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Türkiye Film Araştırmaları Dergisi
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Visual Promises: Lobby Cards, Film Promotion and Cinema-going Experience

Görsel Vaatler: Lobi Kartları, Film Tanıtımı ve Sinemaya Gitme Deneyimi

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Abstract
Cinema related ephemera, both in academic and popular context, play an important role in our understanding cinema history. Based on literature review and randomly selected examples, this article both aims to understand and introduce lobby cards in the context of cinema industry, formal aspects and spectatorship practices and attempts to historicize these materials as an early form of trailers. These historical publicity materials were used to promote films and attract potential audience. A set of lobby cards was put up in front of the movie theatres or displayed in special glass cases. At first sight they resemble posters with their 2D designs and paper-based material. However, the way they were displayed and their interaction with the audience enable us to approach these materials as an early form of trailers. As a result of digitalization and decentralization of exhibition, trailers today do not have specific or fixed space. Yet lobby cards, without leaving their actual context, generated a sequence to tell stories off the screen and became an active part of cinema-going experience. For these images, not far from the big screen, were probably seen by the spectators before and after film viewing. This is paratextually significant in spectators' film selection, film interpretation, feeling excitement or disappointment and formation of film taste.

Keywords: Lobby cards, film promotion, cinema-going experience, paratexts, ephemera

Özet
Hem akademik hem de popüler bağlamda, sinemaya ilişkin efemera sinema tarihini kavrayışımızda önemli rol oynar. Literatür taraması ve rastgele seçilen örneklere dayanan bu makalenin amacı lobi kartlarını hem sinema endüstrisi, biçimsel özellikler ve seyircilik pratikleri kapsamında anlamak ve tanıtmak hem de bu materyalleri film tanıtım videolarının erken bir örneği olarak tarihselleştirmektir. Bu tarihsel reklam materyalleri filmleri tanıtmak ve seyirci çekmek için kullanılmıştır. Tanıtımı yapılan filmden alınan sahnelerden ya da sette çekilen fotoğraflardan oluşan bir grup lobi kartı genellikle ya sinema salonu girişine yerleştirilmiş ya da bir camekân içinde sıralanarak fuayede sergilenmiştir. Lobi kartları kağıttan üretildikleri

ve iki boyutlu tasarlandıkları için ilk bakışta posterlere benzer. Öte yandan, kartların sergilenme biçimi ve seyirciyle etkileşimi bu tanıtım materyallerini fragmanların erken tarihli örneği olarak değerlendirmemize olanak tanımaktadır. Günümüzde gösterim mekânlarının merkezsizleşmesi ve dijitalleşme ile fragmanların özgül veya sabit bir mekânı yoktur. Oysa lobi kartları bağlamlarını terk etmeden perde dışında hikâye anlatmak üzere bir dizi üreterek sinemaya gitme deneyimine etkin şekilde eklemlenir; çünkü seyirciler perdeden çok da uzakta olmayan lobi kartlarını film izleme eyleminden önce ve sonra sinema salonunda görebilmiştir. Bu şekilde lobi kartları yan metinler olarak seyircilerin film seçiminde, olay örgüsünü yorumlamalarında, heyecanlanmalarında veya hayal kırıklığına uğramalarında ve film beğenisi geliştirmelerinde önemli rol oynar.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Lobi kartları, film tanıtımı, sinemaya gitme deneyimi, yan metinler, efemera

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Introduction

Lobby cards, which designate specific space and physical material, may not mean much for many viewers today. This type of advertising lost its primary purpose and became obsolete long ago. However, like all cinema related ephemera, lobby cards serve multiple and diverse purposes. They attract fans, professional and amateur collectors or scholars. Today one can see them on websites, at auctions and flea markets as tradable and collectable objects or in books as visual aids or documents with academic and archival value.[1] As Wickham puts it, ephemera create academic or popular film histories, help us understand the way cinema works and how cinema history is formulated, because they belong to cinema history and the history of everyday lives (Wickham, 2010, p. 315-319). Therefore, when the materials are "the only existing visual record of the film", lobby cards, and ephemera in general, can be "a direct source of information" and provide us information about wardrobes, sets, locations, production company, scriptwriter and director (Gallardo, 2013, p. 353). What's more, lobby cards constituted an important part of cinema-going experience, because these historical promotional materials are also paratexts which required spectators' engagement. Between posters and trailers lobby cards not only promoted films and stars but also shaped the context of film interpretation and taste.

This article, initially inspired by a lobby card (Figure 1) found in a bundle of photographs in spring 2018, focuses on lobby cards in terms of industry and their primary function in film publicity, formal aspects and the relation between spectatorship and cinema-going practices. In time, growing personal interest resulted in obtaining a few lobby cards, not out of a desire to own them, but out of a need to see and touch them; because, although many digital versions are one click away, lobby cards, first and foremost, are tangible objects used to advertise and sell films. Upon purchasing lobby cards at *nadirkitap.com*, a bookseller described their primary purpose as follows:

> Along with movie posters, lobby cards were essential visual advertising materials. Posters of the movies were put at the entrance to ensure the passers-by see which films were screening. In those times lobby cards were cheap advertising for the movies that are shown. They were pinned up on the walls of the cinema lobbies. These promotional materials were preserved in various glass cases. With appealing pictures on the cards a visual feast was displayed for cinema lovers (Website correspondence, 30.01.2022, with the permission of the bookseller).

The term and the comment above indicate that these cards were placed and displayed in the lobby or at the entrance of movie theatres to attract spectators with the intention of persuading them to buy tickets for the advertised movies. As it is seen in Figure 1, the needle marks on the corners point out that this particular photograph must have been pinned up and displayed in a movie theatre as well. In addition, the stamp on the back tells us the name of the distributor "SUNAR FİLM" and "Y. SERİ" must mean "a series of new films" to be distributed and therefore in need of advertising. The multiple needle marks and the deterioration on the corners also suggest that the display had taken place several times. This, along with the physical condition, points out the fact that lobby cards are portable and modular as well as tangible and perishable objects.

[1]For some examples from Turkish cinema see: (Scognamillo & Demirhan, 1999 and 2002); (Özgüç, 2005); (Öğünç, 2016).

Figure 1: *The lobby card (B&W/18 x 24 cm) purchased at Ayrancı Antique Baazar Spring 2018. Reproduced by the author.*

Analyzing such materials has its own challenges, therefore will require different research designs and methods. First, the above-mentioned modular and ephemeral aspect makes it almost an impossible task to (re)center lobby cards both in the past and present. Gallardo, referring to the scope of Mexican cinematographic history, mentions "the difficulties in establishing a chronology of the changing functions and aesthetics of motion picture lobby cards" (2013, p. 355). Second, analyzing such advertisements is multi-disciplinary and requires studying the industry with the distribution system and exhibition networks (Mukherjee, 2011, p. 329). Third, since "ephemera are ephemeral (and) designed for the moment" any analysis has to deal with issues such as item selection, overvaluation, unknown aspects of the artefact or questionable origin, date and ownership (Wickham, 2010, p. 317-326). Finally, any research related to the consumption of or interaction with such items, in terms of spectatorship, has to take into account the wide spectrum of materials; but still with their significant role in cinema history and culture lobby cards deserve a closer examination and different research agendas.

In terms of Turkish cinema history, it is possible to find a wide range of lobby cards because not only Turkish films, but also foreign films were exhibited and many cards are available online. However, keeping that in mind, the examples[2] were merely and randomly selected to illustrate and help visualize some formal aspects or functions. Therefore, this article does not aim to and obviously cannot analyze all the lobby cards and their changing aesthetics. Rather, for starters, the article, based on literature review and the ephemera itself, aims to understand their role and function in film publicity and cinema-going experience as paratexts[3] which are materials that target spectators and create all sorts of practices – from watching trailers to buying toys or wearing T-shirts. By focusing on the role and function of lobby cards and interpreting these documents, the article not only overviews and provides general information but also attempts to historicize these materials as an early form of trailers. These historical promotional materials advertised movies and helped (or manipulated) spectators produce filmic meaning off the screen. As for today they still, though indirectly, circulate certain genres, stars and film tastes. Therefore, the

[2]All the lobby cards used in this article were purchased by the author at either Ayrancı Antique Bazaar in Ankara or nadirkitap.com.

[3]Based on Gerard Genette's study the term paratext originally refers to any texts within and outside books: For example, peritexts include covers, title pages, author names, dedications or introductions while interviews, reviews, public responses, and ads are epitexts (cited in Gray, 2010, p. 25). As Gray puts it paratexts are "central part of media production and consumption processes"; they "condition our entrance to texts, telling us what to expect" and "prepare us for other texts". Posters, videogames, podcasts, reviews, or merchandise are all tangible forms of paratexts (Gray, 2010, p. 6, 16, 25).

first section, based on literature review and randomly selected examples, will focus on the historical background and aims to understand what lobby cards were. Since film stills were widely used as lobby cards and photography was a way of obtaining such images, the second section discusses and briefly comments on the relation between cinema and photography. The third section, examines the layout and display arrangements and from a theoretical perspective, tries to establish the audience-lobby cards encounter within cinema-going practice. The cards visually resemble posters but function like trailers due to scene selection, display arrangement and narrative quality. These promotional materials (and their ephemeral status today) paratextually influence filmic meaning and generate an off-screen site for interpretation, decision-making and taste formation.

1. Customizing Images: Historical Background and Industry

Lobby cards, as expected, are emerged in the field of film advertising. Films have always needed publicity even before the star system or feature films. When cinematograph was a novel visual device, practices such as using "the guidance of newspapers" and "opening night programs" (Musser, 2006, p. 170-174), announcing films with a notice (Özuyar, 2008, p. 51, 64-85) or "the role of barkers" (Lacasse, 2006, p. 182) in the early years underlined the necessity or desire to inform spectators. John Kobal and V.A. Wilson in their book *Foyer Pleasure: The Golden Age of Cinema Lobby Cards* (1983), a collection of cards that range from 1920s to mid-1950s, call lobby cards "a uniquely American creation" together with products like bubble-gum, hamburgers and seamless nylons. They were "provided by the early film companies to theatre owners with their two-reelers" (1983, p. 10). Inspired by other entertainment fields and modeled on theatrical productions, book jackets, circuses and traveling shows lobby cards meant to lure spectators into the movie theatres and "promised a world of wonders" like the circus posters did (Kobal and Wilson, 1983, p. 9-10; Staiger, 1990, p. 7).

In terms of material, lobby cards belong to a group of "secondary promotional items" and paper products such as stories in newspapers, trade papers, pressbooks and fan magazines (Staiger, 1990, p. 10).[4] Until about 1905 manufacturers employed a direct advertising method: They used catalogs; listed films' names, lengths, generic characteristics and plot summaries; but when distributors started supplying films to nickelodeons, the catalog lost its relevancy; distributors' reliability and alliance with manufacturers gained importance. The fact that films demanded "special treatment to encourage consumption" and their transformation from "generic products" to items with "apparently unique characteristics" led to a regularized and predictable distribution system after 1909 (Staiger, 1990, p. 6-7). Eventually the institutionalization gave way to publicity of movies rather than the cinema itself.

Evidently one cannot identify the diversity of the movie theatres and the display alternatives by way of looking at the cards today, but lobby cards were "mounted on easels beside the box office window or inside the lobby" (Kobal and Wilson, 1983, p. 10) or "originally displayed in specifically designed windows on the outside of the cinema and lit at night" (Stezaker, 2006, p. 113).[5] Although, as the name suggests, a specific space is required, it is not easy to agree on the optimum conditions of exhibition. However, these objects were connected to a certain space and place and aimed circulation within cinemas (Mukherjee, 2011, p. 327). Produced for display at movie theatres, they were located between actual viewing area and the entrance or outside the cinema. Unlike newspapers or fan magazines which could be found anywhere, we can assume

[4]Containing ads, plot summaries and suggestions to exploit films, pressbooks were based on the reciprocity between selling stars and newspapers (Kobal and Wilson, 1983, p. 9). Some examples of pressbooks and fan magazines can be found here: https://mediahistoryproject.org/

[5]For an example from Turkey see: (Çetinkaya, 2015, p. 42-43).

that lobby cards were not supposed to be far from movie theatres. They were literally *off the screen* but spatially dependent and closer to the context they actually belonged to. Hence, as part of their cinema-going experience spectators had to pass by, go to or be at the cinema in order to see the cards. That is why exhibition site becomes significant. Frank Ricketson, an exhibitor, highlights the need for stills in 1938 when he said, "scene stills attract attention and draw people into the theater lobby" (cited in Gomery, 2004, p. 506).

From an industrial point of view, stars and genre become important elements to draw attention. Pre-1915 ads and posters show that illustrations were used to foreground major scenes, dramatic intensity or genre (Staiger, 1990, p. 12). Similarly, when Kobal and Wilson say that "a typical set of cards promoted ROMANCE! DRAMA! TERROR! LAUGHTER! TEARS!" (1983, p. 10-11) they, quite literally, highlight the role of genre and its connection to spectators' feelings. In other words, lobby cards emphasize stars and call our attention to mise-en-scéne (Mukherjee, 2011, p. 329). By doing that, they rely on the correspondence between genre conventions and spectators, especially with popular films. When one scene or "the design had to reveal something of the film" (Kobal and Wilson, 1983, p. 14-15), then the cards visually spoke to the spectators.

For example, in Figure 7 the star is Türkân Şoray. Her name, though the font size is smaller, is above the film title. The lobby card is split half and consists of two different scenes, but the star looks as if she is dominating the whole surface, leaning forward, she comes to the forefront. Here seeing the star summons the genre she was associated with in Yeşilçam period. In Figure 8 the name "Arzu Okay" is easily detectable, too. The font size is bigger, and it is on the right but above the film title. For promotional purpose her name may have been misleadingly used, because she was a prominent actress during the 70s when erotic and pornographic movies were popular and accessible in mainstream cinemas. In Figure 4 and 9, the actor's name is also emphasized. The name "Kemal Sunal" is distinguishable. In *Düttürü Dünya* the names of the movie and the actor are in alignment while in the vertical layout of the movie *Yoksul* his name is in the middle; the font size is bigger than everyone else's names, except the director. In Figure 2 and 3 the names "Zeki Alasya" and "Metin Akpınar", famous comedy duo in 1970s and 1980s, are placed before the film title and these are the only actor names that we can see. In these examples actors' names might have functioned as a genre indicator. Whether the scenes on the cards are representative of the genre is questionable, but even today the actors' names remind us or evoke generic conventions and expectations.

Such visual addressing can appeal star-oriented or genre-oriented movie fans. Because of "the metonymic relation between the still and the film" (Van Parys, 2008, p. 87), genre "can work paratextually to frame a text" and affect interpretation (Gray, 2010, p. 6, 35-36) or attract attention. Lobby cards, with genre and stars, give spectators an idea before they watch the movie – similar to film trailers which are like "a taste test" for upcoming films (Kernan cited in Gray, 2010, p. 50). It is important to keep in mind that spectators were not always anonymous. When advertising practices changed over the years, there was a move from "mass to target audiences" which led to the reconceptualization of "the customer" from "everyone" to "someone-in-particular" (Staiger, 1990, p. 17). Therefore, movies as "unique" products needed to address "unique" spectators, and the lobby of a movie theatre seems to be a suitable location to give such an impression.

2. Making Images: Cinema and Photography

Apart from the ontological debate or their shared history of technology, photography has been integral to cinema industry and used for practical reasons. Photographs of sets or costumes were necessary due to continuity or reference and there were "stillmen" who took photographs of a

specific scene, usually from the viewpoint of the camera while actors stayed in character without breaking the fourth wall (Jacobs, 2010, p. 374). Taking photographs was an essential task because "massive publicity efforts […] surround(ed) all films" and other than straight and character portraits, fashion shots or advertising poses, film stills were mainly used for film promotion as in the case of the Edison and the Vitagraph companies (Gomery, 2004, p. 503-504). Although local exhibitors-controlled advertising, with the stabilized distribution system after 1909, production companies provided materials produced by their advertising departments (Staiger, 1990, p. 7). The studio system in the 1930s and 1940s, however, "increased the demand by exploiting publicity efficiently and aggressively" (Gomery, 2004, p. 506). These efforts show both the increasing variety of promotional materials and the importance of "below the line" labor – the fact that can be easily taken for granted or overshadowed by time and nostalgia when it comes to historical documents or ephemera such as lobby cards.[6]

The fact that film stills "provided the basis for posters and billboard advertising" (Jacobs, 2010, p. 374) inevitably invites us to consider the role photography and the distinction between stillness and movement. Today anyone can use the print screen key or take a screenshot to capture and freeze a moment of a moving picture. With new technology we can "manipulate film images and turn them into instances of photographic standstill" and therefore "digital media has made the distinction between film still and frame enlargement irrelevant" (Jacobs, 2010, p. 386); but still in the context of lobby cards the distinction seems important. David Campany regards the difference as "rich binary", because acting and posing are associated with cinema/movement and photography/stillness, which is "a fundamental part of how makers and viewers have come to understand images" (Campany, 2006, p. 98). He notes two types of film still. Both promote movies and shape the way we remember films: First, as Barthes defines it, it is a single frame or the actual frame extracted from the movie.[7] Second, it refers to still photograph shot by a cameraperson on the film set (Campany, 2006, p. 107). The difference here highlights the methods to obtain images used on lobby cards.

Unlike Campany, Stezaker believes that still images signal failure, because actors reconvene and pose for a "second-take" and these images "accidentally reveal about their circumstances of production" (Stezaker, 2006, p. 115). Stezaker, with disappointment, remembers the discrepancy between film stills and movies, but the way he describes these items places them within spectator practices:

> […] the failure represented by the film-still seems more acute. These images claimed to be samples of a promised cinematic entertainment but never seemed to actually appear on the

[6] Photographs and material production and distribution indicate the importance of manual labor in the industry because as Douglas Gomery points out thousands of copies were sent to the distributors, fan clubs and newspapers before the opening night, but when it came to the quality of the work, they were evaluated "by weight, not by beauty". In other words, they were "reproduced as cheaply as possible and then retouched by a battery of employees who cared not a whit about artistry and lighting, but only about whether a star's nose looked too big" (Gomery, 2004, p. 506). In terms of lobby cards Kobal and Wilson also draw our attention to this laborious task. By saying that "very often the men who selected the images for these films either hadn't seen them or couldn't have cared less" (1983, p. 16) they remind us the fact that image selection might not be based on "artistic", "aesthetic" or "professional" choices. Here the task of producing such materials reveals the distinction between, what John Caldwell calls, "below the line" workers and "above the line" directors, producers, writers and actors (cited in Gray, 2010, p. 8). For this reason, Jonathan Gray underlines the importance of "below the line" paratexts and states that the labor and creativity that produce such materials is as constitutive as the texts that are produced by the "above the line" agents due to the intensive industrial investments on bonus or paratextual materials (2010, p. 8).

[7] For Barthes photogrammes have several meanings. In addition to informational and symbolic meaning, there is a "third meaning" which is accidental and beyond the filmmaker's control. When we watch a film, the flow of individual images prevents us from having enough time to contemplate (Jacobs, 2010, p. 374).

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> screen. They evoked for me a spectral and shadowy underworld. Even when films were in colour, the black and white stills suggested 'film noir'. The other-worldly quality of the film-still […] become, for me, spaces of imaginary habitation. However, this aura of the still image would be instantly dispelled by the context of the moving image (and with the everydayness of colour). Cinematic encounter with the still was invariably dissimulative (Stezaker, 2006, p. 113-114).

This self-reflexive quality and distinction must be quite important from spectators' point of view, because some visuals exist only for promotion. This may alter their interpretation or expectation. As with the trailers today, lobby cards may not "accomplish" what they aimed for. They promote the films, but they may not promise to tell the truth. As a result of aesthetic choices and technical problems a still deviates from the film image; so some scenes are erased and some gestures or positions of actors contradict the scenes in the movie (Jacobs, 2010, p. 379). For example, in Figure 2, *Aslan Bacanak*, actors seem to be posing and waiting for the shot, without motion. The fact that the movie does not include this specific scene also forces us to think that it is a film still. Figure 3, *Petrol Kralları*, may seem more ambiguous, because the water dripping from the actor's hands indicates acting and movement (for both methods), but the fact that actors are facing the camera and looking away implies posing. However, when watching the film one can see that there is a scene where two actors get cleaned but it is not shot from this angle. In Figure 4 and 5 the blur we see show that the images were obtained while acting or during movement; because the outfit of the dancer and the woman's hand must have been shot while they were moving. These examples distinguish movement and stillness, but since they are not radically different from the actual scenes, one cannot expect to be disappointed as Stezaker did. However, these scenes, whether they are in the movie or not, might be remembered by the audience, represent that particular film and find their way into cinema culture and history.

Figure 2 *Aslan Bacanak* (Zeki Alasya, 1977)
Reproduced by the author.

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Figure 3: *Petrol Kralları* (Zeki Alasya, 1978)
Reproduced by the author.

Figure 4: *Düttürü Dünya* (Zeki Ökten, 1988)
34,5x24,5 cm. Reproduced by the author.

Figure 5: *Ateş Böceği* (İsmail Güneş, 1987)
17x31,5 cm. Reproduced by the author.

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3. Interpreting Images: Layout, Display and Narration

This section briefly evaluates visual components such as the role of typography, font size and color as well as recurring illustrations; but more importantly, it mainly focuses on size, number and display arrangements of the cards which liken them to trailers. Although the cards lack standardization and the examples here do not hold representative claim, they still help demonstrate their function in film promotion and cinema culture. In principle, all cards deliver an objective message and inform the audience. The examples here tell us the name of the movie, producer, director, screenwriter, director of photography and actors or the names of the composer and song writer. However, unlike what they say, how they say is likely to change spectators' visual perception and reception of the films. In the scope of this article, it won't be easy to cover the history of printing and typography or identify each font, but it is essential to be aware of different techniques and color choices. For instance, early examples, as Kobal and Wilson say, were "little more than murky reproductions of stills, the result of a brown and white rotogravure process that lacked any clear-cut whites and browns", which however "made them more durable than the fragile photographic stock on which movie stills were printed" (1983, p. 10). The lobby card Gallardo discusses, however, is "a silver gelatin developed-out photograph (fiber based paper) adhered overall for a secondary support of light green cardboard" (2013, p. 353). The examples in the article, even at first view, reveal different typefaces, fonts and colors.

Lobby cards obviously offer a surface for design and visual message. First, in typographic design elements such as variations of letter forms, two-dimensional space, figures, size and proportion interact with objective messages and subjective emotions (Kunz, 2002, p. 18, 50, 97). The use of space and the distribution of words, pictures and illustrations, in other words, the visual and spatial arrangements vary a lot. This must have altered the message and spectators' perception or opinion about the movies in different periods, because typography "sends objective messages (effect) and expresses subjective emotions (affect)" and differentiates "what is cognized" and "how it is perceived" (Kunz, 2002, p. 97).

Second, color is also an important element. Some cards sold black and white movies by luring spectators with colorful eye-catching scenes and illustrations. As Kobal and Wilson put it, it is "ironic" because the early examples were "sepia or duo-tinted" (1983, p. 10) and at the beginning lobby cards "were produced in blazing colors". However, they were "with a few rare exceptions, black and white films". The main motivation behind such a practice was obviously "to convey the excitement of the product they were selling" (Kobal and Wilson, 1983, p. 12). Here in Figure 6 tinted cut-out scenes or characters from the B&W movie were superimposed, which can exemplify Kobal and Wilson's comment. However, Figure 7 and 8 contradict this practice. They are not B&W films, but their lobby cards or the scenes from the movies are. Whether the movie is in color or not is indicated on some cards (Figure 2, 3, 7 & 8). It is possible to say that, like sound,[8] color was promoted or highlighted to attract and inform spectators, but paradoxically using black and white visuals.

[8]In the context of lobby cards and film advertising, sound seems to be an interesting element: "[…] with the arrival of *The Jazz Singer* sound became the novelty that had to be sold. In the foyers of the movie theatres, Lobby Cards were combined with the newly invented Talkie Card, a short lived forerunner of today's home video cassettes. Stills from the film showed the cast in static poses, as a result of being grouped around invisible microphones, quoting lines of dialogue from the movie. They were placed on a revolving drum linked to a recording of snippets of dialogue that would go on as each card popped up" (Kobal and Wilson, 1983, p. 17).

Figure 6: *Civanmert* (Aydın Arokan, 1960)
35x30 cm. Reproduced by the author.

Third, as Kobal and Wilson convey that in time lobby cards became sophisticated or "more lavish, imaginative and dimensional" and the kinetic designs decorated the photographs were more captivating (1983, p. 10). This could be related to the fact that "companies started hiring famous artists for illustrations" (Staiger, 1990, p. 8). That is why such ephemeral materials have "dual nature" as documentary or art objects (Gallardo, 2013, p. 355). For instance, "the style and feel of the nineteenth century French posters of Toulouse-Lautrec" in *Zaza* (1923), the recurring "silhouette of an elegant young eighteenth century courtier" in *Monsieur Beaucaire* (1924) with the actor's name, Rudolph Valentino, above the title or the signature of a famous designer in *Sunny Side Up* (1929) (Kobal and Wilson, 1983, p. 27, 36-52) may turn these cards into an art form. Here Figure 8 illustrates how a recurring image appears on each card. On the left side actors look in their roles and were taken out of the scenes they belonged to. They accompany a black and white scene from the movie. In Figure 9 an illustration is used above the scene. The recurring illustrated theme here is the building where the movie takes place. *Düttürü Dünya* (Figure 4) also has recurring images on all cards. Kemal Sunal, the leading actor, plays the instrument sitting on a globe on each card. All the recurring images and illustrations seem to be acting as a binder. While the scenes change, they hold the set of cards together.

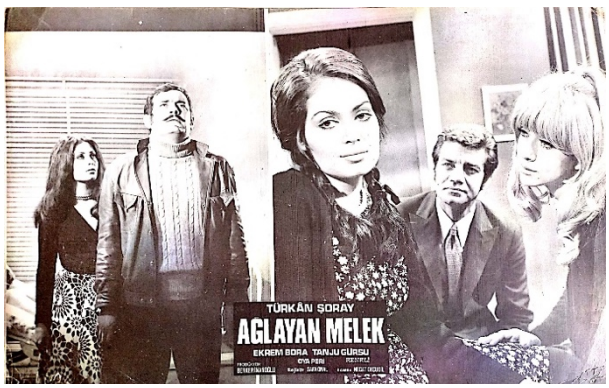

Figure 7: *Ağlayan Melek* (Safa Önal, 1970) - 34,5x24,5 cm. Reproduced by the author.

Figure 8: *Vur Mehmet Vur* (İbrahim Güray Giresunluoğlu, 1975).
Reproduced by the author.

Figure 9: *Yoksul* (Zeki Ökten, 1986) – 15x35 cm. Reproduced by the author.

Finally, the size and the number of lobby cards are important on several levels. Early examples were usually printed images which were mounted on a 11 x 14 paperboard for support, and this left enough space to include the film's logo, credits and various artwork (Gallardo, 2013, p. 350). There seems to be a standardization,[9] but the size, vertical or horizontal shape and the role of the cards in the set are not identical. The example given on the *Art of the Movies* website, a UK based family business which collects and sells movie posters, can give an idea: *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980), with one extra card, has a set of nine lobby cards which fall into the category of "mini lobby set" (8 x 10 inch) and the explanation on the website is as follows:

> The Title Card takes the design of the film's one-sheet movie poster, by the legendary Saul Bass. The eight "Scene Cards" lead us through some of the key moments of the movie, including the iconic "here's Johnny" moment and Shelley Duvall terrified, holding a butcher's knife. Given the film's nature and the studio's desire (perhaps need) to keep some of its most thrilling moments under wraps, the cards do a fantastic job of Jack Torrance's craziness, the potential danger to his son and the terror of his wife. Lobby card collectors use the term "a Dead Card" to describe a card that adds little to your understanding of the film […] There isn't a dead card in this set. They all do what lobby cards should […] At its best a Lobby Card provides the essential essence of a film in a single image (Kennedy, 2018).

[9]The *Art of the Movies* website gives a list of lobby cards with different names according to their sizes: Mini lobby card (8 x 10 inch/20 x 25 cm), Lobby card (11 x 14 inch/28 x 36 cm), Jumbo lobby card (14 x 17 inch/36 x 45 cm) and Window card (14 x 22 inch/36 x 55,9 cm) (Kennedy, 2018). Kobal and Wilson also mention standardization: "The cards grew to 11" x 14" (this became the standard size) and were offered in sets of no less than eight exciting scenes for the average film, and as many as sixteen for the new super productions" (1983, p. 11).

What we learn from the website, but may not apply to all examples, is that there are three types of cards: title card, scene cards and dead card. In this example the title card shows the name of the movie, director and the actors along with the statement that indicates the genre and places the movie in cinema history: "a masterpiece of modern horror" (Kennedy, 2018). While the scene cards, as the name suggests, depict certain scenes from the movie, dead cards are ineffective and reveal nothing or evoke no emotions and curiosity. Although Kobal and Wilson do not use the term "dead card",[10] they imply the existence of such cards: Some lobby cards have "features consisted only of dust-raising long shots in which the stars were distant images, or, conversely, might contain nothing but unexciting close-ups […] giving no clue to the story" (1983, p. 16). When lobby cards are expected to "give a sense of the story line of the movie" (Kobal & Wilson, 1983, p. 10) and to "provide the essential essence of a film" (Kennedy, 2018) the purpose is clearly to inform the spectators, create expectations, excite them or temper with their choices. However, it is also possible to be "deliberately ambiguous about the plot" to "appeal to the curiosity of diverse audiences" (Gadihoke, n.d., p. 109). Either way, whether the cards hide or give away the story, it is directly related to the narration and plot.

The order of the cards, ambiguous or self-explanatory, generate a sequence or narration. First, because film stills, like the film itself, tell a story and photographs can implement narrative functions (Jacobs, 2010, p. 380). Second, "the lobby cards of the period use shots from films to recreate the experience of actual film-viewing" (Mukherjee, 2011, p. 329), which implies a flow of images.[11] When there is a set of cards, then, how the display practices worked becomes a legitimate question. Was there a "right" order? Did the cards follow the scenes from the actual movie? Were the display order the same in every movie theatre? Since it was also a manual task, did someone change the order on purpose or by mistake? It seems that a set resembles a deck of cards so that one can arrange them in many ways. Without an indicator on the cards or without watching the movie, the possibilities are endless. The movie *Gülüşan* (Figure 10) can exemplify this. Each card has the same written information with a different scene, but which one is the first card? John Stezaker, based on his experience and referring to film stills, says that "these pictures were displayed in linear sequences as still versions of the cinematic narrative". They were both "advertisements for current cinematic entertainment" and "smaller sample of the next week's attraction labeled 'coming soon'" (2006, p. 113). When the cards were put up following the flow of the events in the movie, then it must be similar to film-viewing experience. When the cards are mixed, as an off-screen experience and a paratext, seeing jumbled images resembles watching trailers or sneak peak videos. However, in both cases seeing lobby cards and interpreting the images become a cinema-going practice.

It is not easy to go through the scene selection retrospectively and justify the reason behind the selection, but it can be said that the more cards were put up the more revealing (or manipulative) they must have become. Because the spectators had more options and information. There were more pieces from the movie to glance at before actually watching the movie. The entries for lobby cards on *nadirkitap.com* consist of the name of the movie, actors and a number. For instance, the lobby card for *Ağlayan Melek* is numbered as "No: 1". *Ateş Böceği* is "No: 12" and *Yoksul* is "No: 10". We can assume that they refer to their place in the set, but these numbers are not written on the actual cards, so their reliability seems questionable. On the other hand, the lobby card of the movie *Aslan Bacanak* (Figure 2) indicates its place in the set, because "No: 3" can be seen in the

[10]However, they use the term "title card" when describing the movie, *The First Kiss* (Rowland V. Lee, 1928) (Kobal and Wilson, 1983, p. 42).

[11] Comic strips, graphic novels, photo novels or fumettis have similarities in terms of narration and sequential story-telling. The reason for excluding them here is that they are not promotional materials in the first place, but visual products sold separately.

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box on the right, which gives us a clue for the display practices: There is or was a card/scene preceding and following this particular one. However, this specific visual, as mentioned before, looks like a still rather than a scene extracted from the movie, which can be misleading in terms of narration and interpretation. Scene selection, order of the cards/scenes and the aspect ratio (the scene in the lobby gets bigger on the big screen) must have changed the way spectators engaged with a film.

The fact that lobby cards come in sets differentiates them from promotional materials like posters. First, they reveal more about the story and they create an illusion of movement. Second, they change the film-spectator interaction. Seeing each scene beforehand could enhance or manipulate the viewing process. Because "iconic meaning of images, frontal address and the tableau form of narration […] are powerful narrative tools" (Mukherjee, 2011, p. 332). Eventually the relation between display arrangements and their reception becomes quite important. Although some cards lacked narrative power or effect, they were still telling a story and the moment they were seen might have triggered spectators' expectation and interpretation. This practice locates these images or fragments at the cinema, but *outside* the screen and film strip. With the illusion of movement or flow they generate; they act as an earlier form of trailers or sneak peak videos. Unlike trailers, which can be viewed anywhere today, lobby cards advertised films without disintegrating the context of the film, its fragments and the specific viewing space. Thomas van Parys, in his article on publicity stills, says that these materials "introduce the film into the popular consciousness. It has the status of a teaser" and they are "in the service of the film", because viewers go to the cinema "in order to see the surrounding visuals, to find out the context of the photographs" (2008, p. 91). That is why Van Parys believes that "as means of representation, publicity stills only become promotional in a second stage. It is only when the film still is shown in a certain context […] it actualizes itself as publicity still" (2008, p. 92). In other words, as long as the spectators enter the viewing area and watch the movie, they find the context of the scattered scenes or fill in the blanks. Spectators can meet their expectations or feel disappointed like Stezaker; but still engaging with lobby cards in this context is a spectator practice and disappointment as part of viewing experience and constructing filmic meaning is as valid as excitement.

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Figure 10: *Gülüşan* (Bilge Olgaç, 1985). Reproduced by the author.

Conclusion

Digital technologies have already changed film advertising. The time and place of encountering promotional materials are no longer specific. As products of movie industry, lobby cards were a form of film publicity and distribution which connected production to exhibition. These visual materials and documents were economically, socially and culturally integral part of cinema history. Despite losing their initial purpose, they are still around. They can be found in academic and popular contexts. Some are cheap, but some rise in value and have become even more commercial. From the industrial perspective, these tangible objects were commercially produced and distributed materials. They were displayed in specific places at the cinema to attract spectators, sell movies and promote stars and genres. Therefore, the first section in general reviewed the history and industry. Since the images, from production to interpretation, were central to lobby cards, the second section focused on the role of photography. However, as paratexts they addressed spectators and needed their involvement. For this reason, the third section discussed lobby cards as part of cinema-going experience referring to spectator–lobby card interaction and their function as trailers.

Staiger rightly reminds us that "asking and answering questions about the production of advertising does not answer questions about its reception" (1990, p. 4). Lobby cards, whether like a poster or a trailer, with spectators' active involvement, probably changed the way they interpreted films, influenced their decisions and helped them form film taste off the screen. In other words, as an early form of paratexts they must have contributed to or manipulated filmic meaning. Jonathan Gray says that paratexts, which increasingly become abundant, work both ways. We interact with such materials before or in the process of watching a film (or years later in a form of ephemera). Paratexts not only challenge the binary of primary/original–secondary/peripheral but also change our focus from "textual ontology" (what is text?) to "textual phenomenology (how does the text happen?) (Gray, 2010, p. 4, 18, 21, 41). What is more, as Gray asserts that paratexts can take over their texts. When people wear the T-shirt but skip the film or a child eats Happy Meal and buys toys without watching the film, we can speak of paratextual superiority (2010, p. 45-46). This obviously challenges what Van Parys believes: Publicity stills are "promotional in a second stage" because they actualize themselves in a context or when the film is seen (2008, p. 92). Johnston's remark is equally important. He believes that theoretically insisting on some terms, such as ancillary, ephemeral, satellite text or paratext, reduces the influence of promotional materials, because one can think that "materials are only useful in light of what they reveal about a central media text" (Johnston, 2019, p. 2-4). However, changing the

focus from the text to how it happens implies the role of spectators and can tell us more about cinema history and culture.

Lobby cards, as both historical promotional materials and ephemera, belong to cinema history and everyday life. These materials "shape in advance the conditions under which interpretations of films are formed" (Baker, 2004, p. 1). They may testify the existence of some movies, but they cannot be reduced to mere illustrations. In other words, because of their in-between status and the spectators' role, even if they are shaped by economic motivations, they can be seen as part of cinema-going experience. According to Wickham whether it is exceptional or trivial, diverse materials are united by "the audience's experience of the moving image and the mediation and development of that experience through a dialogue with the film industry" (2010, p. 316). An encounter with the lobby cards could be such a dialogue. This dialogue with the industry in cinema culture was once established with historical spectators. The dialogue alters but continues today. Even in this article, by selecting some lobby cards and excluding others, certain films, actors and genres keep circulating. Such texts and materials change interpretation, reception and the status of movies before and after or even without watching them or years later as ephemera. Despite the historical gap and the fact that lobby cards are replaced by new forms of advertising, they still exist; like all cinema related ephemera they "exist beyond the text" (Wickham, 2010, p. 316). Therefore, as historical paratexts and collectibles, they can help us understand cinema culture and spectator practices retrospectively.

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