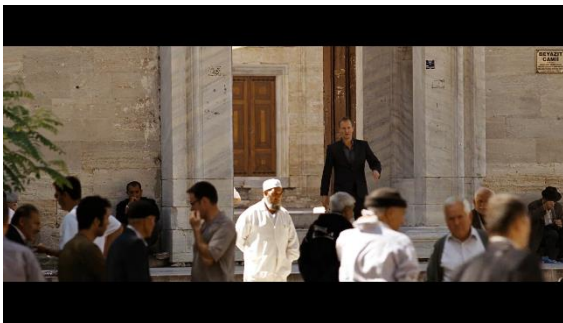


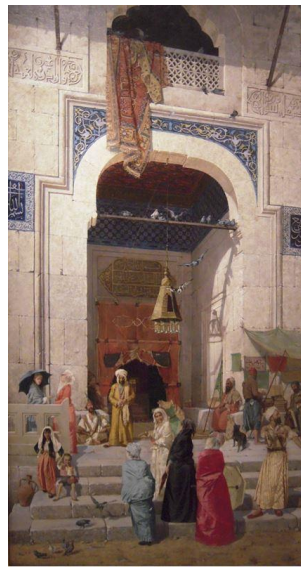**Figure 5:** *"The International"* frame from the movie



**Figure 6:** *"At the Mosque Gate"*

Along with these descriptions of the East, some characteristics are also stated about Eastern people. People idle around with a careless, bored and jobless attitude (see Figure 5). This approach, which fits the orientalist discourse, is similar to the descriptions of Easterners as communal, impersonal, lethargic and indifferent. It is seen that this scene bears similarities to Turkish painter Osman Hamdi Bey's painting titled *At the Mosque Gate*, dated 1891 (see Figure 6). In the mentioned work, there are people sitting, chatting and selling. These two moments in the film and the painting are examples of the implicit orientalist discourse in terms of narrative.

In the scenes where Salinger chases his target in the Eminönü bazaar, the current state of a crowded and male-dominated environment is striking (see Figure 7). Especially in the bazaar, which is one of the places where shopping is frequent, the fact that there are almost no women leads to the positioning and inequality of men and women. In the orientalist discourse, the understanding that men have more freedom rights than women and that women are even isolated from daily life are reflected in this plan. It can be concluded that while men are free to do whatever they wish, women are allowed to live within determined limits and therefore have no visibility. In the rest of the scene, Salinger moves forward despite the gun in his hand being clearly visible as he wanders around the market (see Figure 8). The people, quite normally, do not care about the situation and continue their business. This situation is reflected as a normal moment of life. For this reason, the discourse in Orientalism that the East lacks security and that institutions do not do their job emerges here. The lack of security is conveyed to the audience due to the fact that such a person cannot be seen in such a long time, the indifference of the public and the failure of the institutions to do their duty as a result. This puts the perception of the East in people's minds as a place where crimes are committed and people can walk around with guns.

**Figure 7:** *"The International"* frame from the movie



**Figure 8:** *"The International"* frame from the movie



**Figure 9:** *"The International"* frame from the movie

During the incident that took place on the roof at the end of the chase, the gun, the murdered bank manager and the mosques are designed to be included in the plan (see Figure 9). While the emphasis on Islam is once again made, the dangerous situation of the East and Istanbul is repeated and the phenomenon of religion is included in this repetition. Thus, the effort to characterize the East by identifying it with religion, apart from characterizing the East alone in the orientalist discourse, is repeated.

**Time-Space**

In the orientalist discourse, the East is not only an other, but also a mysterious phenomenon waiting to be discovered. This state of being mysterious is sometimes achieved through people, and sometimes it is maintained through places. The Basilica Cistern, built in the 6th century AD to meet the water needs of Istanbul, is presented as a mysterious place in the movie (see Figure 10). This positioning, where secret business can take place and used with a mysterious definition, is the place for verbal agreements on weapons. In terms of discourse, the East is placed in an attractive and mysterious position, while being reminded that it is dangerous.
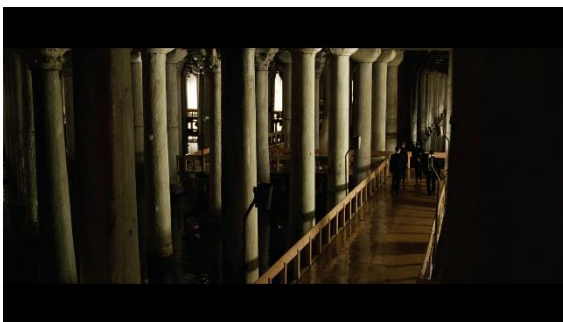


**Figure 10:** *"The International"* frame from the movie



**Figure 11:** *"The International"* frame from the movie

The danger situation is reinforced by the murder in the mosque courtyard (see Figure 11). In this event, which takes place in this area within the borders of a place of worship, Islam and the uncanny nature of the East are used together. This narrative, in which the East and Islam, placed against the West and Christianity, are unsafe, dangerous and may lead to a process that can even lead to murder, is in line with the orientalist discourse. He uses the mosque to identify the East with Islam and its unsafe situation through the same event.

**Figure 12:** *"The International"* frame from the movie

The rooftop scene of the chase towards the end of the film and Istanbul (see Figure 12) appear disorganized, complex and suffocating. In this part of the story, where the conflict reaches its climax, there is a choice suitable for the narrative of the film; the perception of the image of Istanbul as a mysterious and dirty city devoid of security is reinforced. An Istanbul space emerges in line with the discourse suitable for the West to characterize the East according to its own desires, to reshape it and present it if necessary.

## Art Direction and Cinematography

Attire for both men and women at funerals is presented in accordance with the occasion and the use of the period. (see Figure 13). This usage, especially during a religious practice, can be designed in accordance with the orientalist discourse, but it is presented in a simple expression. So much so that this narrative continues with the narrative of a traveling family (see Figure 14), which is shown after the reflection of the unemployed and careless group of people. The choice of clothing is again like the use of the period.
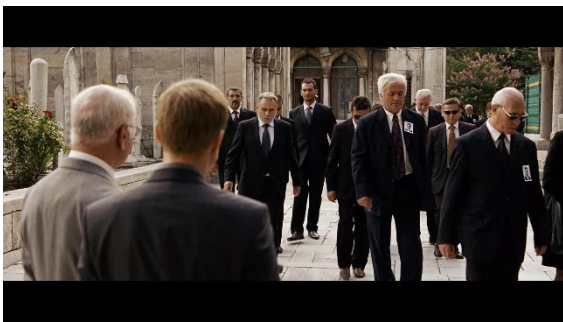


**Figure 13:** *"The International"* frame from the movie



**Figure 14:** *"The International"* frame from the movie

This neutral approach takes on an orientalist approach when it comes to showing the Holy Quran (see Figure 15), hookah (see Figure 16), carpets (see Figure 17) and pottery (see Figure 18). It is aimed to reinforce the narrative of Istanbul, the East and Islam through objects. The 1897 painting *The Carpet Merchant* by painter Rudolf Weisse (see Figure 19) coincides with these objects used. In the frame, hookah and carpets are visible. The depiction of the East, which has become increasingly permanent in line with its use in painting, one of the branches of art under the influence of Orientalism, ends with the selection of similar objects for use in cinema, which has not changed since then. This gives the result that the East has never changed, is static and has not been able to introduce any new elements. The visual identity of the East is maintained.



**Figure 15:** *"The International"* frame from the movie
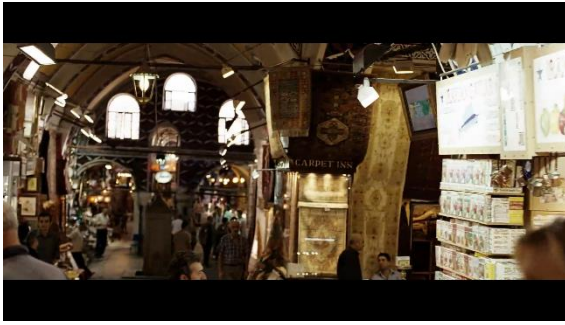


**Figure 16:** *"The International"* frame from the movie

**Figure 17:** *"The International"* frame from the movie



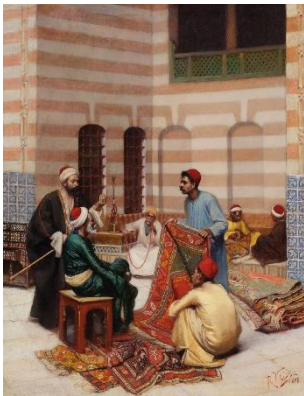**Figure 18:** *"The International"* frame from the movie



**Figure 19:** *"The Carpet Merchant"*

If we approach it from the perspective of art direction, it can be seen that the simple and impartial attitude in some scenes is replaced by a conscious attitude in some scenes. Considering that every sign used in the cinema is reflected with a conscious choice, this creates a situation of confusion.

In terms of camera angles, it can be seen in Figure 7 and Figure 17 that space is given to frame the signs and carpets. Especially if we note that in Figure 8 after Figure 7, the subject is at the same distance and the shot taken from the ground is positioned neatly and in accordance with the golden ratio (1/3 rule)[4] this strengthens the claim. It shows that the elements were consciously used in the narrative by including the old-looking, yellow color weights of the signs in the frame to make them visible, as well as the hanging carpets in the other frame.

**Skyfall**

**Abstract Information about the Movie and Synopsis**



**Director:** Sam Mendes

**Producer:** Barbara Broccoli, Michael G. Wilson

**Writer:** Neal Purvis, Robert Wade, John Logan

**Year:** 2012

**Colour:** Colourful

**Running Time:** 143 mn.

**Starring:** Daniel Craig, Judi Dench, Javier Bardem, Ralph Fiennes



**Figure 20:** *"Skyfall"* poster of the movie

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[4] It is the positioning of the object on the lines in the nine parts formed by dividing the image frame into three horizontally and vertically and at the points where the lines meet.

Bond and Moneypenny are in Istanbul to get back the hard disk containing the list of international secret agents from the mercenary who obtained it. During the fight between Bond and the mercenary, Moneypenny fires to hit the mercenary upon the directive she receives from M. Her shot hits Bond and he falls into the river, disappears and is thought to be dead. An investigation is opened against M. regarding the hard disk. The MI6 building is detonated in the attack. When Bond receives this news, he comes out of hiding and returns to service. The clues lead him to China. Here, he finally meets Silva, the former MI6 agent who actually planned the attacks. Silva was abandoned by M. during a mission. As a result, it becomes clear that he is waiting for this time to take revenge.

Istanbul scenes are approximately 15 minutes throughout the movie. The scenes of Turkiye in the film were shot in Istanbul, Adana and Fethiye.

## Signs of Orientalist Discourse

Before tracing the Orientalist discourses, semiotics and the analysis of oppositions and signs in the film are discussed.

### Semiotic Analysis

**Table 3:** *"Skyfall"*

| | |
|---|---|
| Hot | Cold |
| Dangerous | Safe |
| Backward | Modern |
| East | West |
| Islam | Christianity |
| Dirty | Clean |
| Old | New |
| Active | Calm |
| Male | Female |
| Messy | Tidy |
| Closed | Open |

**Table 4:** Semiotic analysis of *"Skyfall"*

| Sign | Signifier | Signified |
|---|---|---|
| Object | Dark room | The mysterious and dangerous East |
| Object | Street | Old and dusty city, Eastern objectification |
| Human | Local People | Standardization, invisibility, expendable, Islam |
| Object | Market Place | Vast market understanding, Eastern standardization, Eastern visual identity |
| Human | Polica | Lack of authority and security, Eastern inadequacy |
| Human | Western Female Agent | The insignificance of the life of the Eastern people |
| Object | Grand Bazaar roof | Chaotic and Islam |
| Object | Old wall with carpet and ceramics | Eastern visual identity, objectification |
| Human | Peddler | Othering, Standardization, profession |
| Human | Passengers inside the train | Male dominance, dark clothing, othering of Easterners |
| Human | Eastern Woman | Eastern woman objectification |
| Object | Scorpion Game | Eastern standardization |

### Authority-Discourse

The movie begins in a dark corridor as Bond enters the room, another dark space. The light is very low, mystery and curiosity come to the fore. (see Figure 21). Other people are seen shot in the hotel room. Orientalism uses mystery, obscurity and danger to characterize the East. In this way, the West, positioned against the East, is characterized as a safe place. Therefore, the dark spaces, shot people and dim light elements used in this plan support this discourse.
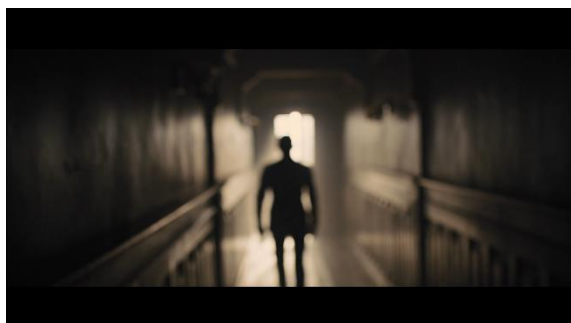


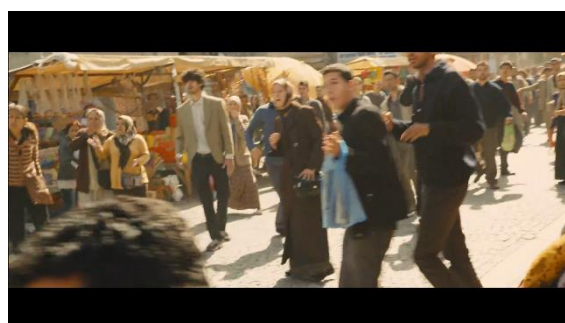**Figure 21:** *"Skyfall"* frame from the movie



**Figure 22:** *"Skyfall"* frame from the movie

People are in the action as the chase scene unfolds (see Figure 22). Cars speed past or over people, giving the impression that local people are of no importance. People are depicted in dark-colored clothes, men are usually wearing caps and hats, and almost all women are covered. The emphasis on Islam is visible through the fact that women cover their hair as part of their beliefs. In Orientalist discourse, the Easterner is subjected to various characterizations while being otherized. Qualities such as dislike of work, fondness for pleasure, inability to govern oneself, quarrelsome and uneducated are used for this purpose. The Easterner, who is already uniformized, is not cared to live otherwise.

While the West marginalizes the East in terms of place and people, it adds another element in terms of belief. Based on the system of the other, which it positions against the self, it sets Islam against Christianity. Thus, it tries to draw the boundaries of Christianity for the West and Islam for the East. In this plan in Istanbul, in addition to the characterization of the East, he emphasizes Islam through women who are covered due to their beliefs. Almost all of the female extras are covered. Therefore, a narrative of an Istanbul that is uniformized and as if no other religion can be experienced emerges.

Local police become involved during a short part of the chase (see Figure 23). However, from their first appearance until their last appearance, there is no situation that they can put into action. When they catch up, they become ineffective. In the orientalist view, the discourse of the East's inability to protect itself as well as its inability to govern itself and its inadequacy is used. Therefore, it is up to the West and its heroes to protect the people who live in danger and insecurity, rather than the Eastern authority that fails to fulfill its duty. In this plan, the inadequacy of local security and the Western agent's attempt to save the incident shows the functionality of the discourse.


**Figure 23:** *"Skyfall"* frame from the movie


**Figure 24:** *"Skyfall"* frame from the movie

Bond pursues the mercenaries on a motorcycle while Moneypenny has to follow them in a car. As chaos ensues and people flee in panic, Moneypenny drives her car into the crowd to catch up with the others (see. Figure 24). The disregard for the lives of the people mentioned in the previous narrative is reinforced again. In the Orientalist discourse, the East is presented in a narrative where people live in crowds and their rights and lives are ignored. When the West takes action in the East, it legitimizes its actions in the eyes of Western public opinion by claiming to bring democracy, education or security. For this reason, some casualties among the local population during the actions are considered normal. In this section, the Easterner is put in the position of an object who does not react to the car being driven on them and whose life has no value. The Western agent thinks that he has the right to run over the people with his car if necessary. In line with these facts, there is an orientalist discourse.


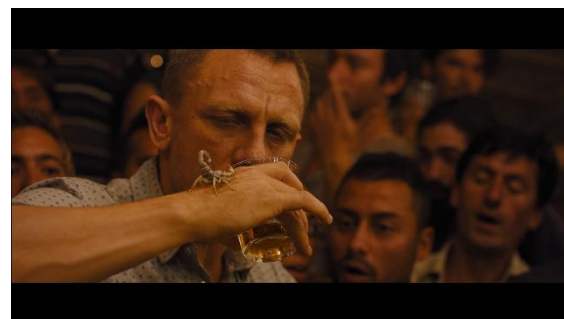**Figure 25:** *"Skyfall"* frame from the movie


**Figure 26:** *"Skyfall"* frame from the movie

Bond is seen with a woman in a shelter-like place by the sea (see Figure 25). As Demir points out (2021: 136), Eastern women are exhibited either completely naked or fully clothed. Eastern women, who are considered mysterious in the Orientalist gaze, are an object of desire and an object to be discovered for the West. Particularly in paintings dealing with hammam and harem subjects in the art of painting, the curiosity for this mystery has increased in their countries through the painters' painting of forbidden areas with their own imagination. Therefore, the Western hero and Eastern woman narrative in line with the discourse is conveyed through this plan.

In the orientalist view, conveyed through snake dances, sorcerers and fortune telling, the East is subjected to dangerous and mysterious characterizations. Bond supports this discourse by playing scorpion while drinking alcohol (see Figure 26). When faced with the sting of a scorpion, he cannot stop himself from committing the act. The East is both mysterious and dangerous at the same time, thus reinforcing the narrative of being a center of attraction for Western heroes.

**Time-Space**

Bond steps onto the streets of Istanbul while following the mercenary. From this point on, peddlers and colorful products are brought to the fore with descriptions such as dust, complexity, outdated and crowded (see Figure 27). Orientalism uses objectification while establishing its narrative through time and space. While doing this, it conveys the equivalents of good adjectives for the East, which it positions against the West. Orientalism uses descriptions about the East and its places as dirty, disorderly, chaotic, crowded and indistinguishable from each other. Therefore, in this plan, Istanbul is constructed within the framework of discourses, objectified and standardized. In this context, with a standardized Eastern narrative, Istanbul can even be positioned as a city in India.



**Figure 27:** *"Skyfall"* frame from the movie



**Figure 28:** *"Skyfall"* frame from the movie

The never-ending market continues in pursuit of the standardized Istanbul/East understanding. (see Figure 28). With a vast market mentality, the whole of Istanbul is portrayed as if it consisted only of this situation. In this plot, where colorful objects come to the fore, the standardization of the East and the visual identity of Istanbul are reinforced.



**Figure 29:** *"Skyfall"* frame from the movie

The Grand Bazaar and its roof is one of the most frequently used locations in movies. Similar to The International, one of the films analyzed within the scope of this study, this film also has similar locations. Bond continues his chase on the roof of the Grand Bazaar on his motorcycle (see Figure 29). In this plan where Istanbul is seen in general, Islam is brought to the foreground through the chaotic situation and mosques. Thus, the disorganized and complexity of the East in the orientalist narrative and its association with Islam are used at the same time.

**Art Direction and Cinematography**

Carpets and ceramics become visible as Bond and the mercenary enter the Grand Bazaar on their motorcycles. (see Figure 30). The carpets and cloths in the watercolor painting *Grand bazar de Constantinople* (1900) by French prince François d'Orléans are similar in color variety and dimness (see Figure 31). Before cinema, painting was one of the branches of art influenced by Orientalism. With the continuation of the similar use in painting through cinema, the East reinforces the narrative of a static place. As a result, the visual identity of the East is maintained.

**Figure 30:** *"Skyfall"* frame from the movie



**Figure 31:** *"Grand bazar de Constantinople"*

The clothes of the people in the train carriage are presented to the audience in dark colors, similar to those of the people in the town square, with the support of a worn-out cap and a scarf. (see Figure 32). In the plans where male extras are predominantly used, women can only be seen sporadically. This narrative supports the Orientalist discourse that Eastern society is male-dominated and women have no place in society. In addition, the choice of dark colors for the clothes, their outdated state, and the use of beanies and scarves reveal an attitude that breaks down the identities of Eastern people in the objectification of Orientalism and makes them uniform. For comparison, in *The International*, another film shot three years ago and included in the scope of the study, it is seen that local people choose different styles and colors from daily life in their clothing use. Therefore, from these films, which are products of similar years, the inference that the clothing in *Skyfall* is a conscious choice is reinforced.
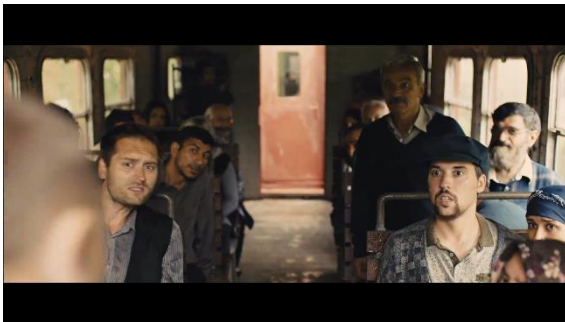


**Figure 32:** *"Skyfall"* frame from the movie



**Figure 33:** *"Skyfall"* frame from the movie

When the plans of Istanbul are examined, it is seen that there is a predominant use of yellow color. In the London scene of the film, this yellow color is replaced by a blue color tone (see Figure 33). While the color yellow, which has a connotation reminiscent of desert and nostalgia, is visible in the Eastern narrative, the color blue is preferred for the Western city. A differentiation is made through these color choices.

**Professions**

In almost all Istanbul scenes, peddlers are seen in a corner of the frame (see Figure #34). In orientalist discourse, the Westerner is cast in roles such as engineer, scientist, doctor, astronaut or spy, while the Easterner is seen as suitable for roles that do not require education and are unobtrusive. Throughout the chase, the peddlers placed in a corner of the plans support the existence of orientalist discourse and this inference. In fact, this attitude can be seen in orientalist paintings. In French painter Hippolyte Berteaux's 1883 painting *Street Merchant in Istanbul*, peddlers are in the foreground (see Figure 35). The narrative that the people of the East are engaged in occupations far removed from education, art or science is reinforced.

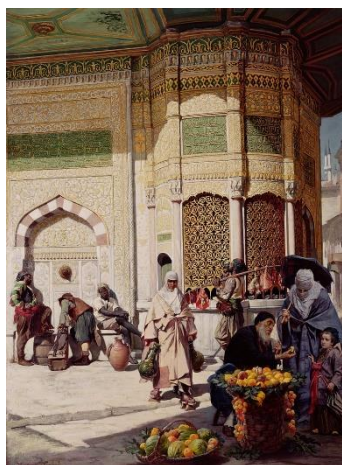**Figure 34:** *"Skyfall"* frame from the movie



**Figure 35:** *"Street Merchant in Istanbul"*

## Other Signs

The news of the day is shown on the television as Bond stays up for the night in the entertainment venue (see Figure 36). The channel on TV is CNN[5]. It is noteworthy that the source of news received through the channel used instead of national news channels is Western-based. Therefore, it can be concluded that the West considers its own media organs as reliable sources. Especially when the Gulf War of 1990-91 and its live coverage on television are taken into consideration, the influence of the media can be seen once again.
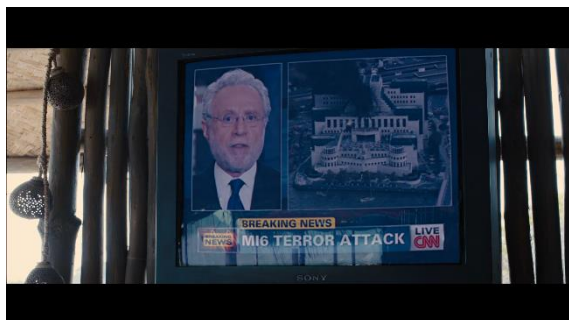


**Figure 36:** *"Skyfall"* frame from the movie

The opening of the movie starts with the call to prayer. In addition, darbuka and ney can be heard in some of the music used in Istanbul scenes.

## CONCLUSION

Contrary to popular belief, cinemas are not innocent spaces where people simply escape their environment, relax, have fun or spend leisure time. The reason for this is that they are guided by those who control it. In this way, cinema, acting as a tool, is used to influence, shape, and direct the masses while conveying the message given to them.

It is evident that Orientalism warrants a thorough examination beyond viewing it merely as a phenomenon of the other positioned against the self. From an orientalist perspective, it involves not just a singular other, but rather a multifaceted process of definition, orientation, alienation through religion, and ultimately, the curtailment of other people's freedoms. The right to exist of the other, transformed into a kind of monster, does not belong to the 'other' but is dictated by the Westerner who holds authority over the ego. Various tools have been employed in perpetuating these discourses over the years. The process delineated through written works and images has made significant advancements in both defining and visualizing the other. Photography, as an art form, is utilized to portray the other as an object with the veneer of reality. In tandem, cinema undergoes a transformative process, harnessing the advantages of images evolving from static to moving, fueled by technological advancements. Orientalism strategically employs cinema as a tool, manipulating, transforming, and presenting images in a manner that aligns with its purpose, whether in terms of content or form. Should the need arise to alter a narrative in favor of a particular ego or hegemony, it possesses the capability to do so at will.

As evident in the findings from the examined films set in Istanbul, the East is consistently cast as 'the other,' objectified primarily based on its geographical location. The portrayal tends to focus on Islam, often neglecting the

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[5] American news channel founded in 1980.

diversity of people with different faiths residing in these lands. The depiction purges differences, standardizes the narrative, and positions the East without due consideration for the social and cultural diversities of its people. Istanbul is not often portrayed in the themes of love or family-oriented movies. Instead, it frequently serves as the backdrop for adventure films, where criminals, agents, and mystery take center stage. In this regard, contemporary versions of the thrill-seeking Western adventurers from the past continue to feature prominently in movies. Consequently, the East finds itself in a narrative position similar to the past, seemingly stagnant and unchanged. The West, represented by adventurous characters, is portrayed as seeking excitement and coming to the rescue when necessary.

Examining, analyzing, and evaluating films that serve as message transmitters goes beyond viewing them as simple entertainment. In doing so, the study brings to light the narratives conveyed, enabling the identification of orientalist discourses. The persistence of these discourses in films contributes to the continuous use and re-transmission of the orientalist perspective to the audience. This outcome emphasizes the importance of scrutinizing films and uncovering narratives embedded with orientalist discourse.

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