

# Cinematic Narration in Altın Çocuk and James Bond Differences, Similarities and Geographies

Altın Çocuk ve James Bond'da Sinemasal Anlatım, Farklılıklar, Benzerlikler ve Coğrafyalar

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## ABSTRACT

Today, many recurrent narratives are presented and transmitted to our image world by cultural industries. The various adaptations of James Bond, who is an important hero of popular cinema and encountered in different geographies, can be seen as an important reflection of cultural transmission. There are examples where the interactions of James Bond films can be seen in Turkish cinema, which is called the "Yeşilçam Era." In this context, the global influence of Bond movies will be examined through Altın Çocuk movies of Göksel Arsoy, known as Turkish James Bond. The study analyzes the relationship between Altın Çocuk and Altın Çocuk Beyrut'ta, and Thunderball and You Only Live Twice.

**Keywords:** Cinema, discourse, similarities, popular culture, narrative

## ÖZ

Günümüzde kültür endüstrileri ile imge dünyamıza yinelenen birçok anlatım sunulmakta ve aktarımlar yapılmaktadır. Popüler sinemanın önemli bir kahramanı konumunda olan James Bond'un farklı coğrafyalarda karşımıza çıkan adaptasyonları kültürel aktarımın önemli bir yansıması olarak görülebilmektedir. Türk sinemasının "Yeşilçam Dönemi" olarak adlandırılan yıllarında da James Bond filmlerinin etkilerinin görülebileceği örnekler bulunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda çalışmada Bond filmlerinin küresel ölçekteki etkileri Türk James Bond'u olarak tanınan Göksel Arsoy'un Altın Çocuk filmleri özelinde ele alınarak incelenecektir. Çalışma, Altın Çocuk ile Altın Çocuk Beyrut'ta ve Thunderball ve You Only Live Twice arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sinema, söylem, benzerlikler, popüler kültür, anlatı

## Introduction

"Yeşilçam" is an era in the Turkish film industry starting with *Vurun Kahpeye* (Dir. Ömer Lütfi Akad) in 1949 until *Arabesk* (Dir. Ertem Eğilmez) in 1989 (Sevim, 2015, p. 213). "Yeşilçam" takes its name from a street in Beyoğlu, Istanbul, where the offices of film production companies were located. "Yeşilçam," as a system based on regional distributors, production firms, and movie stars, has a box-office-oriented approach, repeated narrations, and a popular cinematic understanding based on the cinema-audience relationship and certain formulas (Akad, 2004, pp. 21–22; Gülçur, 2016, pp. 227–236; Ulusay, 2002; Özön, 1995, p. 245).

In the study, the reasons for Göksel Arsoy to make the films discussed, together with the conditions of the "Yeşilçam Era" in which the films were shot, and Arsoy's personal reasons for making these films are discussed and examined. For this purpose, besides referring to Göksel Arsoy's own narratives about his films, the structure of Turkish cinema in the "Yeşilçam Era" and the literature review on Bond films are analyzed, and the relationship between Altın Çocuk films and Bond films is analyzed in the light of the findings of the research.

## Material and Methods

The 1960s in the Yeşilçam Era, Turkish films were released one after another, and the industry developed a distinct identity (Ulusay, 2002). The period between 1960 and 1972 is known as the "golden age"

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for the number of cinema productions, the popularity of Turkish films across the country, and the relationship between production and audience in particular. The rapid increase in cinematic works influenced the emergence of the star system and popular genres. Producers and production companies have emerged in these years as cinema became a more profitable sector. Two types of producers are seen in this period: producers with non-cinema capital and made producers already involved in the film industry, such as actors and directors (Ayhan Işık, Orhan Günşiray, Göksel Arsoy, etc.) (Gülçur, 2016, pp. 227–236; Ulusay, 2002).

In the 1960s, when capitalism and migration from the rural to the city were on the rise, and television had yet to be introduced, cinema, along with the radio, became the most popular form of entertainment, and the demand for domestic films grew. Producers were unprepared for this situation and resorted to various strategies to speed up productions to meet the demand. The number of reworks increased, speeding up the screenwriting process, camera equipment was reduced, and foreign films were “repeated” scene by scene. A shortage of original stories and scripts was experienced in this fast-paced production environment where the work had to be done in a short time, and adaptations became part of this commercially cinema (Erdoğan, 2002, p. 238; Scognamillo, 2010, pp. 351–360–364; Ulusay, 2002; Özön, 1995, p. 34).

Profit-driven producers preferred adaptations for being less risky economically (Durdu, 2018). Hutcheon states that “It is obvious that adapters must have their own personal reasons for deciding first to do an adaptation and then choosing which adapted work and what medium to do it in” (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 92).

One of the actor-producers, Göksel Arsoy, produced *Altın Çocuk* and *Altın Çocuk Beyrut'ta* based on his understanding of Yeşilçam circumstances and for personal reasons, using Bond films as his base. In the 1960s, James Bond was one of Yeşilçam's favorite movie styles. During this period, besides *Altın Çocuk*, *Dehşet Yaratan Adam* (Dir. Nejat Okçugil, 1966), *İstanbul Dehşet İçinde* (Dir. İlhan Engin, 1966), and *Yakut Gözlü Kedi* (Dir. Nejat Saydam, 1966) were produced.

Arsoy, describes his orientation towards Bond films in a book as follows: “A man came out. His films were unique. People broke theater doors around the world. The reason was James Bond, starring Sean Connery. He made films one after another. The newspapers and tabloids were after him. I read a clever article by Sean Connery's manager. He was right. The James Bond character clung to the actor, but the wind would end one day, and thus Sean Connery. Reading this article, I questioned my situation. I had to take precaution. I thought about what to do for weeks. Dramatic love movies clung to me. I decided immediately... I was going to shoot the first Turkish James Bond. As a producer and lead actor, I immediately took action. Thrill, action, and beautiful girls would bring a different mood. That's how I saved my acting career” (Arsoy, 2017, p. 81).

Hence, the study analyzes the relationship between *Altın Çocuk* (Dir. Memduh Ün, Writer. Bülent Oran, 1966) and *Altın Çocuk Beyrut'ta* (Dir. Ertem Göreç, Writer. Bülent Oran, 1967), and *Thunderball* (Dir. Terence Young, 1965) and *You Only Live Twice* (Dir. Lewis Gilbert, 1967) by quoting references from Arsoy's own narrations. This paper examines these films from a comparative perspective, reviews the literature on Bond films, and eventually focuses on the *Altın Çocuk* films in consideration of the findings of previous research. Accordingly, the similarities, differences, and characteristics of the films themselves will be deciphered by discourse analysis.

## Results

The lack of a Hollywood-like economy in Turkish cinema led to the need for productions depending on individual efforts and resources (Durdu, 2018). This applies to Göksel Arsoy's career as an actor-producer. Arsoy's *Altın Çocuk* is the first example of the change he desired in his film career. He was the producer and lead role of this film (Özgüç, 2014, p. 213). Arsoy describes the production process as follows: “I signed with the director Memduh Ün. I researched the nature of this genre for a long time. I watched and analyzed dozens of action movies and identified their must-haves. Special music, beautiful and sexy girls, lovemaking scenes, different fighting styles and weapons, different places, blood, racecars, helicopters, foreign countries... I started preparations. I was also involved in scriptwriting. The romantic young man was about to disappear, and a totally new Göksel Arsoy was due to arise” (Arsoy, 2017, p. 81).

Apart from his action film research, Arsoy took notes on the scenes that he found interesting while watching *Thunderball*, recently released in London, where he also shot *Altın Çocuk* (Arsoy, 2017, p. 88). The relationship between *Altın Çocuk* and *Thunderball* reveals interesting elements. The use of music is among the most characteristic and basic elements of James Bond films (Haworth, 2015, p. 157; Piotrowska, 2015, p. 167). Arsoy, having known that dedicated songs are a must-have for the James Bond films, had the “Altın Çocuk Caz Müziği” composed for his film (Composer: Süheyl Denizci, Singer: Ayten Alpman) (Arsoy, 2017, pp. 91–92). The lyrics of the authentic jazz music (Bengi, 2018, p. 15), also referring to “Goldfinger”, heard from the opening scene onwards emphasize the characteristics of *Altın Çocuk*.

“Golden boy, altın çocuk/Hug me with your arms all the time/Fighting with iron fists, making love with lips/Trust me, I'm not afraid of your pistol/Neither bullets nor fists/You get into my dreams every night/My fear is your lips/I raised my hands, don't shoot/You'll love me first I know/Put down your gun, open your heart/I'm undressed and truly yours with everything I have.”

In addition, the song's lyrics and its use in the movie can be associated with Catherine Haworth's statement about music and representation of women in Bond movies, “These strong links between the sound of the series and its characterization, style, and story mean that music is also implicated in the Bond films' problematic identity politics” (Haworth, 2015, p. 157).

In this scene, we find traces of a “romantic young man” of Arsoy's past melodramas that he wants to leave behind. Besides, Fiona's words to Bond in *Thunderball*, “But of course, I forgot your ego, Mr. Bond, James Bond, who only has to make love to a woman and she starts to hear heavenly choirs singing. She repents and then immediately returns to the side of right and virtue. But not this one!” (Funnell, 2011,

p. 202), reveal that the appeal of Bond that makes women turn to the “side of right” is also applicable for Altın Çocuk. As Funnell points out, in *Thunderball*, Fiona rejects domestication, challenges the notion of ideological repositioning, and unrepentantly proclaims her status as a “bad girl” (Funnell, 2011, p. 202), while Helen in *Altın Çocuk* does the right thing despite not being able to follow him.

We see sexy women, love scenes, rich and different venues, racing cars, and foreign countries in London trip of Altın Çocuk, which are the must-have elements of action movies, according to Arsoy. In *Thunderball*, Bond is also on vacation at a health clinic in the southern United Kingdom. Altın Çocuk and a woman are seen kissing in a Jaguar E-Type (Arsoy, 2017, p. 87) after images from London are depicted (Bond is driving an Aston Martin DB5). Then follows a long promenade scene on the streets of London, where she gets off and another woman gets into the car. Unlike Bond’s trips to “exotic countries” (e.g., Bahamas in *Thunderball*), Altın Çocuk travels to Bond’s country. Regarding Bond’s mission outside the United Kingdom to “exotic places,” we can conclude that they were possible touristic destinations for only a tiny percentage of the film’s viewers, as today’s widespread air transportation and package holidays were uncommon in that era (Dodds, 2005, p. 268; Todd, 2013). And accordingly, Altın Çocuk also depicts London from a touristic perspective in. A similar view was used for Istanbul in the film throughout the scene where Dimitrius and Helen move towards their underwater secret center in Bosphorus. Images of the Bosphorus and İstanbul are shown throughout the journey, along with “Katibim,” a song associated with Istanbul. Helen’s sightseeing of Istanbul seems to be reminiscent of a Bosphorus tour, which is a popular touristic activity.

Arsoy uses a variety of fight styles and weapons that he has seen in other action films, in his own way. Altın Çocuk goes to Helen’s funeral disguised as a woman and uses karate techniques when fighting Dimitrius. This scene brings to mind *Thunderball* and the scene SPECTRE’s number six, Colonel Jacques Bouvar, attends his fake funeral in the guise of a woman in black. Unlike the one-on-one fight in *Thunderball*, in *Altın Çocuk*, Dimitrius’ men also participate.

Divers, underwater fights, and harpoon murders are depicted in the scene where Altın Çocuk dives into the water to blow up the underwater center with dynamites after killing Dimitrius’ men. Underwater, Altın Çocuk gets into a fight with one of Dimitrius’ men and kills him. This scene was montaged with scenes from another foreign movie because it had difficulties in production and cost due to the challenging conditions of the time (Neon, 2016). Using ready-made scenes from other films was a common method of Yeşilçam cinema due to the shortage of budget and time (Civelek, 2019, p. 168).

The Bond films emerged during a decade of great social upheaval in technology. As noted by Chapman, “It was a decade in which technology and technological progress came to the fore” (cited in Jones, 2015, p. 207). In *Thunderball*, we see advanced technologies such as a flying vehicle for Bond, bulletproof armor, a geiger counter for radioactive substances, an underwater camera, an oxygen generator that can be used underwater, and a harmless radioactive device swallowed by him that sends signals to a receiver. According to Louis Markos, “No, it is not the gadgets themselves that are fantastic, but the fact that Bond always has exactly the right gadget when he needs it” (Markos, 2006, p. 167).

“The moral qualities of Yeşilçam melodramas are also reflected in their appearance,” writes Akbulut, adding, “Clothing and gestures of the characters are conventions that symbolize hostility and these conventions bear universality inside” (Akbulut, 2008, p. 107). This definition also applies to the clothing and gestures of Dimitrius, the “villain” of Altın Çocuk.

Dimitrius plans an attack to destroy the nuclear facilities in Turkey. However, the film leaves the reason for the “villain’s” plan unanswered. This is aligned with Meral Özçınar’s observation: “In melodrama movies where the hero is established as an unreal and fairy manner, ‘the good wins, the bad loses’ approach is dominant. The characters are mostly superficial due to the focus on the good-bad distinction. The only thing that distinguishes them from each other is being good or bad. Therefore, not only Yeşilçam but the Turkish cinema in general has no three-dimensional characters.” (Özçınar, 2018, p. 161).

In *Thunderball*, however, what SPECTER’s number 1 is up to is clearly depicted, and the film’s limited/gradually decreasing time allotted for this purpose becomes one of the main thrillers. Klaud Dodds describes it as, “the James Bond story lines have used the figure of the ‘evil genius’ to complicate understandings of inter-state relations. In other words, James Bond’s missions frequently involve him confronting a dangerous figure that is, at best, only loosely connected to Cold War adversaries such as China and the Soviet Union” (Dodds, 2005, p. 271). According to Funnell and Dodds, “Bond’s imaginative geopolitics is one shaped by colonial, Cold War, and post-Cold War contexts on the one hand but also complicated by transnational and global actors, processes, and structures on the other. The Bond films in the 1960s, unlike Fleming’s novels, do not position the Soviet Union as the premier threat facing the UK and its allies” (Funnell & Dodds, 2017, p. 12).

Arsoy describes the popularity of *Altın Çocuk* and the path he took to the next film as follows: “Co-production offers came as a result of the film’s success and the fact that its revenue was heard in Arab countries. I realized once more that we are doing a good job, which makes me very happy. We made a deal with the woman owner of a wealthy Lebanese film company ... Thus, I brought the first co-production deal to Yeşilçam. Then we started filming *Altın Çocuk Beyrut’ta*.” (Arsoy, 2017, p. 92).

Because *Altın Çocuk* was in demand and its box-office return was heard in Arab countries, Arsoy received several co-production offers. In agreement with a Lebanese production company, *Altın Çocuk Beyrut’ta* was planned to be shot as a sequel in Beirut and Istanbul, featuring actors from Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt (Arsoy, 2017, p. 92).

*Altın Çocuk Beyrut’ta* begins with an Istanbul tour by car, starting from the airport. After the images of Istanbul’s nightlife, we see a female character on a stage with people dancing. She takes money out of her chest, which is a local behavior pattern, to buy drugs. During the police raid, the dealers do not pour the drugs into a toilet but into a sink to prevent them from being captured by the police. This is a motion peculiar to the film, unlike the Western cinema conventions.

The half-naked woman on the stage is used in the same scene to prevent the police from finding the drugs by misusing the sense of privacy. The drugs were kept in a hidden safe behind a nude woman's picture, referring to the preventative feeling that sexuality and intimacy have on men. A policeman looking for the hidden safe sees the portrait on the wall and says, "I would take a closer look at this lady. The lady's chassis is in plain sight, but it's good to use for covering some other dirt," is the discourse that conveys the failure in the prevention of the action and the representation of women using the sense of shame.

*Altın Çocuk* does not appear until then. When the Turkish authorities discuss about the ideal agent, they describe him as brave, experienced, and intelligent, and these traits bring *Altın Çocuk* to mind. In *Altın Çocuk Beyrut'ta*, the characters don't race against time, which is a thriller element in *You Only Live Twice*. A more comfortable and unrestricted story timeline comes across. On the other hand, in Bond films, the dose of thrill and excitement is increased along with the race against time.

Similar to Bond films, *Altın Çocuk* starts with a power-play on stage. *Altın Çocuk* practices karate while a song about his characteristics plays in the background, which was also presented to the audience in the first film. Here, *Altın Çocuk* is provided with specially designed weapons, unlike in the first film. These weapons look like the advanced equipment in James Bond films. The equipment brought in a suitcase is mostly used as an element to ensure the integrity of the plotline of the film. As a feature that is also seen in the first *Altın Çocuk* film, the lack of technological equipment is easily compensated throughout the film by the characteristics that the Turkish agent possesses. Similarly, despite the small amount of equipment, the unlimited budget allocated to *Altın Çocuk* contains a positive reference to the economic power of the state.

*Altın Çocuk* uses "Tokyo Ginza" as his password in Beirut and Bond does his trip to Tokyo in *You Only Live Twice*. This helps the viewer relate to the two films. The target address and the name of the contact person are given to both Bond and *Altın Çocuk* on a piece of paper. Both of the heroes are given a contact password; Bond's is "I Love You," while *Altın Çocuk*'s is "Tokyo Ginza." The word "Tokyo" is used to remind the audience of the movie *You Only Live Twice*.

*Altın Çocuk*, in a later part of the film, sneaks into the house of the criminal named "Cobra Ahmed," deceives the security guards with his intelligence and skillfully opens the door. He overpowers everyone in the house, learns what he wants with sleight of mouth, using only a knife, and disguises himself with a fake identity named "Çakar Ali." He shows how he defeats the bad with his wits, without using any violence, by skillfully and effortlessly crushing down the criminal. Bond uses the "Mr. Fisher" nickname for the first time in *You Only Live Twice* and travels to Japan in the movie.

*Altın Çocuk* is drawn to women from the very first moment in the first film. However, in this second film, *Altın Çocuk* contacts a woman directly for the first time only when he arrives at the station to take a train to Lebanon. This behavior reflects that he is a person who does not want to dine alone and does not consume alcohol, unlike his chaser and womanizer character in the first film. Regarding the parallelism between the films *Altın Çocuk Beyrut'ta* and *You Only Live Twice*; the female character who helps Bond is an agent of the Japanese secret service, while the one in *Altın Çocuk Beyrut'ta* is a Lebanese agent.

Later in the film, the streets of Lebanon are viewed both from inside the cars and by external cameras when *Altın Çocuk* and the female character are chasing each other. Thus, a touristic view of the city is provided to the viewers. Apart from the car trip, markets and city streets are shown in the background in a long walking scene accompanied by Lebanese music. Unlike films with an orientalist perspective, *Altın Çocuk*, presents Beirut to the audience as a modern city. The cultural distinction is reinforced, especially with the accompaniment of Arabic melodies added to these scenes. "In addition to depicting the cityscape, *You Only Live Twice* presents the interior of one high-rise building. When Bond first approaches the Osato building by car, the lower levels are captured in a low-angle shot that tilts upward to emphasize both the height and importance of the building. Inside, the building features a modern design style that is characterized by an emphasis on horizontal and vertical lines, neutral colors, large and unadorned windows, natural materials and use of reflective surfaces" (Funnell & Dodds, 2017, pp. 111–112).

In the following scenes, this style is conveyed to the audience with a long shot scale without the need for such filtering. One of the important differences between *Altın Çocuk Beyrut'ta* and *You Only Live Twice*, which were shot in different countries, is the use of language. Bond has got a degree in Asian languages at Cambridge, so he easily communicates with people in Tokyo, but we don't hear any Arabic from *Altın Çocuk*. While James Bond's use of language indicates a universal identity, the lack of feedback on the use of language by *Altın Çocuk* shows that he was created as a local character rather than an international agent.

At the end of both *Altın Çocuk Beyrut'ta* and *You Only Live Twice*, the faces of the bad characters are revealed, while the image of the unknown enemy disappears. "While the film, which was both starred and produced by Göksel Arsoy, is an 'agent' film, the bad and powerful man aiming to take the control of the world and faces *Altın Çocuk* to achieve that is like from an old TV series, with his mask, cloak, gilded clothing, helper women in miniskirts, and a laboratory equipped with a lot of devices" (Scognamillo & Demirhan, 1999, p. 43). Whenever a sexual rapprochement between *Altın Çocuk* and Emel takes place, the music in the background turns to Western melodies. This is used as a label for the western-eastern divide. Bond reasserts his masculinity and sexuality in these traditional East Asian spaces that exist on the outskirts or beneath the surface of the modern city, much like in *You Only Live Twice* (Funnell & Dodds, 2017, p. 129).

### Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Among *Thunderball*, *You Only Live Twice*, *Altın Çocuk*, and *Altın Çocuk Beyrut'ta*, we see quaternary relationality in terms of plots, character designs, universality, locality, and narration.

The discourse change formed by the relationship between space, time, and story in the Bond films that continues to the present day and that of *Altın Çocuk Beyrut'ta*, which begins in London and ends in Lebanon, is another manifest in the perspective of women and



entertainment life. Both in the *Altın Çocuk* and in the James Bond films, emphasis is placed on the sexuality of the protagonist. The sexist discourse against women, which is seen throughout the analyzed films, has increasing or decreasing proportions in different scenes.

In terms of the characters' ability to use technology, although the relevant elements in *Altın Çocuk* seem insufficient, both he and Bond have the appropriate tools necessary for the situations they encounter.

An important point noticed in comparative studies is that although internationalism is the main axis in both stories, political discourse around national and international balances of power is more prevalent in the James Bond films than in *Altın Çocuk*.

As can be seen from the comparisons made on the films, Arsoy identified the main points that made the Bond films successful and tried to apply them in his own films. While doing this, it can be seen that he aimed to produce a series of spy films that would be successful and popular by attracting the attention of the audience by bringing together the personal characteristics that he identified with the Bond image and the film-making habits of the Yeşilçam cinema of the period. Although the relative success of the first film brought cooperation with foreign producers and artists for the production of the second film, the cinematographic structure that makes Bond films successful, the literary tradition that is the source, the themes and subjects suitable for the political conjuncture, the production opportunities, the use of technology, and the marketing strategies, such as constantly renewing itself and evolving, were successful. The inadequacy of the important points that made it possible for Arsoy's films not to capture the structure of Bond films, which still continues, is evident. In this sense, Arsoy's films present a view that is limited to his personal career and success focus.

In the 1960s, Göksel Arsoy reinforced his place in Turkish cinema history with the unfinished Bond-style action films *Altın Çocuk* and *Altın Çocuk Beyrut'ta*, which were shaped by both current trends and his personal interests. Research on adaptations that can reveal cultural differences in cinematic narrative will be useful in raising awareness.

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