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**Araştırma Makalesi \* Research Article**

## Orientalism in Cinema: Analysis of Atlantis Animation Film Series Sinemada Oryantalizm: Atlantis Animasyon Film Serisinin Analizi

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**Abstract:** Cinema is used as a tool for cultural alienation and expansionist aggression. The West's concern for influence over the East is shaped by Orientalism. The West is the guardian, supervisor and when necessary, obsessive love of the East. He acts as a guard to ensure that he does not go beyond the boundaries he has drawn. He commands her by setting rules for her own self and despite all his wildness, she is his lover whom he cannot give up because he cannot leave her alone.

In the context of the relationship between cinema and orientalism, the study aims to reveal how animation, whose majority audience is children, has been transformed into a tool of discourse, especially under the influence of orientalism. In the study, firstly, orientalism and orientalist discourses are defined and then their relationship with cinema is tried to be elucidated. In this way, by revealing orientalist discourses, an attempt is made to determine the points to be looked at in cinema and especially in animation. The animated film series "Atlantis: The Lost Empire" directed by Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise and "Atlantis: Milo's Way" directed by Victor Cook, Toby Shelton and Tad Stones are analyzed based on semiotics. The analysis reveals orientalist discourses within the film series.

**Keywords:** Orientalism, Orientalism and cinema, Film Analysis, Semiology, Animation.

**Öz:** Diğer yayın organları gibi sinema, bir kültür ve ötekileştirici yayımlar için kullanılır. Batı'nın Doğu üzerindeki nüfuz kaygısı oryantalizm etrafında şekillenmektedir. Batı, Doğu'nun bekçisi, amiri ve yeri geldiğinde saplantılı aşkıdır. Kendi çizdiği sınırların dışına çıkmaması için bekçilik yapar. Kendi benliği adına kurallar koymasıyla amirlik eder ve bütün yabaniliğine rağmen onu kendi haline bırakamamasıyla vazgeçemediği sevgilisidir.

Çalışma, sinema ve oryantalizm ilişkisi bağlamında, çoğunluk izleyicisi çocuklar olan animasyonun özellikle oryantalizm etkisinde nasıl söylem aracına dönüştürüldüğünü ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada öncelikle oryantalizm ve oryantalist söylemler tanımlanmakta, sonrasında sinemayla olan ilişkisini aydınlatma yolunda gidilmektedir. Bu sayede oryantalist söylemlerin açığa çıkarılmasıyla sinemada ve çalışma özelinde animasyonda bakılacak noktalar belirlenmeye çalışılmaktadır. Gary Trousdale ve Kirk Wise'in yönettiği "Atlantis: Kayıp İmparatorluk" ve Victor Cook, Toby Shelton ve Tad Stones'un yönettiği "Atlantis: Milo'nun Yolu" adlı animasyon film serisini, göstergebilim temelinde çözümlenmektedir. Çözümleme sonucunda film serisinde oryantalist söylemelere aracılık ettiğine ulaşılmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Oryantalizm, Oryantalizm ve sinema, Film Eleştirisi, Göstergebilim, Animasyon.

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## INTRODUCTION

The existence of society and the culture it creates with this existence is a process that continues from the past to the present. Culture, which does not exist in an instant, cannot remain as an absolute truth in a continuous manner. Social events, movements and discoveries affect the culture as well as the society of the day. As a result of these influences, culture has become a feature that both represents society and conveys it. Since art is a phenomenon that can be evaluated as one with culture, it changes, develops and continues to be transmitted day by day. It is not right to speak absolute truths about art. The reason for this is that it should be taken into consideration that art can be affected by factors other than the society, culture and purpose in which it exists.

Cinema has been used by people for various purposes since its invention. Cinema, which provides the expression of emotions such as having fun and crying, is also used for the transmission of culture, influencing the masses and mobilizing the masses. The messages in the cinema have an impact on the audience through their literal or connotative meanings, depending on the reception of the message. Using different tools before the cinema, Orientalism begins to convey its intended messages to wider audiences by using the power of visuality together with cinema.

This study aims to understand how Orientalism and orientalist discourses have influenced cinema and how these discourses are reflected in it. To understand the relationship between Orientalism and cinema, the infrastructure of the study is created by first defining Orientalism and orientalist expressions. Explaining Orientalism, orientalist expressions and their definitions will help understand the relationship between Orientalism and cinema and observe this process reflected in films. In this way, an answer to how Orientalism is reflected in cinema is sought by analyzing the animated films selected as a sample.

Cinema attracts the curiosity and interest of people from all walks of life. The source of this interest may be the ability to take the audience to places they have never been, to experience different emotional states and sometimes to identify with the hero who saves a city or the world. Along with live-action films, there is a growing interest in animated films. These films, which were previously seen as a description of children's films, today attract the attention of all age groups and compete with live-action films in their own fields. Based on the assumption that animated films are watched more by children, the perception of the superiority of Western culture begins to be created in the subconscious of children by taking the elements of Orientalism through messages. Within the scope of the study, within the limitation of the year 2000, which is twenty years away from today as a date and the beginning of the new millennium, *Atlantis: The Lost Empire* (Gary Trousdale & Kirk Wise, 2001) and *Atlantis: Milo's Return* (Victor Cook, Toby Shelton & Tad Stones, 2003) animated movie series were selected. The Atlantis animated series begins with Milo, the grandson of the famous adventurer Taddeus Thatch and a museum employee, joining a team formed to find Atlantis, a place he is passionate about. He fulfills his grandfather's dream by finding Atlantis, staying there, and becoming one of its protectors. The series then embarks on a quest to unravel the mysteries of the strange creatures that begin to appear on the surface of the world after Atlantis' discovery. Ultimately, Atlantis is safe again.

To examine the films, Orientalism, orientalist expressions and the relationship between Orientalism and cinema were mentioned. When examining Orientalism-based studies, there are works that encompass different art forms. Within the scope of this study, these works are also utilized. Upon reviewing the academic studies conducted, there are works on Orientalist discourses, Hollywood cinema, directors' analysis of their films through Orientalist discourse, and the positioning of Western films shot in countries located in the East. It has been determined that the number of studies on animation is slowly but surely increasing. The difference of this study is the selection of animated films as a sample. Another difference is that in this selected sample film series, the Eastern theme comes to the fore or the indicators are not directly in the face of the day. It will be made to explain through signs what the orientalist discourse with presuppositions that may occur while watching a movie with an Eastern theme can convey to its viewers without having such a theme and presupposition. In addition, through this study on cinema-animation, the examination of animation, which is watched by younger

audiences, will contribute to the field in terms of understanding the message instilled in the audience and creating awareness against it.

The reason why cinema stands out among the branches of art is that it creates content in terms of producing and interpreting meaning by using other branches of art. In the study, semiotics was used to analyze the selected film and the signs in the film. Cinema research, which did not develop as a language until the 1950s and 1960s, suggested the development of cinema in terms of language by redefining semioticians' understanding of written and spoken language (Monaco, 2005: 154). Nevertheless, there are also those who argue that cinema already has a language. Cinema semiotician Christian Metz believes that telling good stories does not depend on cinema having a language and that cinema becomes a language because it tells good stories (Monaco, 2005: 154). Cinema semiotics has a significant impact on contemporary film theories and criticism (Özden, 2014: 137). In terms of evaluating the basic semantic material of the film, semiotics is a favorable critical approach. Semiotics, which plays a role in establishing cinema studies on an objective basis, helps films to be evaluated with a critical attitude, thanks to its objective approach. The acceptance of the existence of the symbolic dimension of cinema enables objective criticism to be secured (Wollen, 2017: 136).

The language of cinema is images. Images are lined up one after the other to create an indicator. Indicators have apparent or underlying meanings. The truth is sought by the method of understanding or interpretation using meanings. Indicators are the embodiment of the visible, objects and abstract concepts in the society they are in (Lotman, 2012: 13).

The sign, which consists of the signifier and the signified, is the formation of a signifier and a signified or a concept with an auditory image, since there will be a reason to sign the meaning-transmitting combination (Barthes, 2005: 48). Signs, consisting of a signifier and a signified, point to understanding, reference and situation, such as signs, traffic rules and beam color. In this way, people attribute meanings to objects and hear images through these symbols.

While the signifiers form the plane of expression, the signified form the plane of content. Each plane consists of two layers, form and substance. While the form is the fact that it will describe the whole of linguistics in an inclusive, simple and consistent manner without resorting to any non-linguistic preconditions; Substance, on the other hand, is all linguistic features that cannot be described without applying non-linguistic preconditions (Barthes, 2005: 48). While most of the semiotic systems contain a narrative substance such as objects, body movements and images that are not included in making sense of existence: they are objects of use, which are derived by the society for meaning, where clothing is used to protect, food to nourish and raincoat to protect from rain (Barthes, 2005: 49). The raincoat is also a sign of the weather. If Saussure's example is taken as a basis, the word tree is a sign, a written or auditory image consisting of the letters t-r-e-e and the tree concept that it creates in the mind is the signified.

The sign for semiotics, including Saussure, consists of the signifier and the signified. Metz, on the other hand, adds that there is no difference between the two-divided signifier and the signified and that while cinema is easy to understand, it is difficult to explain. From the viewer's point of view, the signs are the work of interpretation and explanation. Saussure states that while the relations that unite linguistic elements produce their own values and develop on two different planes, these two planes correspond to two forms of mental activity (Barthes, 2005: 61). The understanding of the sign is divided into two: the serial plane and the syntactic plane. While the serial plane is about selection, it consists of my selections of signs of the same kind, at the discretion of the filmmaker. The syntagmatic plane is the arrangement of signs in a way that can produce meaning. While the sequential plane is the choices during the shooting, the syntactic plane is the creation of the acquired shots together with the editing to create a meaningful whole.

Semiotics deals with sign systems that appear in daily activities and take place in all communication events, including daily language. Semiotics examines the whole of languages, symbols and norms to form signs (Guirand, 1994: 17). Semiotics encounters language again when it is passed not only to simple symbols, but also to wholes that can have sociological value. Images, behaviors and objects have meaning; but instead of being independent, they merge with the language within the unity

of the sign (Barthes, 2005: 28). Language not only constructs meaning, but also focuses on forms of meaning and interpretation that can be discursively variable.

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 signified. 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 interpretations and understandings.

The language of cinema is formed by the production and combination of images and sounds in a meaningful way. Thus, the distinction between the visible and the meaning emerges. In the production of meanings, codes are created to express meaning through signs. Meanings are communicated through codes. Metz identifies five ways of cinematic coding that convey the message to the audience. Visual image, speech, music, sound and writing. The codes that emerge in cinema, where the five ways combine and become a means of expression, are grouped into three types. Cinema free codes are scene transitions. Codes that do not belong to cinema are codes with cultural meanings or references. Codes shared by cinema with other arts are codes shared with other art branches. Semiotic criticism, which is provided by the analysis of codes, operates as a first level in which the codes are analyzed according to psychological, sociological, cultural and aesthetic meanings and a second level in which the cinematic style presented through codes is analyzed (Eberwein, 1990: 132). With the discovery of evaluation criteria that enable the discovery of meaning, films cease to be a consumable object and gain a structure in which meaning is reproduced outside the filmmakers (Özden, 2014: 140).

## ORIENTALISM

Orientalism, as a formal field of study, finds its academic roots in the early 14th century. It emerged when the Church Council of Vienna established chairs in several universities dedicated to the teaching of oriental languages and cultures. At its inception, the primary catalysts for this field were not purely intellectual; rather, they were driven by the pragmatic necessities of trade, military conflict and international competition (Turner, 2002: 67). Initially, any researcher engaged with the grammar, history or culture of the East was classified as an orientalist and their output was considered Orientalism. However, the meaning of these terms has undergone a radical transformation, particularly following the critical debates that rose to prominence in the mid-to-late 20th century. Scholars such as Abdel Malek, Tibawi, Turner and Said challenged the established perception of Orientalism as a neutral, academic discipline, instead characterizing it as a sophisticated form of racism and a mechanism for political control (Macfie, 2002: 3-6).

The publication of Edward Said's Orientalism in 1978 serves as the primary turning point in the field's conceptualization. Said's critique did not merely add to the existing body of knowledge; it fundamentally questioned the objectivity of Western thought and the uniformitarianism of the West. Said identified three distinct but overlapping meanings of Orientalism that continue to shape the discourse.

First, there is the academic sense that anyone who researches, teaches or writes about the Orient -be they a sociologist, anthropologist or philologist- is an Orientalist. Second, Orientalism is defined as a way of thinking rooted in the epistemological and ontological distinction between the Orient (East) and the Occident (West). The third and perhaps most critical definition positions Orientalism as a Western style used to dominate, restructure and establish authority over the Orient, particularly since the late 18th century. This institutionalized approach allows the West to make determinations about the Orient, describe it and ultimately rule it (Said, 2003: 12-13).

Central to this framework is the concept of hegemony, as articulated by Antonio Gramsci. Cultural leadership or hegemony allows certain views to be adopted as superior to others (Rubin, 2007: 24-25). In the context of the West's relationship with the East, this hegemony ensures that cultural forms and ideas produced by the West are accepted as universal truths, thereby legitimizing the West's role as the ruler and the East's role as the subject (Said, 2003: 6). This connection between the production of

knowledge and the exercise of power suggests that cultural production and imperialism are in constant cooperation.

The West's perception of the East has never been static, though it has consistently served Western interests. During the Middle Ages, the East-West divide was primarily defined through the lens of religion. Stereotypes from this era depicted the East -often equated with Islam- as wild, fond of sexual pleasure and deeply enmeshed in magic and sorcery (Erkan, 2009: 116-118). With the advent of the Age of Enlightenment, the perspective shifted. The East was no longer merely a place to be avoided but a territory to be explored. However, this shift did not lead to true understanding; instead, it created a new myth of the East. Nineteenth-century travelers and thinkers fixed the East in an image of a region incapable of governing itself, thereby necessitating Western intervention (Erkan, 2009: 116-118). This period also saw the rise of Western Romantics who, seeking to escape the troubles caused by the Industrial Revolution, viewed the East as a unique, untouched geography (Germaner & İnankur, 1989: 21). While these Romantics saw the East as a refuge, they ultimately consumed and re-created it to fit their own artistic and psychological needs.

Even when scholars like Bernard Lewis attempted to defend the field, portraying Orientalism simply as research or the work of painters who visited the Middle East to depict what they saw or imagined, the underlying power dynamic remained (Lewis, 2007: 220). Whether portrayed romantically or extremely, the East was always positioned as the observer's object. This positioning serves to meet Europe's internal need for order and authority by placing the East in a degraded, backward position (Mitchell, 1991: 166). The point to be noted here is that Western expressions, which are perceptual rather than realistic, are produced because of perceptual contents in the representation of the East.

Othering stands out as another tool of Orientalist discourse. Throughout history, communities have chosen this path to define and instrumentalize those who are different from themselves. For the West, the East is not just a neighbor. It is the site of its oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and its primary cultural rival (Said, 2004: 11). The reinforcement and realization of these images is maintained through the works produced. In this way, the discourse of Orientalism serves to make the East open for the West. It can divide, reproduce and transform it as it wishes. In this binary opposition, if the East is primitive, the West is sophisticated; if the East is deviant, the West is rational; and if the East is inferior, the West is superior (Said, 2003: 300). The West, which holds this power of the media in its hands, feels entitled to the decision-making position by using it.

This dehumanization is not accidental but is part of an elaborately organized dehumanization program where local cultures are compared against Western values, found wanting and eventually suppressed (Durukan, 2004: 71-72). This paves the way for subsequent discourses, actions and processes.

The transmission of Orientalist ideology has moved from oral traditions and written texts to the modern media, which continues to shape and perpetuate these cultural biases. Media institutions do not define the East for what it is, but rather for what it is not, focusing on its perceived shortcomings to serve Western interests (Keyman et al., 1996: 10). The means of transmission of culture continue to function throughout history. In addition to oral means of transmission, such as cave paintings, tales and songs, written instruments also help in this transmission.

The Eastern object, shaped according to the desired model by people living in the West and who do not have the opportunity to go to the East, is presented in a documentary manner through the artist's production in painting. Orientalism, by increasing its influence in the West and focusing on the East, led to the term being presented as a type of painting (Germaner & İnankur, 1989: 14). Within Orientalist discourse, the backwardness of the East is reiterated, with elements such as being uncivilized, cruel, angry and numerous. In painting, moments from historical wars serve Orientalism, influencing the Western perception of the East and justifying potential conflicts. Delacroix, in creating *The Death of Sardanapalus*, had not yet seen the East or Ingres, inspired by Lady Mantagu's memoirs, *Letters from the East*, created *Le Bain Turc* (The Turkish Bath), which is incompatible with reality (Germaner & İnankur, 1989: 23). The East, created through descriptions far removed from reality, once again demonstrates the influence of Orientalism in the presentation of the East as an object. Orientalist paintings, shaped

around sexuality and dominance, are prominent representations of the East. The continuous perpetuation of these representations facilitates the dissemination of discourses (Kirel, 2012: 487). The West adopts the endeavor to decipher the mystery of the East by associating it with exoticism, mystery and eroticism.

Today, the media, which is one of the means of transmitting culture, continues to perpetuate the culture of the society to which it belongs and continues to do its duty to shape it. Today, the characterization of the East as different and inferior to the West is again provided through the media and repeats the use of the adjective other.

In contemporary media, including cinema, television and news, the East is frequently represented through recurring, negative archetypes. It is often depicted in crowds rather than as individuals, characterized by mass anger (Said, 2003: 300). Films frequently resort to derogatory stereotypes, portraying Easterners as slave traders, lecherous, drunkards, camel drivers and scoundrels. These images are not merely entertainment; they are a means of asserting the West's decision-making position by reinforcing the idea that the East is inherently deviant and irrational.

A significant portion of Orientalist discourse is dedicated to the identification of the East with Islam. Orientalism is frequently criticized for searching for flaws in Islamic politics, economy and society, often attributing these perceived failures to an absence of civil society (Turner, 2002: 58). Although Islam has been a major cultural force within Europe specifically in Spain, Sicily and Eastern Europe (Turner, 2002: 46). It is consistently marginalized and treated as an external, Eastern entity.

The Orientalist system thrives on emphasizing differences rather than commonalities. While Islam and Christianity share deep historical, scientific and philosophical roots Orientalism underlines their division and separation (Turner, 2002: 60). This leads to an unfair comparison where the West identifies itself with modernity, greatness and cultural richness, while Islam is depicted as mired in the mud of primitiveness and backwardness (Said, 2000: 87).

This religious marginalization has real-world consequences in modern discourse. For example, in the media, the term Jewish terrorist is rarely, if ever used, yet Muslim terrorist is a common phrase (Ameli, 2007: 20). This linguistic choice equates the faith of Islam itself with potential violence. The modern West's reaction to Islam is still dominated by the idea that Islam is a serious rival of Christianity and a threat to Western stability (Said, 2000: 80). Consequently, Islam is treated as a monolithic whole and followed with special hostility and fear.

The ultimate goal of Orientalist discourse is to make the East open for the West to divide, reproduce and transform as it wishes. This discourse justifies the control and exploitation of the Other by suggesting that the West must teach it to think and decide its independence (Said, 2004: 21). This discourse prepares the ground for colonialism and justifies the modernization, subjugation and exploitation of the East. The point to be questioned here is why the West is in the decision-making position. It is through the media that the East is positioned and defined in the way the West wants.

This logic is visible in contemporary efforts to bring democracy to Eastern countries. The curiosity the West exhibits toward the East is not a desire for genuine learning, but can be compared to a child's curiosity about a new toy. What non-European societies have is ignored and defined by their deficiencies and every deprivation in these societies is seen as the development of Europe (Dirlik, 1996: 100). By positioning the East as the enemy rather than just the other, the Western mindset transforms the act of exploitation into a duty to protect their own culture (Uluç, 2011: 39). Instead of us and others, the concept of us and enemies also takes its place in the process. Putting aside the economic reasons behind the wars, those who are seen as the other are in fact positioned as enemies and for someone in the Western mindset, their duty is to protect their own self, their own culture. The idea that the East cannot govern itself and its identification with despotism is a description that is still used today. When we look at the processes of bringing democracy to Eastern countries, we can observe how these two terms have gained functionality.

Orientalism is far more than an academic pursuit; it is a comprehensive system of representation that has historically served the economic, political and cultural interests of the West. From its early

university chairs to its modern-day media tropes, Orientalism has consistently worked to otherize non-Westerns, creating a binary where the West is the center of rationality and progress and the East is a peripheral site of backwardness and mystery.

Through the mechanism of hegemony, the West continues to construct its own perceptions as objective facts and attempts to restructure and dominate the East under the guise of academic studies or civilizing missions. This process is reinforced through media stereotypes and a deep-seated religious hostility toward Islam, which is viewed as a monolithic threat to Western identity. Ultimately, the discourse of Orientalism provides the intellectual and moral justification for colonialism and exploitation, ensuring that the East remains an object to be managed, surveilled and ruled by the West.

## **Orientalism and Cinema**

Orientalism is not a static phenomenon but a pervasive attitude that finds its place across various branches of art. Historically, this perspective became visible in the art of painting when European artists began to depict the East through an exotic and intriguing lens. These orientalist discourses gradually permeated architecture, porcelain decoration, literature, dance and music. However, the advent of photography and cinema provided a transformative new field for Orientalist expression. Cinema, in particular, must be recognized as more than just an artistic tool; it is a potent media tool capable of mobilizing photographs for both artistic and propaganda purposes.

The emergence of cinema coincided with a growing public curiosity toward news and new phenomena, a sentiment that was frequently fueled and utilized by the medium. During historical flashpoints, such as World War II, audiences gathered in cinemas to receive news about the war's progress while being simultaneously exposed to propaganda that imposed specific ideologies. This process involved the systematic marginalization of opposing nations, portraying them as enemies whose lands required capture. Whether in times of war or peace, the phenomenon of the other has been perpetuated to maintain social order and reinforce the perceived privilege of Western societies over others. In this context, Orientalism serves as a rescue for Western discourse, utilizing cinematic imagery to arouse curiosity while mediating the marginalization of Eastern peoples.

The role of mass media is central to shaping ideas regarding identity, race, nationality and gender. Media channels do not merely reflect reality; they shape ideas about both our own identities and the identity of the other through specific forms of representation. By determining who holds power, the media legitimizes the attitudes of the powerful and ensures that the powerless remain in a subordinate position (Erkan, 2009: 20). Consequently, mass media function as channels that reproduce social ideology.

This ideological dimension is closely linked to the concept of electronic colonialism. In many non-Western contexts, the replacement of local cultural products with imported Western products constitutes a fundamental problem. It has been argued that electronic colonialism is as dangerous as economic, military or political colonialism (McPhaill, 1991, as cited in Yiğit, 2008: 23). Films containing Orientalist elements play a vital role in this process by codifying the Western view of the East in ways that define and legitimize Western superiority (Said, 2004: 60). Audiovisual media have thus made discourses previously confined to literature more visible and easily transmissible to a global audience.

The history of Orientalism in cinema can be traced back to the early 20th century. One of the earliest examples is D.W. Griffith's 1916 film *Intolerance* (Karlıoğlu, 2020: 75). The film, which explores human intolerance across different ages, mediates orientalist discourse through various visual tropes. Despite Griffith's claims that he did not intend to marginalize Eastern peoples, the film's depiction of these societies in states of turmoil and within the confines of a harem contributes to its classification as an orientalist work (Hamilton, 2013). Furthermore, the inclusion of belly dancing in the Babylonian War sequences and imagery suggesting that women exist primarily to please men reinforces these tropes. It should not be forgotten that cinema is primarily a collection of visual elements. The auditory elements that accompany it exist to help and support this visuality. It is necessary to pay attention to the sometimes explicit and sometimes underlying meanings of these signs in films created with visual elements.

Another landmark production is the 1921 film *The Sheik* (George Melford), which centers on a Western woman marrying an Arab Sheikh (Dajani, 2000: 4). The narrative focuses on the conflicts between Western femininity, the Arab Sheikh and Eastern culture. The film relies heavily on maintaining a perceived Eastern theme characterized by exoticism, desert landscapes and specific Muslim depictions. By establishing successful prototypes of Eastern representations, *The Sheik* encouraged a wave of subsequent films, including its sequel, *The Son of the Sheik* (George Fitzmaurice, 1926). These films were successful because they presented the East as a fairy tale, aligning with the existing desires and expectations of Western audiences. Such productions strengthened orientalist representations even in the minds of viewers who had no firsthand knowledge of the East (Karlıoğlu, 2020: 78). This situation reinforces cinema's similarity to previous art forms and its use of orientalist elements. It is important to remember at this point that in visually-oriented disciplines such as painting and photography, the East is presented only through the limited perspective of the painter or photographer, without ever having seen it.

The emphasis on cultural and racial difference remains a staple of Hollywood productions. The East is frequently utilized as a rich decor, a backdrop that shapes worldviews and influences the audience's characterization of good and evil (Erkan, 2009: 21). This is clearly observed in Steven Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), where Arab men are depicted as anonymous, expressionless masses circling Western researchers. In this film, native characters are often relegated to tasks that Westerners refuse to perform. The characterization of native men as lazy, cowardly and fatalistic mirrors traditional orientalist texts, whereas Western characters are represented as possessing scientific expertise and physical strength. Furthermore, the film legitimizes Western control over Eastern heritage. The narrative depicts Westerners claiming ancient artifacts and placing them in European museums, a move that is framed as necessary due to the perceived ignorance of the natives (Erkan, 2009, 135-140). This reinforces the discourse that the salvation and preservation of the East are dependent upon Western intervention.

Other modern examples of these continuing discourses include Michael Cimino's *The Year of the Dragon* (1985), which portrays Chinatown gangsters and James Cameron's *True Lies* (1994), which depicts nearly an entire nation as inclined toward jihad (Bernstein & Studlar, 1997, 1-4). These examples demonstrate that cinema is not merely a source of entertainment but serves significant political purposes. Hollywood, as an industrial and cultural institution, can mobilize vast resources to produce films -ranging from war dramas to national security thrillers- that reinforce a specific cultural identity (Valantin, 2006: 8). This situation reveals the expression and importance that each frame in a film can create.

The marginalization of the enemy is a process that is constantly renewed through the cinematic medium, ensuring that Western society maintains a clear sense of the foreign. Hollywood, in particular, undertakes the mission of transferring Western ideological sanctions and ideas to a global audience (Güngör, 2011: 68). This became particularly evident following the start of the Iraq War in 2003. During this period, Hollywood saw a revival of films themed around patriotism, national security and the war against America's enemies. In these narratives, America's efforts to dominate the outside world are legitimized by framing the East as a source of terrorism, anarchism and communist phenomena that are presented as direct threats to the West (Valantin, 2006, 213). In contemporary orientalist discourse, the East is frequently associated with terrorism and is viewed as being below the West, characterized as a region that is inherently unable to govern itself. Films continue to portray the East as a place of chaos, disorder and a lack of law, thereby cementing these perceptions in the global audience's mind.

The representation of women within orientalist cinema further highlights these power dynamics. In orientalist discourse, the Eastern woman is often portrayed as a subordinate slave who exists in a position of total obedience to men. This stands in stark contrast to the representation of Western women in the same cinematic contexts. In films like *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, a character's American nationality can render them untouchable and distinct from the local population (Erkan, 2009: 134-135). While the Western woman is afforded this status, the Eastern woman remains the other, trapped in a cycle of reconstructed and reconsidered orientalist tropes designed to suit specific narrative purposes.

Cinema has proven to be the most powerful tool for the perpetuation of Orientalism in the modern era. By evolving from early 20th-century exoticism to contemporary associations with terrorism and lawlessness, the medium has consistently served to marginalize the East while legitimizing Western hegemony. As these films are watched worldwide, they play a crucial role in shaping the perceptions and values of global audiences. A critical question remains regarding the extent to which Eastern societies themselves are aware of the roles and characterizations assigned to them by this Western lens, a problem that underscores the deep-seated reach of electronic colonialism. Through the systematic use of visual and auditory signs, cinema ensures that the image of the East as a chaotic and ungovernable Other remains a dominant fixture in the Western imagination.

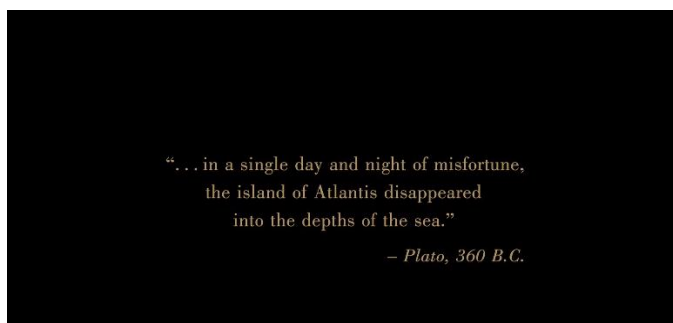
## EXAMINATION OF "ATLANTIS" ANIMATION FILM SERIES IN THE CONTEXT OF ORIENTALISM

### Atlantis: The Lost Empire

A co-production of the United States and France, directed by Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, the film was released in 2001. The film, which was also scripted by Tab Murphy, grossed \$186 million worldwide<sup>1</sup>. The film also won the 2001 Gold Spirit Awards for best animated score and the 2002 Motion Picture Sound Editors Guild Award for best sound editing in animation.

The plot of the movie is about Milo, the grandson of a famous adventurer, Taddeus Thatch, who works in a museum. Milo, who grew up listening to his grandfather's adventures and knows his passion for Atlantis, takes over after his death. Adventure-seeking grandson Milo is determined to fulfill his grandfather's unfinished dream. With the help of one of his grandfather's old friends, the difficult adventure begins to find Atlantis.

In the opening sequence of the film, the philosopher Plato's statement about Atlantis, supposedly uttered in 360 BC (see Figure 1), is projected on the screen: "...in one day and one night of misfortune, the island of Atlantis sank into the depths of the sea". The film thus refers to a well-known person to prepare its audience for what it will tell throughout its duration. This reference to the scientific part adds to the authenticity of the movie, the authenticity of the language used in the film. In this way, pre-conditioning the audience that what is being told is not fiction helps to present it as real.



**Figure 1:** "Atlantis: The Lost Empire" frame from the movie

The film begins with a short clip (see Figure 2) of the sinking and disappearance of Atlantis, its subject. The catastrophe that befalls the East, which is part of the discourses of Orientalism and to which Western storytellers refer, is again the subject of the movie.

<sup>1</sup> The source from which the revenue amount is received: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0230011/> [Access Date: 01.05.2021]



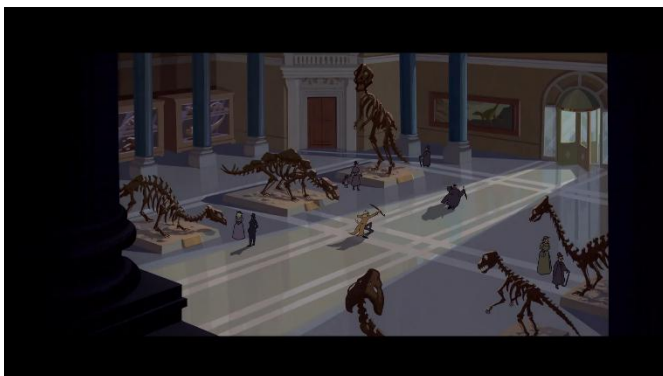
**Figure 2:** “Atlantis: The Lost Empire” frame from the movie

The oppositions in this section are old-new, life-death, fiction-truth and disaster-joy. As for the analysis of the signs, Plato's word is the signifier and the object as the sign and it is the signified both to give historical information and to increase reality. The disaster scene is the signifier, the factor of nature is the sign and the signified is to increase the curiosity about Atlantis and its positioning in the Eastern discourse.

After these scenes, the movie travels to America to meet Milo, one of the protagonists of the movie, who works in a museum. During the rehearsal of a meeting to find funding for his research on Atlantis, Milo gives more information about Atlantis that will make the audience curious. The discourses in this section overlap with the repetition of the orientalist discourses mentioned earlier and the increased sense of curiosity towards the East. But this curiosity is not only about exoticism or mysteriousness. Towards the end of his rehearsal, Milo expresses his desire to find the Heart of Atlantis, a source of power and light (see Figure 3). The fact that the West wants to legitimize the wealth and power that do not belong to it and wants to bring this resource to the West coincides with a similar scene in the film. The museum's display of dinosaur skeletons and objects from other parts of the world (see Figure 4), which is shown in the continuation of this scene, is meant to increase the impact of the idea of right on the viewer. The orientalist discourse that the East cannot protect its culture, but the West can protect its culture, is repeated through the elements shown.



**Figure 3:** “Atlantis: The Lost Empire” frame from the movie



**Figure 4:** “*Atlantis: The Lost Empire*” frame from the movie

As oppositions: related-unrelated, legitimate-illegitimate, wealth-poverty. While the Heart of Atlantis is a signifier, it is an object as a sign and a source of power that is desired and desired to be possessed is also a signified. Dinosaur skeletons and other items are the signifier, the sign as object and the wealth of the West and the attempt to legitimize its right through these items is the signified.

Our character, who cannot receive the help he expected from the committee at the museum, becomes ready to do the research with the support of his deceased grandfather, who was also a researcher. This old friend of his grandfather is rich and curious about other cultures. In return for this research support, he only wants one piece of evidence from Milo. When the photograph of the research team is shown, it is seen that roles are assigned in terms of both race and gender (see Figure 5). The head of the team is tall, white, muscular and confident, while the mechanic is the person hired to blow things up and the doctor is black, Latino or Mediterranean. Except for the doctor, the others are short in stature and lack self-confidence. It is also noteworthy that there are no members of this team with Eastern characteristics, even in a supporting role. At this point, it is necessary to remember once again the discourse in Orientalism that Western people progress on the path of reason, science and curiosity, while Eastern people have beliefs and a life far from science. The team continues its way through various events and in order to pass through a large gap in the tunnel, the column, which, in Milo's words, took perhaps thousands of years to build, has its function changed by placing dynamite at its base and detonating it (see Figure 6). Against a historical artifact that does not belong to it, the West has no problem in altering, damaging or destroying it for its own purposes. Finally arriving in the city and welcomed by the Atlanteans, the team is brought before the king. The king is portrayed as distant from the people, making the rules and listening to no one (see Figure 7). He also does not listen to his own daughter, Kida. This form of government, which is among the discourses of Orientalism about the East, is attributed to Atlantis in the movie. The profile of the ruler who is a pleasure-seeker and lives disconnected from the people is constantly used for the perception of how far the East is from democracy and that they cannot govern themselves. As a result of these discourses, we see a West that feels entitled to bring democracy to the East. With the movies, this entitlement has an impact on the audience. These movies, which are watched not only in the West but also in the East, cause this perception to turn into a universal thought. In Milo and Kida's conversation after this scene, Kida mentions that their civilization is dying, there is no food and these scientists from the West can help.



**Figure 5:** “*Atlantis: The Lost Empire*” frame from the movie



**Figure 6:** “Atlantis: The Lost Empire” frame from the movie



**Figure 7:** “Atlantis: The Lost Empire” frame from the movie

The oppositions in this section are real-imagination, rich-poor, quantitative-qualitative, preserve-destroy. In terms of analyzing the signs, while the photograph of the team is the signifier, the human factor is the sign and racial and gender discrimination and the assignment of roles that are considered secular are the signified. The dynamited column is the signifier, the object is the sign and the variability of the use of a non-Western historical artifact is the signified. The King of Atlantis is the signifier, the human factor is the sign and the repetition of the orientalist discourse is the signified through his identification with the ruler of the East, his having the last word and his distance from democracy.

The representation of women has a masculine perspective in Orientalism. The Eastern woman, who is portrayed as exotic, naked, submissive and without a voice, finds a place in the movie with a similar understanding. Although Kida is portrayed as a warrior, a woman who fights for her people, she is mysterious, half-naked and her body lines are emphasized (see Figure 8). Although she is a princess, she is an Eastern princess and cannot defy her king. In the sequel scenes with Milo, Kida cannot read her own language, while Milo, as an outsider, can. When Milo says to Kida, who has made it up to a certain point, "It is a great achievement that you have made it this far" during their reading of articles on the use of a vehicle, he is trying to emphasize the need for a Westerner in a technological field and that the West is always ahead of the East. Milo and Kida then start touring the city (see Figure 9). The clothes of the city dwellers are a piece of cloth and fishing is done by hand or with the help of long sticks. Tents, old boats, a chaotic marketplace, collapsed statues in the background, mossy buildings, crowded tables, lamps inside the house, rugs (see Figure 10) and eating with wooden spoons or sticks are all indicators that Atlantis is left behind. The East, which is drawn with the connection to Orientalism, lives in tents like in this section, in complex settlements without modern clothes, with old objects in their houses. Expressions such as order and individuality are not identified with the East.



**Figure 8:** “Atlantis: The Lost Empire” frame from the movie



**Figure 9:** “Atlantis: The Lost Empire” frame from the movie



**Figure 10:** “Atlantis: The Lost Empire” frame from the movie

As opposites: open-closed, ignorant-ignorant, modern-primitive, community-individual. Kida is the signifier, human is the sign and the signified is that she is presented as an object rather than a human being and an individual and that she is portrayed from an orientalist point of view. Another scene that supports this narrative is when Kida is getting ready to swim (see Figure 11) and takes off a cloth she is wearing, Milo misunderstands this and thinks that Kida is going to offer herself to him. He soon realizes that she is preparing for a swim. Milo, who is positioned as the Western hero, expects Kida to do such an act as a natural expectation since she will save them. As mentioned before, if we consider the woman positioned within the framework of Orientalist discourse, the reason for this expectation becomes clear. Milo's ability to read writing is the signifier, the sign is the human being and in the face of a people who cannot even read their own writing, it is the signified that Western people are advanced, devoted to science and can keep the culture of the East alive. Through this position in which the West positions itself, it instills in the East the need for the West to survive and know its culture. While the possessions of the city and the people are the signifier, the objects are the sign and the cultural and life backwardness of Atlantis through these objects is also the signified.



**Figure 11:** *“Atlantis: The Lost Empire” frame from the movie*

The team arriving with Milo wants to take the Heart of Atlantis (see Figure 12). They think this is their natural right. Even though it is known as the source of life by the local people, they set out to realize it without paying attention to this. Milo, as an individual and self-critical as he has been taught, opposes this. A Westerner does not need to be taught what is good and right. The colonel of the team then makes a statement that clearly articulates Orientalism and defines the East-West point of view: “If you gave back every stolen artifact from a museum, you’d be left with an empty building”. The character defines these actions as a kind of archaeological service for Western society. The archaeological richness of the West, created with the understanding of colonialism and based on Orientalism, is the legitimization of the right that is intended to be done in this scene, presented as a confession. Similarly, Orientalist studies are like this statement in that the West puts itself at the center and positions itself as the upper class, legitimizing what it does. As our characters enter a cave, Kida sees statues of the great gods of the past and begins to worship them (see Figure 13), while the Westerners sarcastically ask him to finish his work quickly. In Orientalism, the positioning of East and West through religion is based on Islam-Christianity. Although the West positions itself as Christian, it positions the others as bigots, practitioners of witchcraft and fortune-telling, because of their presentation that they are on the path of science. In addition, the similarity of the depicted plan with the part of the Islamic prayer during prostration (see Figure 14) reinforces this conclusion. Islam, positioned by Orientalism as an Eastern religion, is also transformed by the West for its own purposes.



**Figure 12:** *“Atlantis: The Lost Empire” frame from the movie*



**Figure 13:** "Atlantis: The Lost Empire" frame from the movie



**Figure 14:** Prostrating while praying in Islam

The oppositions in this section are strong and weak, rich and poor, Islam and Christianity. Analyzing the signs, while the Heart of Atlantis is a signifier, it is an object as a sign and claiming rights and the legitimization of the West by putting itself at the center is a signified. While Kida's worship is the signifier and the human factor as the sign, seeing other beliefs as insignificant and comparing them to an action performed during prayer in Islam in terms of transferring Orientalism, targeting it as marginalization is the signified.

Kida sacrifices himself for his people by becoming the Heart of Atlantis. She is imprisoned and taken away by the team and the others of the team, like Milo, find the right behavior and do not set out on the road back. The king, whose daughter was taken away, asks for Milo's help and the people, who did not speak out or oppose while Princess Kida was taken away, unite under the leadership of the West (see Figure 15). The fate of the East is in the hands of the Western scientist. Through various events, Kida is rescued and the city is secured. The Westerners, who are there for someone else's riches and then choose the right path in their own way, are rewarded for their help with gifts from the riches of the East (see Figure 16). The movie ends with the rewarded team leaving and Milo remaining in Atlantis.



**Figure 15:** *“Atlantis: The Lost Empire”* frame from the movie



**Figure 16:** *“Atlantis: The Lost Empire”* frame from the movie

The oppositions are sacrifice-sacrifice, captive-free, united-separated, safe-dangerous, reward-punishment. The unification of the people is the signifier, the human being as the sign and the signified that a Westerner must lead the people of the East for them to be united and free. While the rewarding of the East is the signifier and the object is the sign, the signified can be made by showing that the West, which helps the East to be liberated, gets its due by legitimizing the reward for its help.

### **Atlantis: Milo's Return**

Unlike the first film, this sequel was presented in video format instead of being shown in theaters. Co-produced by the United States and the Philippines and co-directed by Victor Cook, Toby Shelton and Tad Stones, the film was released in 2003.

Milo, who decided to stay in Atlantis at the end of the first movie and Kida, the Queen, strive to restore Atlantis. Mysterious creatures appear on the surface of the Earth. They reunite with their teammates from the first movie to solve interesting events that may be related to the mysteries of Atlantis.

Starting with Atlantis, the movie shows the recovery of Atlantis while listening to the speech of the new queen, Kida. On the other hand, we are reminded of the importance of what is touted as the heart (see Figure 17) or the light of Atlantis. The stones carried by the city's inhabitants (see Figure 18) are used to perform magical acts, such as repairs.



**Figure 17:** *“Atlantis: Milo's Return”* frame from the movie



**Figure 18:** “Atlantis: Milo’s Return” frame from the movie

The oppositions in this section are autocracy-democracy, male-female, old-new and corrupt-repair. In terms of the analysis of signs, the heart of Atlantis is the signifier, the sign is the object and its preciousness and the wealth of the East is the signified. This element can be interpreted as wealth on the one hand and knowledge on the other. One of the situations that supports its interpretation as knowledge is the use of stone while putting the statue's nose in place. The stone used to fix the statue is the signifier, the sign as an object and the signified as both a situation, like magic and requiring knowledge. While the richness of the East is presented, we are also reminded of its mysterious events, such as magic and spells.

In this shot (see Figure 19), Milo appears as a Western scientist who has settled in Atlantis, which was positioned as the East in the previous film, dressed in local clothes and carrying a stone with various powers. In Atlantis, alarmed at the thought of an attack from outside, a man is seen wearing a mask to frighten the enemy (see Image 20).



**Figure 19:** “Atlantis: Milo’s Return” frame from the movie



**Figure 20:** “Atlantis: Milo’s Return” frame from the movie

Male-female, tradition-modern, ordinary-extraordinary, war-peace constitute the oppositions in this section. Milo himself is the signifier, the human is the sign and the positioning of the Western man,

his attempt to redesign the East, his interest in the East is the signified. The Westerner who decides to stay in Atlantis wants to take part in the modernization and transformation of the East. However, just like the discovery of the East in the orientalist discourse, its attractiveness and the desire to possess it, here, too, the Western scientist wants to continue the process of in-depth exploration by staying here after the discovery. Kida's statement in this scene that it is thanks to Milo that Atlantis was reorganized and made functional supports the signs. The mask worn by the local people is the signifier, the sign is an object and the signified is that even though they try to comply with the conditions of the day, they are still left behind by trying to fight against the enemy by wearing a mask. The fact that they try to defend themselves with objects such as masks and spears, far from the conditions of the day, shows their backwardness. This presentation of backwardness reiterates the orientalist discourse by revealing how much Atlantis, the East, needs the West and a Westerner to defend itself.

With the return of Milo's former teammates, the locals are also interested in them. The women of the local community show interest in Mole (see Figure 21). In the rest of the welcoming scene, as they all have dinner together, it is repeated that Milo has saved not only the East but also the Earth and is now involved in the development of the East. After they leave Atlantis together, they take refuge in a seaside town after surviving various events. The people here behave strangely, listen to only one person and are also seen as barbarians by the crew (see Figure 22).



**Figure 21:** “Atlantis: Milo’s Return” frame from the movie



**Figure 22:** “Atlantis: Milo’s Return” frame from the movie

The oppositions in this section are male-female, interested-uninterested, attractive-unappealing and West-East. It is a signifier that shows interest in Mole, the human factor is the sign and the signified is the Eastern woman is the one who shows interest in the Western man. The Westerner is glorified by positioning him in opposition to the rough, dirty and uneducated forms of the Eastern man in the Orientalist discourse. During this glorification, the idea that the mysterious and exotic Eastern woman is attractive and that she is almost a slave to herself, with the idea of a harem, continues. Based on this idea, the Westerner can own, speak and rule over the Orientals in cases where orientalist discourse is seen. Just as before, when Kida states that everything went well thanks to Milo's presence, this discourse is expanded and reminded by emphasizing that he saved not only the East but also the world. While the Easterner cannot handle a job alone, lacks the ability to manage, the Western hero overcomes difficulties

alone, improves himself and can manage those who cannot manage themselves. The people in the town are the signifier and their lack of humanity is a sign; democracy, their rudeness and awkwardness are the signified. While the townspeople are marginalized through these definitions, the fact that they cannot govern themselves and are under authoritarian rule is conveyed through signs. While the self is presented with the characteristics of science and democracy, the other is portrayed as incapable of self-government, lacking etiquette and being malicious.



**Figure 23:** *"Atlantis: Milo's Return" frame from the movie*



**Figure 24:** *The toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue*

Milo and his team liberate the town by saving it from the ruler. So much so that they topple the ruler's statue (see Figure 23). In the conversation between Milo and Kida in the rest of the scene, Milo tells Kida that "your people can make a difference too". He states that Atlanteans can adapt to this new world. In the scene where the woman from the town (see Figure 25) speaks with her baby in her arms, she expresses that the salvation of the town is thanks to them and that no amount of thanks to them will be enough.



**Figure 25:** *"Atlantis: Milo's Return" frame from the movie*

Young-older, democracy-autocracy, dirty-clean and orderly-complex are the oppositions of this section. The toppling of the statue is the signifier, the sign is the object and the signified is that the people will begin to govern themselves and democracy will come to the town. The fall of the statue symbolizes the people of the East achieving democracy thanks to the West. The distribution date of the film varies in various countries, with the release date being February 25, 2003, in France and May 20, 2003, in the United States. The destruction of the statue here is like the destruction of Saddam Hussein's statue in Firdos Square on April 9, 2003 (see Figure 24), one of the symbols of the Iraq War that started in 2003. The invasion of Iraq, one of the actions initiated by the United States as a result of the September 11 attacks, is presented as liberating Iraq, ensuring democracy and liberating it from authoritarian rule. Public support is provided by presenting the phenomenon in Orientalism of the East's inability to govern itself and its association with terrorism. This similarity between the images, especially considering that it is the same year, leads to the inference that the Orientalist discourse is used in terms of repetition, functionalization and transmission to the audience. The woman from the town with her baby in her arms is the signifier, the human is a sign and the salvation of the town, thanks to the Westerner, is the signified. The understanding that the Westerner knows what is good even in unfamiliar places is repeated. It is underlined that the Easterner's salvation can be thanks to the Westerner and that he must obey him. The happiness of the town, the return of the fish and the reappearance of the sun are thanks to this.



**Figure 26:** *“Atlantis: Milo’s Return” frame from the movie*

After the liberation of the town, the actions to protect the antiquity are characterized by jackals made of dust. These jackals (see Figure 26) are the guardians of the old. When they enter an antiquities shop, Kida does not understand why the spear is kept in a glass cabinet (see Figure 27). Milo explains that it is for preservation purposes. He buys the statue of the guardian of crystals (see Figure 28), which Kida also finds in this shop. This guardian is believed to show the positions of the stars and to contribute to learning about nature.



**Figure 27:** *“Atlantis: Milo’s Return” frame from the movie*



**Figure 28:** “Atlantis: Milo’s Return” frame from the movie

The oppositions in this section are old-new, valuable-valueless, superstition-truth. The jackals from the dust are the signifier, the animal factor is the sign and superstitions and the protection of old values are the signified. With the jackals from the dust, Eastern beliefs are combined with superstition. They are among the elements used by the West to position the East as mysterious. The spears displayed in the glass cabinet are signifiers and an object for the sign. It is the signified that reveals the difference in understanding between the East and the West. The Easterner sees the old spear only as a tool. The Westerner expresses that it is worth preserving. While the East does not protect and preserve cultural and historical objects, it is the West that will do so. The Westerner protects, tries to understand and owns the ancient artifacts of the East as well. The statue of the guard is the signifier, the object is the sign and old beliefs and belief in statues are the signified. Through the statue, it is repeated that the people of the East remain in the past by characterizing them as having old beliefs and believing in statues.

In the room where the meeting takes place in the house of the elder of the team (see Figure 29), objects from Eastern and other cultures are displayed on the walls. As a result of the events, the team returns to Atlantis and Kida decides that the Heart or the light of Atlantis, must be shared (see Figure 30). With this decision, Atlantis surfaces.



**Figure 29:** “Atlantis: Milo’s Return” frame from the movie



**Figure 30: "Atlantis: Milo's Return" frame from the movie**

Underground-surface, East-West, separating-uniting, revealing-hiding are the oppositions of this section. The objects on the walls of the room are the signifier, the object is the sign and the possession of the artifacts of other cultures and the Westerner's keeping them for himself is the signified. The discourse of Western people owning the riches of the East and keeping them for themselves is repeated. Instead of giving them to their rightful owners, the Westerner is normalized to display them on the walls of his own home. The sharing of the Heart of Atlantis is the signifier, the object is the sign and the idea of sharing the riches and everyone benefiting from them is the signified. The idea of sharing the riches of the East and benefiting everyone is repeated from time to time in the movie through its implementation at the end. The West has brought democracy to the East and it is not in vain that it is trying to develop it again. He expects the East to share its riches and, if necessary, to take them from it and own them.

### CONCLUSION

From the very first film, *Roundhay Garden Scene* (Louis Le Prince, 1888), cinema begins to influence people, open new horizons and give them direction. While watching the movie, one can enter different emotional states and go to different places; in a way, one can become vulnerable and ready to accept the messages coming from the movie. The audience is detached from reality by the movie. In these moments of vulnerability, various messages are conveyed to the audience both visibly and implicitly.

Cinema is an art, but we should not forget that it is also a media tool. Cinema, which turned into a propaganda tool especially after World War II, proved to be an important tool in influencing and directing the masses. In the post-war period, it did not lose this characteristic and Hollywood, supported by the United States of America, which realized this power of cinema and media early on, continued to do so. Orientalism, which places Western civilization and culture at the center and considers it superior to other cultures, can adapt itself to almost all cultural tools. This process, which starts with oral and written culture and continues with painting, can reach even wider masses through the media, especially cinema. The other characters created for the sake of the movie are also enemies and the perception of the Western individual being superior to an Easterner, legitimizing the possession of the riches of the East and ruling them is conveyed to the audience. This not only ensures the continuity of their own Western culture and people, but also the preconditioning of people from other cultures outside the West. Within the framework of the analyzed animated film series, Orientalism and orientalist discourses are reflected in the films through cinematic codes and signs. Analyzing the selected samples by using semiotics allows the findings to be revealed. Through semiotics, signs and codes are revealed. The East-West definition, marginalization, the West and Islam are used as indicators pointing to the extent to which Orientalism is present in cinema. Orientalist discourses find a place through direct or implicit codes. Films are made not only to make movies but also to convey Orientalism. Especially in the case of animated films, although they have audiences from all age groups, since children watch them more, it is desired to convey these messages to them. In this way, the desired messages will have a more permanent place on these young viewers.

Cinema is one of the arts that emphasizes the meaning behind seeing. The signs used in the production of these meanings reveal how sensitive and important this production is. Through the analyzed films, the effectiveness of the expressive power of the language and elements of cinema is revealed. A frame shown in a movie is not there aimlessly. It starts to generate interpretation and meaning through the qualifications it possesses. To recognize a film with an orientalist discourse, it is necessary to know the history, orientalist expressions and the relationship between Orientalism and cinema. Only in this way can the messages intended to be conveyed be recognized and, if necessary, prevented.

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