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# The Representation of Turkish Women in James Bond Films

## Abstract

While there is ample academic material exploring the cinematic role of James Bond and the “Bond Girl”, this paper chooses to focus on and examine the significance of Turkish female representations in three films set in Istanbul: *From Russia with Love* (Terence Young, 1963), *The World Is Not Enough* (Michael Apted, 1999) and *Skyfall* (Sam Mendes, 2012). The varying representations in these films are scrutinized to investigate how they distinguish Turkish female characters and the connotations of Istanbul over time and whether this depiction is connected with Turkey’s changing position vis-à-vis the Western world. These questions thus have historical implications and point to the country’s geopolitical role at the time each film was released, and its effects on the female’s depiction and the plot. From a contextual analytical standpoint, factors such as costume theory, sexual objectification, post-colonialism and the “male gaze” are taken into account in the examination of the case studies.

## Keywords

Sexual objectification, ‘male gaze’, ‘Bond Girl’, ‘fluffer’, masculinity, Orientalism, ‘Othering’, Istanbul

## Author Notes

Kerem Bayraktaroglu received his PhD degree in English from Exeter University in July 2017. He is the author of *The Muslim World in Post-9/11 American Cinema: A Critical Study, 2001-2011* (McFarland, 2018). He has also published articles and presented papers at international conferences and university seminars. His areas of interest include Gender Studies, Feminism, Post-colonialism, Ethnic and Cultural Stereotypes, Representation of the “Other” in American cinema, Transnational cinema, Evolution of the child character in American movies, and Orientalism. He is presently working on the portrayal of China and the Chinese people in American cinema since the Beijing Olympics (2008) when the country showcased itself to the world as the up-and-coming global power.

## **General observations**

While the popularity of James Bond as a film character continues to flourish at the cinema box office, it is no surprise that his role has required revisions in order to appropriately update his significance within an ever-evolving world. Just as his role has been modified to suit these changes, so too has the portrayal of exotic locations and their inhabitants altered. He may remain part of an imperial fantasy, but his characteristics and relationships with women have, until recently, been influenced by what Bennett and Woollacott observe to be a “model of adjustment.” They comment that, due to this adjustment, “a condensation of the femininity attributes,” which are needed to accommodate Bond’s “new norms of male sexuality” are required and consequently incorporated into the films.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the necessity for a “model of adjustment,” it is claimed by Wagner that Bond’s position over a 50-year period as a colonial oppressor remains unchanged.<sup>2</sup> His insight into this matter is particularly revealing as he chooses to focus on the role of the black Bond Girl, but his prognosis can equally be applied to the plight of the “Other” women of the East, including those from Turkey. The representation of Muslim women in American cinema in general has been shown to have changed significantly, regardless of their national background,<sup>3</sup> and this also applies to Turkish female images in Bond films. Wagner claims that, in this instance, Bond’s position as a colonial oppressor defines his encounters with women of color who lack the ability to challenge their oppression [by Bond]. Black women, especially those with a clear

colonized past, are marginalized by Bond's "coolness." His suave yet cynical worldview, which frames the narratives, works to silence and disempower them because to question such a heroic figure like Bond would be to undermine a sense of hegemony that grows weaker in a post-colonial global framework.<sup>4</sup>

However, the re-imagining of the character of Bond and the Bond girls in general is conceived by some as a casual modification. Leach, for instance, claims that, "[i]n recent films, the Bond-woman relationship has come under pressure but has changed only superficially, with the woman becoming more active in furthering the plot, and, similarly, the reworking of Bond with different actors does not really affect his function as a dashing resourceful male."<sup>5</sup> The changes may look flimsy and unsubstantial if the focus is on a multitude of locations and an international collection of female interests, but a different picture emerges, verifying Bennett and Woollacott's stance, when the evolution of representing a single location and female companions of the same nationality are considered. This paper shows that some aspects of the "adjustment" in the Bond character are significant and influenced by the way Turkish female characters are moulded in line with Turkey's image in American politics.

In this article I will argue that the character of Bond represents a phallogentric masculinity that dominates agency and controls the discourses of sexuality. However, there is a degree of uncertainty regarding how, and indeed whether, he is positioned as an affirmation of a patriarchal ideology. In psychoanalytical terms, Bond embodies the phallus, and for Lacan the phallus "functions as a knot" by which the subject establishes a sense of "I" in contrast

to others (them). This “I” simultaneously functions as “a force by which the subject must measure himself up against.”<sup>6</sup> Complementing this paragon of virility is an attractive “Bond Girl” whose characteristics have implications for the character of Bond himself. In the ten-year period following the first James Bond film, *Dr No* (Terence Young, 1962), female characters in close association with the hero are presented as working alongside Bond, aligned with English culture and speaking with a British accent.<sup>7</sup> This quaintly elegant “English” companion is replaced towards the end of the decade with revolutionary British TV character types, such as those in the series *The Avengers*. These females are defined as “hip, leggy, sexy, brilliant, physically competent women who took nonsense from no man and were Steed’s superiors intellectually, and his equals in combat.”<sup>8</sup> The popularity of such action-woman characters with distinct British upper-class features was, however, short-lived as in the 1970s and 80s, American side-kick Bond Girls with masculine physical and behavioural characteristics took the floor. Sometimes cast as a villain or an agent from an opposite secret service, they continued the Bond Girl tradition of being an object of the “male gaze.” Less prominent local damsels have also featured in some scenes, one of whom Burnetts calls “the fluffer”. Fluffers, he claims, are “marked by a disposability that distinguishes them from the Bond Girl. They also signify alternatives to the Bond Girl’s passivity and powerlessness, enjoying a wider spectrum of agency for the limited time they are on screen.”<sup>9</sup> Burnetts compares these archetypes (which can be found in all the Bond films) to the fluffer in pornographic movies. Their purpose is to sexually prepare Bond

for the central Bond Girl he will encounter in due course. Burnett's further explains:

As a temporary character, the fluffer must be both eye-catching and invisible, indeterminacies that reveal a more unstable regime of desire in Bond than usually assumed. While the fluffer is more visibly exploited and disposable than the Bond Girl, such secondary characters also make visible sexual and racial pleasures that are otherwise repressed by the Bond film, not least in terms of its established adherences to heteronormative sexual pleasure and (neo) colonialist positioning of the foreign Other.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, they can be viewed as what Bennett and Woollacott call "phallic fodder" to emphasize Bond's sexuality.<sup>11</sup> The female figures in Bond films can therefore be divided into two categories (not counting the neutral extras appearing in external shots to fill in the background): the fluffer and the Bond Girl.

### **Istanbul as a film setting**

Being the only city in the world that extends to two continents (Europe and Asia), Istanbul has been a crossroads for many races and a melting pot for many beliefs and cultures. It has a rich historical heritage, handed down from two powerful empires of the past, the Christian Byzantine Empire and the Muslim Ottoman Empire, with their indigenous relics adorning the city. Due to its history, diversity and splendour, Istanbul has always been attractive for scriptwriters as a film setting, although not all stories which are based in Istanbul have been filmed on location, due to fluctuations in its geopolitical importance or internal stability.

The first Hollywood film that is associated with Istanbul seems to be a 1934 production named *Stamboul Quest*. This was followed by *Journey into Fear* and *Background to Danger*, both released in 1943. Famous actors of the studio production era appeared in Istanbul based films from the 1950s (*Five Fingers*, 1952, featuring James Mason, and *Istanbul*, 1957, featuring Errol Flynn), to the 1960s (*Topkapi*, 1964, featuring Maximilian Schell and Peter Ustinov). These films concentrate on the city as a gateway between the East and the West, rather than strictly on its religious characteristics. These were the days when Turkey was included among the European countries receiving Marshall Aid from the US in order to recover from the devastation of World War II, although it did not take part on either of the warring sides. Its inclusion among the recipients of this economic aid in 1947 was significant for it shows that US–Turkey relations in the late 1940s and early 1950s were exceptionally good. In fact, in 1952 Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and has been a close strategic ally of the US. In 1963 it was also accepted as a candidate member of the European Economic Community (EEC) in line with its aspirations to be more European than Asian. Things were going well for Istanbul as a film setting and a popular destination for filmmakers.

However, a single movie shattered the country's image in 1978 with long-lasting consequences. As a result of the black propaganda in *Midnight Express*, interest in Istanbul as a film setting suddenly died down and remained like this for at least most of the 1980s and 1990s. The only exception in this period is *High Road to China* (1983, featuring Tom Selleck) but this was not

filmed in Turkey. In the aftermath of the 1980 coup d'état Istanbul was under military rule and filming on site was considered to be difficult so the Istanbul scenes of *High Road to China* were shot in Volosko in western Croatia.

In the new millennium and especially since Barack Obama paid his first foreign visit to Istanbul in 2009, the city has again gained popularity with American filmmakers. In 2012, three different films were shot in Istanbul: *Taken 2* featuring Liam Neeson, *Skyfall* featuring Daniel Craig, and *Argo* featuring Ben Affleck. Others followed in later years: *The Water Diviner* in 2014 (starring Russell Crow), *Inferno* in 2016 (starring Tom Hanks), *The Promise* in 2016 (starring Christian Bale) and *Downsizing* in 2017 (starring Matt Damon).

Events in the unsettled Middle East may have consequences for US–Turkey relations, but whatever turn these events may take it is likely that Istanbul with all its charisma and attractions will continue to inspire future scriptwriters and filmmakers.

### **Turkish women in Bond films**

Bearing in mind the claims that Turkey's geopolitical importance has undergone serious modification, especially in the post-Cold War era,<sup>12</sup> the films in this study are analysed in the chronological order of their release dates. This not only provides insights into the evolution of Turkish women's depictions, but is also a basis for examining the geopolitical influences that have affected their transition.

Turkish women in the films under scrutiny here are not represented as Bond Girls, described by Caplen as the “ubiquitous symbol of glamour and sophistication.”<sup>13</sup> Nor are they “the disempowered object[s] of desire whose apparent autonomy is undermined by their role as bait.”<sup>14</sup>

While considering changes with regard to the Turkish female, three significant areas need to be addressed: (1) the means by which sexual objectification is displayed, (2) the Orientalist discourse at work, and (3) Bond’s role as a post-colonial fantasy figure.

Sexual objectification is accomplished through the male gaze, an idea made popular by Laura Mulvey in her essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.”<sup>15</sup> The concept of the male gaze refers to how women are looked at as a spectacle or object in the media by the patriarchal male. This gaze may be that of the hero in the film or its male viewers. Indeed, I argue that Bond’s gaze on the Turkish woman in *Skyfall* (Sam Mendes, 2012) and *From Russia with Love* (Terence Young, 1963) produces varying results with implications also for the audience. Fredrickson and Roberts state that sexual objectification results from sexual gazing, which divorces a woman’s body parts from her personality.<sup>16</sup> Dworkin elaborates on this premise and uses Kantian language to describe the phenomenon of sexual objectification as something which “occurs when a human being, through social means, is made less than human, turned into a thing or commodity, bought and sold. When objectification occurs, a person is depersonalized, so that no individuality or integrity is available socially or in what is an extremely circumscribed privacy.”<sup>17</sup>

While sexual objectification can be readily applied to encompass a large proportion of Bond Girls, what distinguishes the woman from the East is her belonging to the “Other” community and being inaccessible, thus provoking in the Western mind the desire to conquer the unattainable.<sup>18</sup> Edward Said, in his seminal work, *Orientalism*, outlines the process by which this “Othering” takes place and describes it as a style of thought based on ontological and epistemological distinctions between “the Orient” and “the Occident.”<sup>19</sup> Although Said’s analysis relates to the British and French views that developed as a result of the way the East was perceived, his work nonetheless suggests that Bond Girl representations differ according to the geopolitics of their country of origin. In fact, Baron expands on this premise and explains, “the construction of national identities of the ‘other’ is performed through the ideology of national identity and patriotic values of the films, which are explicitly British.” Bond’s adventures are steeped in the discourse of Orientalism, positioning the East as shadowy, incomprehensible and pathologized in order to justify Western imperialism and provide a way for Britishness “to continue to be defined in opposition to the ‘dark’ people of the world.”<sup>20</sup>

Lately, Orientalist discourse has been implemented to provide reasons for and justify US conflicts in the Middle East. Although in recent years the pretext for American presence in the Middle East has been the “delivery of democracy” to lands that have suffered under political despotism, before this it was the rescue and emancipation of women by the West from the tyranny of Islam. The three films under scrutiny here clearly reflect this “rescuer’s reflex.”

For example, in *From Russia with Love* it is Bond that prevents the Turkish gypsy women from killing each other; in *The World Is Not Enough* (Michael Apted, 1999), Bond is seen to save the women of Istanbul and, by implication, rescue them from contamination; and finally, in *Skyfall* he emancipates and sexually liberates his Turkish lover from the social demands that her faith and culture place upon her. However, the same films deviate from the traditional approach that is noticeable in the majority of American films depicting “the Orient.” The fusion of traditionalism and modernity present in the Istanbul scenes in these three films resonates with the thinking that Turkey is where East meets West and, like a bridge between the two, has the qualities of both sides.<sup>21</sup> The balance between these contrasting qualities seems to be determined by the rise or decline of Turkey’s geopolitical importance for the USA and/or Europe.

Finally, it is useful to refer to the costumes used in each film, as these play an important part in the formation of the characters. Everything a Bond Girl wears reveals something about her. While her clothes become a site of struggle for the control of her body, they often tell the audience more about her than the dialogue. Clothes permit the audience to assess her function within the scope of the narrative, despite her saying little or being on screen for a short period of time. In this sense, costumes in a film play a particular role in how female characters are perceived. Deborah Nadoolman Landis explains in *Screencraft – Costume Design*:

At the root of the problem with existing film costume literature is a lack of understanding (or a basic misunderstanding) about what a costume is, and what it is not. Costumes are a tool a film director has to tell the story of the movie. Fashion and costume are not synonymous. They have directly opposing and contradictory purposes. Costumes are never clothes. This is a problematic concept for fashion writers, designers, and magazine editors, and a real stumbling block to being able to understand costume design in film.<sup>22</sup>

This means that clothing, which complements the message to be given about a certain scene, is “costume.” Similarly, Jane Gaines discusses the relationship between costume and narrative: “costumes are fitted to the characters as a second skin, working in this capacity of the cause of narrative by relaying information to the view about a ‘person’.” She goes on to elaborate: “although all characters, regardless of gender, are conceived as ‘costumed’ in motion pictures, a woman’s dress and demeanour . . . indexes psychology; if costume represents interiority, it is she who is turned inside out on screen.”<sup>23</sup> The films under scrutiny here have additional analytical importance because the costume choice for each character showcases not only the difference between the Western audience and the members of the “Other” group, but also pinpoints the variations existing in the filmmaker’s mind among “Other” women (e.g., mistress, liberal female companion, tribal representative, city dweller, etc.). In a relatively unexplored academic field, costume theory does warrant mention, if only to indicate the inconsistencies and variations at work in portraying the Turkish woman in Bond films.

### ***From Russia with Love* (Terence Young, 1963)**

At the height of Turkey being the USA's valuable strategic partner and a candidate to become an EEC member state – that is, in the 1960s – the city's portrayal in *From Russia with Love* is twofold: it reflects the indecisiveness at the time on the part of the Western world as to whether Turkey should be applauded for its increased modernization, or kept at a distance because of its traditional Islamism. This was despite the fact that there were strong voices in favour of the former on account of Turkey being “the Islamic world's most self-consciously modern country.”<sup>24</sup> While it has never lost its reputation for being an “exotic” attraction,<sup>25</sup> the indecisiveness over how to read Turkey is clearly reflected in the 1963 film, with views dotted with tall modern buildings replicating those in Western metropolises, and sturdy mosques with slender minarets, among other cliché-ridden motifs, symbolizing a “backward” religion.

At the beginning of the film, as the credits roll, there are several occasions when our attention is directed to an Oriental dancer as the titles are projected on to her fragmented body. During the sequence, her face is framed only momentarily and then concealed, with 007 superimposed on it. If we are to assume that this Oriental dancer is of Turkish origin, we can begin to prepare ourselves for the degree of sexual objectification and overt sexualization of women yet to come in the film. According to Planka, the female body is deployed in this particular sequence as a “defamiliarized or veiled enticement in order to stimulate the desire for femininity and female sexuality.”<sup>26</sup> Planka elaborates by suggesting that women in Bond title credits are indeed objectified

rather than individualized, so that they can perform two key functions. First, the male viewer can “look at the women without inhibition, take pleasure in their aestheticized physicality, and project his fantasies onto their bodies”; second, the title designers use the woman as a canvas, onto which the credits are projected. This consequently and quite literally gives the female the “status of an object, or more specifically a screen, inviting close examination.”<sup>27</sup>

In *From Russia with Love*, Bond is assigned to go to Turkey to escort a Russian intelligence woman, Tatiana Romanova, and bring her, as well as a stolen decryption device, back to England. In his interpretation of the narrative, the filmmaker creates several contrasting portrayals of Turkish women. In external scenes, aesthetically Westernized female extras appear in modern European clothes, even wearing “bucket” or “lampshade” hats, which were fashionable in the West in the 1950s. They are either paired with males or shown as individual pedestrians. These are canvas fillers in a landscape design where Islamic hijabs, burkas and veils are not accentuated. Their image reveals little to associate them with their cultural faith and, despite some sporadic establishing shots of mosques, one could easily interpret their conduct as that of Westernized women. They are, however, neutral in terms of sexuality and not objectified.

The film also presents other Turkish female figures that gratify the male gaze. When Bond is first introduced to his counterpart, Ali Kerim Bey, we observe a quiet but stunning Turkish woman leaving his room, obviously after amorous activity. She exits the office just as Ali Kerim Bey adjusts and tidies a

bed he has in the adjoining room. Bond acknowledges her existence by subjecting her to a form of sexual objectification as she departs: he turns around and evaluates her figure from behind, with a smile of approval on his face. There is nothing to associate her behaviour and attire with her role and function as an Islamic woman. Ali Kerim Bey in this instance is not given extensive post-coital coverage either and it is left to the viewer to piece the implications of the scene together. This female image, therefore, is sexually connotative in nature. In a later scene, however, the same nameless Turkish woman appears again, but on this occasion she becomes vocally suggestive. Her wanton need to be satisfied is expressed by the only dialogue she is given, which consists of repeating Ali Kerim Bey's name in a lascivious manner. As Ali Kerim Bey walks towards her, the explosion of a bomb in the locality prevents him from quenching her oversexed thirst. Yet her demeanour, as with the gypsy women Bond later encounters, is reminiscent of the way Black describes May Day's representation in *A View to a Kill* (John Glen, 1985) as "a wild animalistic sexuality."<sup>28</sup> All such female archetypes (whether of African persuasion or an Eastern "Other") are not only associated with the erotic but are themselves eroticized.

Other contrasting portrayals of Turkish women can be found when Bond arrives at the undisclosed location of a gypsy camp, presumably in the vicinity of Istanbul. The setting contrasts starkly with the alluring landscape of the city itself. Caravans and Bedouinesque tents are positioned within a small confine, leaving Bond to conduct the bulk of his business outside. While the camp seems more stereotypically attuned to that of a Romanian or even Spanish topography,

Dodds argues that Bond's attitude towards Turkey and the Balkans is clearly shaped by a "plethora of stereotypes relating to the region's apparent reputation for backwardness, atavism and tribal violence."<sup>29</sup>

The festivities at the gypsy camp start with a gypsy girl dancing. The dance sequence can be read as a piece of historic cinematic Orientalism. Her eroticized movements are gazed upon by a predominately male audience, much to Bond's amusement. This can be construed as what Said describes as the West's relationship with the East, consisting "of power, of domination, of varying degrees of complex hegemony."<sup>30</sup> The dancing girl's suggestive attire is not only titillating but also a device that intentionally conjures up Orientalized images of the harem setting, realized in past films such as *Intolerance* (D.W. Griffith, 1916) and *Son of Sinbad* (Ted Tetzlaff, 1955).

After the dance sequence, the scene changes to two young Turkish gypsy women brawling over who is to marry the camp leader's son. They are shown wrestling on the ground, pulling each other's hair, hitting and biting one another in a savage fashion. The fact that Bond chooses to intervene in the women's fight illustrates the differing nature of opposing cultures. The voiceless gypsy dancer may have sexually warmed up the male spectators, but the female fight that follows acts as a fetishistic device that correlates sex with violence in Turkish women. What distinguishes the two female portrayals in the camp (the dancer and the fighters) is evident both in their physicality and their attire. The rhetoric of the costume design we have here therefore creates an assumed representation. The gypsy dancer suggests an Ottomanesque setting but the

appearance of the two brawling women emphasizes the cultural differences between the civilized West (as epitomized in the character of Bond) and the savage and mystical East.

The exotic Turkish Bond fluffers' agency is ambiguously split between racial alterity and classical femininity. These are both understood in terms of the Turkish female body's positioning within an economy of Bond's colonizing male desire. The Turkish gypsy dancer, who is sexually objectified by Bond, becomes an erotic precursor to the two fluffer gypsy women he eventually beds; a development which is not shown in the film but communicated to the audience by implication. Bond's threesome thus becomes a harbinger for his eventual encounter with the Bond Girl character of Russian origin, Tatiana Romanova.<sup>31</sup> Yet this is at the expense of misrepresenting the women of Turkey.

The cultural difference of the gypsy camp is also accentuated in the way Bond affirms the colourful nature of his environment by speaking in Turkish. He says, "Teşekkür ederim" (Thank you), which in itself is a rarity within the film's franchise as Bond scarcely speaks in any language other than his own. This novelty points to the various language ideologies at play within the scene. Androutsopoulos, for instance, believes that linguistic choices in cinematic discourse become meaningful "through their assignment to particular characters and their deployment in dialogic contrasts against the backdrop of (dominant) language ideologies." He further suggests that "[c]haracters are authenticated by the linguistic choices made for them by scriptwriters and performed by actors" and "language ideologies are mapped on character contrasts in the

cinematic representation of social difference.”<sup>32</sup> So when Bond speaks in Turkish, not only are cultural differences realized through aesthetic tropes but Bond’s status as a colonizing agent is reinforced.

Based on the understanding that costume complements the message conveyed by a certain scene, as mentioned earlier, it is obvious that the costume designers for *From Russia with Love* rely too much on generalized notions of regional clothing and too little on the exact locality. The garments chosen for the characters create incorrect assumptions in the viewer. After all, gypsy dancers in 1950s’ Turkey did not dress as the film depicts, and the costume chosen on this occasion came out of the Ottoman past. The gypsy dancer’s attire is a historic representation of Turkey. In comparison, the costumes of the other two gypsy women resemble a Balkanized trope that monolithically merges such representations. What further accentuates the differences is the manner in which Bond sticks out in the clothes that he wears. Karlan claims that in the gypsy camp sequence Bond is like a “western magician whose clothing separates him from the Eastern mystic,” making him protrude in his “charcoal suit against more traditionally clothed Turkish people, adorned with bright colors, flowing skirts, and tan suits.”<sup>33</sup>

It now sounds unbelievable that when *From Russia with Love* was first released in 1963, the gypsy camp sequence was under heavy scrutiny by the British Board of Film Classification, which deemed the dancer and subsequent fight too suggestive and risqué. Despite recommendations that the scenes be censored, the outcome is the most varied of all Turkish female depictions in the

Bond films, although some are reminiscent of old times while others are borrowed from neighbouring cultures. As we shall see in the following case studies, this has never been replicated to similar effect.

### ***The World Is Not Enough* (Michael Apted, 1999)**

In *The World Is Not Enough*, the city of Istanbul consists of the interiors of the eleventh-century lighthouse, Maiden's Tower (Kiz Kulesi), on the Bosphorus, considered to be one of the landmarks of the old city. Its separation on the island from mainland Turkey offers a contextual inquiry into the geopolitical identity of Turkey in the aftermath of the Cold War. When evaluated in terms of the geopolitical image that the country had in the world, this is an interesting period. In the latter part of the 1990s, the Republic was witnessing ground-breaking political moves for the first time in its history. An American-educated female academic, Professor Tansu Çiller, became Prime Minister in 1993, and in 1996 she formed a coalition government with the pro-Islamic Welfare Party. On the one hand, the country was being ruled by an educated, Westernized, good-looking woman and, on the other, religion was becoming a force in the political arena. However, the reason why most of the action scenes in *The World Is Not Enough* are crammed to the confines of a tower has nothing to do with either of these developments; it was a precautionary move, as explained below.

At the time of production of *The World Is Not Enough*, Michael Apted, the Director, said he was reluctant to film many of the scenes set in Turkey due

to the escalation of terrorism after the capture and imprisonment of the Kurdistan Workers' Party leader, Abdullah Öcalan. Consequently, Spain, Azerbaijan, the UK and other locations were used for the safety of the film's crew, replicating the country's setting. This required a new adjustment of the city. The reluctance to film in Turkey has had an indelible effect on how Turkish women are portrayed since there are hardly any scenes featuring the country's inhabitants, except for a handful of local "baddies." Instead, numerous establishing shots of Istanbul are favoured and the setting of the remote island of Kız Kulesi (Maiden's Tower) is the location in which the climatic sequences of the film take place. As Dodds remarks:

[the] geopolitical subversion [is] simultaneously utilised [in] particular representations of Istanbul and other parts of South East Europe and Central Asia in order to reflect as much on its assumed "Balkan" character as on the prevailing geopolitics of the period ... In the aftermath of the Cold War, these place-based characterisations were supplemented by Euro-American doctrines of rogue states, which helped define a geography of evil and terror.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, Dodds asserts that "Istanbul is actively re-imagined and re-presented as a palimpsest of geopolitical intrigue and mystery."<sup>35</sup> In this re-imagined setting, the city takes the form of a hub where control over oil and its consequences are displayed with increased violence, in comparison to earlier Bond films. Black writes: "The conflation of geopolitics and resources is handled deftly. The commercial and critical success of *The World Is Not Enough* (Apted, 1999) indicates that the cinematographic Bond is still alive and healthy"<sup>36</sup> even though his actions are confined to a tower where the local

female Turks who might have otherwise accentuated his virility are nowhere to be seen. The geopolitical ramifications of Turkey, in a post-Cold War and pre-millennial climate, left the country in a questionable state regarding its identity and role within the region. Was it going to continue being the strategic partner of the US, in coalition with the West, or would it take the side of its southern neighbour Iraq in the face of the WMD allegations? According to Dodds, *The World Is Not Enough* draws on mainstream political concerns over security, despite subverting the power realities of the post-Cold War period.<sup>37</sup> Bond still manages to silence the Turkish woman (as he does in the other case studies by satisfying her sexual wantonness), but on this occasion her silence is evidenced by her omission or absence from the film. This, according to Wagner, can be measured in response to Bond's "hyper-colonial privilege."<sup>38</sup>

The absence of female locals is compensated for by the inclusion of an alpha *femme fatale*, Elektra King, who is the offspring of an English father and an Azeri Turkish mother. When her father, Sir Robert King, is assassinated by the ex-KGB agent turned terrorist, Renard, Bond is assigned to protect her. However, as the story unfolds it becomes apparent that it is in fact himself that Bond has to protect from Elektra and Renard's deadly attacks. In the end, not surprisingly, he triumphs, saving M, as well as all Istanbulites, from disaster.

The Turkish woman's absence from the film requires the audience to adopt preconceived notions of her image and form. By conceding to a need to "fill in the blanks," the female becomes ingrained as a stereotype in the gritty and exotic city of Istanbul. She is neither seen nor heard but subtle prompts

appear throughout the film that indirectly stimulate our need to revert to preconceived notions of her. These prompts are either establishing shots of Istanbul or the rhetoric arising from the Orientalized purple dress that Elektra wears towards the end of the film. Furthermore, in an earlier scene set in Baku, we are provided glimpses of Azerbaijani villagers, both men and women, protesting the construction of an oil pipeline. While their appearance could quite easily be associated with Turkish village folk, the evocation of association propels us towards an assumed response in forming an impression of the silenced and absent Turkish female. Black believes that exoticism “forms the basis of establishing Otherness” when analysing the nature of Istanbul’s influence in the films but in this instance, “the city is only one aspect that impacts our impression.”<sup>39</sup> Such is the depth of Bond’s appeal as a colonizing agent that we succumb to acknowledging and accepting his racial privilege over the “Other.” The Turkish woman’s omission may generate an assumed response that necessitates a stereotype, but while this may not be explicitly negative, the audience is driven to cling to clichés more desperately. Her disappearance from the screen may be misleading but not persistent. Depending on the Western world’s notion of whether or not Turkey is a reliable ally, she may re-emerge like a politically meandering stream. As we shall see in the next case study, her portrayal is about to be subjected to yet another transformation.

***Skyfall* (Sam Mendes, 2012)**

In the last and most recent film, Turkey and the city of Istanbul once again play host to Bond, but in this particular case the film's theatrical release can be placed in the post-9/11 context, when public concern was diverted to America's internal security issues rather than how its strategic partners in the world were faring. By the time *Skyfall* was released in a post-9/11 climate, Istanbul had yet again been re-envisioned. This time, the city's identity was more prone to affirming a progressive and secularized stance within the Middle East, which was going through turmoil under the romanticized nomenclature, "the Arab Spring." Being the only secular democracy in the Muslim Middle East, Turkey, despite having been governed by a right-wing, Islamic party for ten years, was hailed as a model to follow. This resulted in Istanbul's filmic representation as a combination of traditionalism and modernity, as had been the case for 49 years, starting with *From Russia with Love*.

Turkey, although a member of NATO, became significant during this period on account of its "Muslimness." The year 2012 was pivotal in cinema for Muslim portrayals, with numerous cinematic narratives focusing on the plight of Islam either within the US or overseas. During that period, Turkey was used as a location in numerous films such as *Taken 2* (Olivier Megaton, 2012), *Argo* (Ben Affleck, 2012) and, three years earlier, *The International* (Tom Tykwer, 2009). Most recently, the city played a significant role in the climactic sequence in *Inferno* (Ron Howard, 2016).

*Skyfall*'s plot deals with Bond's loyalty to M when her past comes back to haunt her. When MI6 headquarters is attacked, 007 has to track down and destroy the threat. The opening sequences shot on location in Turkey involve Bond trying to chase an assassin who has managed to obtain vital information that will expose MI6 agents. After he is unable to apprehend the villain, Bond is shot and recuperates somewhere on a beach in Turkey with a voiceless Turkish female companion.

*Skyfall* does not deviate from the West's continual desire to place Turkey within an "Eastern" context. The city of Istanbul, in which the opening chase sequence takes place, remains a globalized city of spectacle where classical Orientalism has been recycled, updated and brought back together in what Akser terms "a montage form."<sup>40</sup> The aim of early representations seemed to be to present a "symphonic city" rather than to simply display its "views," "yet recent international productions have noticeably been more and more prone to using it as a backdrop for international conspiracies."<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, Akser recognizes that changes have occurred in how the city and its inhabitants are projected. He suggests that part of Hollywood's new Orientalized approach is to establish a conversion from a slow-paced, quiet locale to one of noise and chaos. By creating false geographies, Istanbul as envisaged in *Skyfall* manages to present Orientalist biases that seem authentic but, in reality, are far from accurate. Akser also asserts that "[t]he most important Orientalist approach to Istanbul is that it is a city of ancient monuments and not of people inhabiting it. When there are people they are bystanders to Western people. The images of women are those

of covered women.”<sup>42</sup> However, despite only rare glimpses of these covered women, the chase sequence in the film clearly establishes and is grounded in Orientalist conjecture: men chase one another, chaos ensues, an Arabesque score is heard and the action takes place not only in the Orientalist setting of a souq (bazaar), but also in close proximity to the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sofia, underlining the location’s multicultural and multi-religious past.

Enjoyable for what it is, *Skyfall* also has merits in disassociating common Orientalist features when portraying the Turkish woman. In brief scenes after the opening credits, Bond is seen during and after his lovemaking with a Turkish woman. This revitalized approach to how the Turkish fluffer girl is conveyed has great significance, for it is not only the first time that Bond can be seen having sex with a Muslim woman but it also affirms Turkey’s geopolitical role as a secularized nation, which can be an example to the rest of the Muslim world in the aftermath of the so-called Arab Spring.

During the time Bond spends in Turkey, Wagner believes his character is reaffirmed as “a patriarchal, colonial figure whose privilege affords him access to everything, including second chances.” He further comments that while this newly revised Bond film is less degrading to women, there is a failure to account for the manner in which “he asserts ‘racial privilege’ over women of color.”<sup>43</sup> This can be taken as an aspect that structures the overall narrative of the film. As Bond lies in bed with his companion, he is shown to have fulfilled his desire and is preoccupied with other matters. Meanwhile, the female showers him with post-coital kisses, reminding one of the nature in which the “Other”

remains an oversexed object of affection. The Turkish woman remains eroticized and sexually objectified, although silenced and voiceless. Like *From Russia with Love*, *Skyfall* takes the Turkish female and positions her within an Orientalized setting. The lovemaking sequence in the later film manages to evoke an Eastern scenario much in the same way as the gypsy sequence in the earlier, when Bond has a threesome in the gypsy camp. In both films, Bond assumes the role of an Ottoman Pasha whose every wish is attended to by his Turkish fluffer companions. However, *Skyfall* is different in its attempt to revitalize the racial dimensions of this so-called fluffer character. Her attire is typically Western and she is not subjected to being handed over by a local male, such as Ali Kerim Bey, for Bond's entertainment. The female here seems to be an individual having a relationship with Bond of her own free will.

The other point at which a Turkish female can be seen in the film comes directly after Bond has made love. In a beach bar, a Turkish woman becomes absorbed in the drunken, gambling male-dominated crowd that encourages 007 to drink alcohol while a scorpion rests on the outside of his palm. This woman in the holiday resort is typically Western in appearance and attire. She acts and behaves in a manner equal to her rowdy male cohorts. This contrasts with some of the Orientalized depictions of women in Istanbul in earlier parts of the film, but even there they remain hardly discernible because of all the commotion that ensues in the city. Yet, despite the attempt by the filmmaker to portray the contrasting identities of Turkish women in a secularized nation, they are still susceptible to being a part of an all-encompassing Orientalist narrative. In the

beach bar scene, for instance, the appearance of a bohemian and carefree Turkish woman is overshadowed by the use of an oversized scorpion, even though this predatory arachnid is indigenous to the desert or jungle, neither of which exist in Turkey. The Orientalist association between the desert and the scorpion becomes sensational and overshadows the attempt to segregate the modern Turkish woman from an Islamic typology. This reminds one of Akser's claim that "the Western imagination that converts the tranquil Oriental space into a place of action knows no limits, as it also creates false geographies."<sup>44</sup> In this instance, I have argued that despite the remodelling of the Turkish female image as a secularized individual, she is still cast in an environment that is firmly and recognizably Eastern.

## **Conclusion**

To date, there have been over 150 films depicting Turkey as imagined by the West, most of which are rich with clichés. The evolution of the country from being a rising star of the East moving towards the West in the 1960s, to a space feared for its internal political turmoil in the 1980s, and then a country torn between modernism and traditionalism in the 2000s, is reflected in the shaping of the female characters in the films. Images of the peaceful and imaginative protests in Gezi Park in 2013, staged by the environmentalist young men and women of Turkey, were shared with appreciation in Western social media, and images of the country called for some further updating. An adjustment is noticeable in *Skyfall*, the last Bond film to feature Turkey.

However, locale, attire, props, environment and space have problematically prevented the smooth process of this transformation. The Turkish female character remains subservient to the whim of Orientalist discourse through mere association with past tropes. She is subjected to different practices of representation as verified by the three case studies in question. Whether this is a direct representation, as in *From Russia with Love* and *Skyfall*, or an indirect representation through her omission, as in *The World Is Not Enough*, a racialized form of knowledge of the “Other” begins to emerge. This in turn becomes deeply implicated in the operations of power.

According to Burnetts, as envisaged through the character of Bond, “Western subjectivity longs to re-integrate with the Other in the name of contemporary pluralism that repudiates the white supremacist racism of the past.”<sup>45</sup> While such is the appeal of Bond maintaining a colonial privilege, the Turkish woman remains largely captive in a system with Eastern contours. This being said, it must be added that geopolitical changes influence how she is realized, for she neither remains tied to her Islamic lifestyle nor is wholly acceptable in a Westernized identity. Emerging from this is the fact that Orientalism as a discourse needs an expansion to allow fluctuations in the intensity of representation of the ‘Orient’ or what is considered to be ‘Oriental,’ depending on the geopolitical implications of this ‘imaginary’ territory for the Western world.

At the time of this writing, recent significant political shifts have been noticed within an ever-evolving global political landscape. Terms and

ideologies such as “New Populism,” “alternative facts,” “the Alt Right,” and “Fake News” seem to be in the forefront and will undoubtedly influence the creation of cultural representations. While we await a new radically altered depiction of the Turkish female, it seems more likely than ever that these future portrayals will be shaped by the geopolitical developments of the time. In fact, one may even go as far as to speculate that either the liberalization of Turkish women in Bond films will have a regressive effect on how they are conceived or they will be intentionally conveyed as representing polarized political discourses. If Bond is to return for a fourth visit to Turkey, it will be interesting to see if and how the socio-political influences of the current climate in the region warrant yet another transformation of her image.

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero* (London: Macmillan, 1987), 197.

<sup>2</sup> Travis L. Wagner, “‘The Old Ways Are Best’: The Colonization of Women of Color in Bond Films”, in *For His Eyes Only: The Women of James Bond*, ed. Lisa Funnell (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Kerem Bayraktaroglu, *The Muslim World in Post-9/11 American Cinema: A Critical Study 2001–2011* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Wagner, “‘The Old Ways Are Best’”, 58.

<sup>5</sup> Jim Leach, “James Bond and Female Authority: The Female M in the Bond Novels and Films”, in *For His Eyes Only*, ed. Lisa Funnell, 36.

<sup>6</sup> Jacques Lacan, “The Signification of the Phallus”, *Écrits: The Complete Collection*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 1996), 575.

<sup>7</sup> James Chapman, *License to Thrill: A Cultural History of the James Bond Films* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999).

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- <sup>8</sup> Toby Miller, *Spyscreen: Espionage on Film and TV from the 1930s to the 1960s* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 13.
- <sup>9</sup> Charles Burnetts, “Bond’s Bit on the Side: Race, Exoticism and the Bond ‘Fluffer’ Character”, in *For His Eyes Only*, ed. Lisa Funnell, 60.
- <sup>10</sup> Burnetts, “Bond’s Bit on the Side”, 61–62.
- <sup>11</sup> Bennett and Woollacott, *Bond and Beyond*, 197.
- <sup>12</sup> Pinar Bilgin, “The Making of the Mediterranean Region: Changing Geopolitical Images of the European Union and Turkey in the Post-Cold War Era”, Third Mediterranean Social and Political Research Meeting, Florence, 20–24 March 2002.
- <sup>13</sup> Robert A. Caplen, *Shaken and Stirred: The Feminism of James Bond* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corporation, 2010), 13.
- <sup>14</sup> E. Tincknell, “Double-0 Agencies: Femininity, Post-Feminism, and the Female Spy”, in *Revisioning 007: James Bond and Casino Royal*, ed. Cristoph Lindner (London: Wallflower Press, 2009), 110.
- <sup>15</sup> Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- <sup>16</sup> Barbara L. Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts, “Objectification Theory: Toward Understanding Women’s Lived Experiences and Mental Health Risks”, *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 21, 2 (1997).
- <sup>17</sup> Andrea Dworkin, “Against the Male Flood: Censorship, Pornography, and Equality”, in *Oxford Readings in Feminism: Feminism and Pornography*, ed. Drucill Cornell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 30.
- <sup>18</sup> Lisa Funnell, “Objects of White Male Desire: (D)Evolving Representations of Asian Women in Bond Films”, in *For His Eyes Only*, ed. Lisa Funnell.
- <sup>19</sup> Edward W. Said, “Orientalism”, in *The Norton Anthology: Theory and Criticism (1986–2012)*, ed. William E. Cain, Laurie Finke, Barbara Johnson and Vincent B. Leitch (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001).
- <sup>20</sup> Cynthia Baron, “Doctor No: Bonding Britishness to Racial Sovereignty”, in *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader*, ed. Cristoph Lindner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 154.
- <sup>21</sup> Ian Lesser, *Bridge or Barrier? Turkey and the West after the Cold War* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1992).
- <sup>22</sup> Deborah N. Landis, *Screencraft – Costume Design* (Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2003), 7.

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- <sup>23</sup> Jane Gaines, “Costume and Narrative: How Dress Tells the Woman’s Story”, in *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*, ed. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog (New York: Routledge, 1990), 181.
- <sup>24</sup> Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the 20th Century* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 261.
- <sup>25</sup> Ahmet Gürata, “City of Intrigues: Istanbul as an Exotic Attraction”, in *World Film Locations: Istanbul*, ed. Ö. Köksal (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2011).
- <sup>26</sup> Sabine Planka, “Female Bodies in the James Bond Title Sequences”, in *For His Eyes Only*, ed. Lisa Funnell, 142.
- <sup>27</sup> Planka, “Female Bodies in the James Bond Title Sequences”, 146.
- <sup>28</sup> Jeremy Black, *The Politics of James Bond: From Flemming's Novels to the Big Screen* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 69.
- <sup>29</sup> Klaus Dodds, “Licensed to Stereotype: Geopolitics, James Bond and the Spectre of Balkanism”, *Geopolitics* 8, 2 (2003), 135.
- <sup>30</sup> Said, “Orientalism”, 4.
- <sup>31</sup> Thomas M. Barrett, “Desiring the Soviet Woman. Tatiana Romanova and *From Russia with Love*”, in *For His Eyes Only*, ed. Lisa Funnell.
- <sup>32</sup> Jannis Androutopoulos, “Introduction: Language and Society in Cinematic Discourse”, *Multilingua* 31, 2 (2012), 147–148.
- <sup>33</sup> Ross Karlan, “The Spy Who Fooled Me”, in *For His Eyes Only*, ed. Lisa Funnell, 198.
- <sup>34</sup> Dodds, “Licensed to Stereotype”, 127.
- <sup>35</sup> Dodds, “Licensed to Stereotype”, 126.
- <sup>36</sup> Black, *The Politics of James Bond*, 168.
- <sup>37</sup> Dodds, “Licensed to Stereotype”.
- <sup>38</sup> Wagner, ““The Old Ways are Best””, 53.
- <sup>39</sup> Black, *The Politics of James Bond*, 29.
- <sup>40</sup> Murat Akser, “From Istanbul with Love: The New Orientalism of Hollywood”, in *Whose City Is That? Culture, Design, Spectacle and Capital in Istanbul*, ed. D. O. Koçak and O. K. Koçak (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 36.
- <sup>41</sup> Scott McQuire, *The Media City: Media, Architecture and Urban Space* (London: Sage Publications, 2008), 59.
- <sup>42</sup> Akser, “From Istanbul with Love,” 40.

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<sup>43</sup> Wagner, ““The Old Ways Are Best””, 53.

<sup>44</sup> Akser, “From Istanbul with Love”, 42.

<sup>45</sup> Burnetts, “Bond's Bit on the Side”, 63.

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