



Representation of Yemenis in the Cinematic Adaptation of *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*

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Abstract

The research paper investigates the depictions of Yemenis in Lars Hallström's movie, *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (2011), which was adapted based on Paul Torday's novel, *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (2007). The study aims to analyze the factors that contribute to the portrayals of Yemenis in the movie. In other words, the analysis is supposed to answer the following question: How does *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* depict the Yemenis? And what are the factors beyond those depictions? The study employs a qualitative textual and postcolonial film analysis. The theoretical framework of the study depends mainly on postcolonial theory and its concept "representation" with a special focus on some of its minor terms: distortion, binary opposition and hegemony. The paper concludes that the cinematic representations of Yemen and Yemenis are not neutral reflections of reality, but are shaped by complex interactions of power, discourse, and ideology. By applying postcolonial theory and the concept of representation, the research demonstrates how this film constructs Yemen as an "othered" and marginalized space within global cinematic narratives. Consequently, the study highlights the need for more nuanced and contextually grounded portrayals that move beyond reductive and stereotypical images, contributing to a deeper understanding of representation, identity, and power in international cinema.

Keywords: Postcolonial theory, Representation, Stereotypical images, *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*.

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تمثيل اليمنيين في النسخة السينمائية لرواية "صيد السلمون في اليمن"

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ملخص:

تتقصى هذه الدراسة طبيعة تمثيل اليمنيين وتصويرهم في فيلم المخرج لارس هالستروم «صيد السلمون في اليمن» (2011)، المقتبس عن رواية بول تورداي الصادرة بالعنوان ذاته (2007). تهدف الدراسة إلى تحليل العوامل والآليات المسهمة في تشكيل الصورة النمطية لليمنيين في الفيلم؛ ويسعى التحليل إلى الإجابة عن التساؤل الآتي: كيف صوّر فيلم «صيد السلمون في اليمن» اليمنيين؟ وما هي العوامل والدوافع الكامنة وراء تلك التصويرات؟ الدراسة وظفت التحليل النصي النوعي وتحليل الفيلم ما بعد الاستعماري. يعتمد الإطار النظري للدراسة أساساً على نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار ومفهوم "التمثيل"، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على بعض المفاهيم الفرعية ذات الصلة، مثل: التشويه، والتقابل الثنائي، والهيمنة. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن التمثيلات السينمائية لليمن واليمنيين لا تعكس الواقع بانعكاس محاييد، بل تتشكل وفق تفاعلات معقدة تحكمها علاقات القوة والخطاب والأيدولوجيا. ومن خلال تطبيق منظور ما بعد الاستعمار ومفهوم التمثيل، تُبين الدراسة كيف يعيد هذا الفيلم إنتاج اليمن بوصفه فضاءً مهمشاً وخاضعاً لمفهوم «الآخر» ضمن السرديات السينمائية العالمية. وبناءً على ذلك، تؤكد الدراسة على ضرورة تقديم معالجات درامية وسينمائية أكثر دقة وعمقاً، تستند إلى السياق الواقعي وتتجاوز الصور النمطية والاختزالية؛ بما يساهم في تعميق الفهم لجدلية التمثيل والهوية وعلاقات القوة في السينما الدولية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: منظور ما بعد الاستعمار، مفهوم التمثيل، الصور النمطية، فيلم صيد السلمون في اليمن.

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1. Introduction

Cinema is indeed a unique form of visual art that serves multiple functions, including entertainment, education and social and cultural dimensions. Cinema and films play a crucial role in the depiction of people, nations and their cultures. However, the depictions of Arabs in cinema were characterized by stereotypes and simplistic portrayals. Whereas many previous studies generally indicated that the depictions of Arabs in cinema are fraught with challenges of stereotypes, the portrayal of Yemenis in world films garnered insufficient scholarly focus.

British cinema has played a significant role in shaping representations of Arabs and, particularly, Yemenis in Western cinematic discourse. This is evident in *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (2011), which places Yemen and its people at the center of a British cinematic narrative. The representation of Yemenis in Western cinema, particularly British cinema, can be understood as the product of several interconnected historical and ideological factors, including Orientalism, the postcolonial legacy, and the political and cultural context that emerged after the events of September 11, 2001. These factors have contributed to shaping Western perceptions of Yemen and its people and have influenced the ways in which Yemenis are portrayed on screen.

The research paper investigates the depictions of Yemenis in Lars Hallström's movie, *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (2011), which was adapted based on Paul Torday's novel, *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (2007). The study aims to analyze the factors that contribute to the portrayals of Yemenis in the movie. In other words, the analysis is supposed to answer the following question: How does *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* depict the Yemenis? And what are the factors behind those depictions?

2. Literature Review

Many studies explored the cinema and its role in shaping perspectives and representing nations, including Arabs in general. The following section reviews previous studies relevant to the present research, with particular attention to the representation of Arabs, Muslims, Yemen and Yemenis in cinema and other forms of cultural representation.

2.1 Studies on Arab and Muslim Representations in Cinema

Jack G. Shaheen (2001) published a book that analyzes over 900 Hollywood films. Shaheen selected Hollywood films from early 20th century to the late 1990s featuring Arabs characters or settings as a sample of his study. Shaheen draws heavily on Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, and analyzes visual and narrative tropes within films. Shaheen's findings identify four dominant stereotypes: the terrorist, the Sheikh, the oppressed veiled woman, and the exoticized belly dancer. His study concluded that Arabs are predominantly portrayed as violent, uncivilized, fanatical, backward, and irrational, often without individual character development. The researcher claims that only 5% of Arab characters are depicted as normal, human



characters. In his concluding remarks, Shaheen urges filmmakers to move beyond harmful stereotypes and instead he calls for portrayals that reflect the everyday realities and diversity of Arabs individuals.

Besides, Iga Razani Khairunnisa (2023) investigated the portray of Muslim in the British film *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*, directed by Lasse Hallstrom. The research focuses on the interpretive examination of visual and narrative elements. The research is based on Roland Barthes' semiotic theory and Edward Said's *Orientalism*. The study aims to analyze how Muslim characters, particularly Sheikh Muhammad, are presented in the film. The study has explored the ideological meanings embedded in the visual and narrative elements of the film. In addition, the study examines how the semiotic signs contribute to the portrayal of Muslims within a Western cinematic context. The outcomes of the study highlight that the film portrayed Muslims through a Western lens, especially Sheikh Muhammed, who was depicted as both exotic and idealistic. The character is shown as a wealthy, spiritual, and eccentric figure, reinforcing certain Orientalist myths. Furthermore, the narrative simplifies complex Muslim identities by aligning them with Western ideals of rationality, progress and peace. Besides that, the film employs visual contrasts to symbolize cultural differences. The study recommends that filmmakers should engage more deeply with authentic representations of Muslim and Arab identities that go beyond stereotypical or symbolic roles. Moreover, future research should explore audience reception of such portrayals and investigate other films with similar semiotic patterns.

2.2 Study on Linguistics and Yemen Representation

Gibreel Sadeq Alaghbari and Ohood Al-Nakeeb (2017) examined the modals expressions in *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*. They employed critical linguistics, particularly Simpson's (1993) framework, to analyze modal expressions in the film's dialogue. The results of the study suggest that modal verbs in the film often signal uncertainty or possibility, reflecting the characters' tentative engagement with the project's feasibility. In the same vein, the use of modals helps frame the cultural and geographical context of Yemen, influencing audience perceptions. In addition to that, modal expressions reveal underlying power relations between characters, particularly between Western and Yemeni perspectives. While the study did not provide explicit recommendations, it underscored the importance of critical media consumption by encouraging audiences to critically engage with linguistic choices in media. Besides, recognizing how language constructs and perpetuates ideological narratives.

2.3 Study on Gender and Feminist Representations in the Film

Baleid Taha Shamsan Saeed (2019) studied the female consciousness in Torday's *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*. The study employs a feminist literary analysis as its primary theoretical framework. It adopts a qualitative textual analysis approach, examining character behavior, dialogue, and narrative function. The



analysis was conducted based on a close reading of the novel, with a particular focus on the female characters' psychological, emotional, and social responses to their environment. The paper explores how the female characters resist patriarchal norms and express autonomy and personal agency as well. It also examines the ways in which female voices are represented and empowered within the context of a male-dominated narrative structure. In addition to that, the study highlights how these female portrayals challenge traditional gender roles in literature and society. The findings indicate that Harriet's character is portrayed as emotionally resilient, professional, and morally centered—demonstrating maturity and self-direction despite personal hardship. Furthermore, Mary, though more traditional, represented a woman asserting her will through control over domestic and financial matters—offering a counterpoint to Harriet. Both characters embody different forms of female consciousness: one modern and assertive, the other traditional yet influential. Torday's representation suggests a progressive stance on women's roles, subtly challenging patriarchal tropes.

2.4 Synthesis of Previous Studies and Research Gap

The reviewed studies demonstrate that the representation of Arabs and Yemenis has been examined from different perspectives, including cinematic, linguistic, discursive, and semiotic approaches. Collectively, these studies have contributed to understanding how Arabs and Yemenis are represented through stereotypes, linguistic choices, visual signs, and other forms of meaning-making. However, the existing literature has given limited attention to the ways in which Yemeni identity is constructed in international cinema through a postcolonial perspective. In particular, previous linguistic and semiotic analyses do not fully address the power relations and ideological structures underlying such representations, including Orientalism, othering, binary opposition, hegemony, subalternity, mimicry, and hybridity.

Furthermore, limited attention has been given to the interaction between narrative characterization, visual and cinematic tropes, and the historical, political, cultural, and geopolitical contexts that contribute to the construction of Yemeni identity on screen. Therefore, the present study addresses this gap by examining the representation of Yemen and Yemenis in *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (2011) through a postcolonial framework, with particular attention to narrative characterization, visual and cinematic representation, and the contextual factors that shape these representations.

3. Methodology

This section presents the methodology adopted in the study to examine the representation of Yemen and Yemenis in *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (2011). It outlines the research design, data sources and corpus, data collection and coding procedures, analytical approach, and the boundaries of the study. It also explains how the selected scenes, dialogue, visual elements, and cinematic features are analyzed through the theoretical and analytical framework adopted in this study.



3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine the representation of Yemen and Yemenis in the British film *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (2011), directed by Lasse Hallström and based on the novel by Paul Torday. The study focuses on interpreting the meanings, cultural assumptions, visual representations, characterizations, and power relations constructed through the film. The study employs qualitative textual and visual film analysis to investigate how Yemen and Yemenis are constructed through narrative characterization, dialogue, visual imagery, cinematic settings, and cultural symbols.

The analysis is guided by Edward Said's concept of Orientalism and relevant postcolonial concepts concerning representation, cultural difference, power, and the relationship between the West and the East. The study organizes the analysis into three interconnected analytical categories: distortion, binary opposition, and hegemony. Distortion is examined through stereotyping and exoticism; binary opposition is analyzed through such oppositions as self/other, West/East, civilized/primitive, rational/irrational, and modern/traditional; and hegemony is examined through subalternity, mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity.

3.2 Data Sources and Corpus

The primary source of data is the film *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (2011). The film was selected because it provides an extended representation of Yemen and Yemeni characters within a British cinematic production and places Yemen at the center of its narrative. The analysis focuses on scenes in which Yemen, Yemeni characters, Yemeni culture, or relations between British and Yemeni characters are explicitly represented.

The data consist of selected scenes, character interactions, dialogue, visual images, settings, costumes, props, and other cinematic elements relevant to the research questions. Particular attention is given to scenes involving Sheikh Muhammad, Dr. Alfred Jones, Harriet, British government officials, and ordinary Yemeni characters. Dialogue spoken by the characters is examined alongside the visual and narrative context in which it occurs.

3.3 Data Collection and Coding Procedures

The film was viewed repeatedly to identify and record scenes relevant to the representation of Yemen and Yemenis. During the viewing process, relevant dialogue, character descriptions, visual elements, settings, costumes, gestures, cultural practices, and interactions between Yemeni and British characters were noted and organized according to their relevance to the research questions. The analysis followed a thematic coding procedure. Initially, relevant scenes and dialogue were identified and coded according to recurring representational patterns. These initial codes were subsequently organized under the three major analytical categories of distortion, binary opposition, and hegemony.



3.4 Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeds through three stages. First, the selected scenes are described in terms of their narrative, visual, and cinematic features. Second, these features are interpreted according to the three analytical categories of distortion, binary opposition, and hegemony. Third, the resulting representations are examined in relation to the contextual factors that may contribute to their construction, including Orientalist discourse, Britain's historical relationship with Yemen, political and geopolitical perceptions of Yemen, cultural assumptions about East-West difference, and the narrative function of Yemen within the film.

3.5 Analytical Boundaries

The study is limited to the representation of Yemen and Yemenis in *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (2011). It does not attempt to provide a general assessment of all British representations of Yemen or all cinematic representations of Arabs and Muslims. Although the study considers Britain's historical relationship with Yemen as an interpretive context, it does not claim that colonial history alone directly caused the representational choices made in the film. Historical and political contexts are therefore treated as factors that may help explain or contextualize the construction of representation rather than as direct causal explanations.

The study also does not evaluate the scientific feasibility of the salmon project or assess the film primarily as a work of environmental, political, or religious cinema. Its focus remains on representation: how Yemen and Yemenis are characterized, visualized, positioned in relation to British characters, and situated within structures of cultural power. Accordingly, the analysis concentrates on scenes and cinematic elements that directly contribute to these representations.

4. Theoretical Framework: Representation

This section presents the theoretical framework that frames the discussions and analysis of the research. Representation refers to the processes through which meaning is produced and circulated through language, images, and cultural texts rather than merely reflecting reality. Behdad (1994) argues that representation actively constructs social knowledge by shaping how people, places, and identities are understood within specific power relations. Representation plays a critical role in shaping public perceptions and legitimizing political narratives, especially in contexts of conflict, identity, and power. According to Rey Chow (2000), representation is a subjective system of signs through which societies construct and evaluate individuals within hierarchical frameworks of race, class, ethnicity, and gender (pp. 38-57).

Said (1978) demonstrates that representation operates as a discursive practice through which the West constructs the East as the "other," relying on fixed images of difference, inferiority, and exoticism to reinforce Western dominance. These representations are not neutral but are closely linked to colonial power, allowing the West to define and control non-Western societies. Said (1978) illustrates the idea of



representation is a theatrical one: "the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined (p. 2; as cited in Ali Behdad, 1994, p. 3-11)". This "stage" is constructed through a network of institutions, academic scholarship, popular literature, and images, all of which work together to naturalize Eurocentric knowledge and justify domination.

Said (1995) argues that when Orientalists traveled to the East, their primary aim was not to understand the region as it truly was, but rather to impose a European interpretation or representation of the Orient (p. 1; as cited in Manqoush et al, 2011).

Homi Bhabha's (1994) discussion of the representation of the "Other" complements Said's framework by drawing attention to the production of stereotypes and the ambivalence involved in representing cultural difference. He explains that Western representation of the "Other" often takes two main forms: sexual and racial (p. 67; as cited in Manqoush et al., 2011). The sexual form highlights the physical appearance and behavior of native people in ways that portray them as exotic and frequently distorted. The racial form involves assigning fixed stereotypes to different groups, such as describing Indians as "lazy" or Arabs as "violent." African women, such as the Khoe and San populations, as primitive, hypersexual, and exoticized. In the same vein, Muslim women are frequently depicted as passive victims requiring Western rescue, while Muslim men are portrayed as dangerous and violent, reinforcing binaries between the civilized West and the barbaric East.

Narmeen El-Farra (1996) explains that individuals may take the actions of a single person and apply them to an entire group, whether ethnic, religious, or social, leading to the formation of harmful stereotypes (as cited in Manqoush et al., 2011) This aligns with Bhabha's discussion of the concept of "fixity," as illustrated in the following excerpt:

An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. Likewise, the stereotype, which is its major discursive strategy, is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is 'always in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated (Bhabha, 1996, p. 66; as cited in Manqoush et al, 2011)

This suggests that the West establishes fixed stereotypes in its representation of the Orient to portray Orientals as backward, degenerate, uncivilized, savage, violent, or lazy. Furthermore, by reinforcing these stereotypes, Orientalism serves to legitimize Western domination and occupation of the Orient, as argued by Chow (2000) below:



Oriental stereotypes fixed typical weaknesses as (amongst others) cowardliness, laziness, untrustworthiness, fickleness, laxity, violence and lust.... Oriental peoples were often considered as possessing a tenuous moral sense and the readiness to indulge themselves in the more dubious aspects of human behaviour.... Orientalism posited the notion that Oriental peoples needed to be civilised and made to conform to the perceived higher moral standards upheld in the West. ... Orientalism justified the propriety of colonialism by claiming that the Oriental peoples needed saving from themselves (p. 46; as cited in Manqoush et al., 2011).

Western discourse has long positioned itself as morally and intellectually superior, promoting the belief that it has the right, and even the duty, to civilize, educate, and develop the Orient. Over time, these persistent stereotypes become internalized by the Orient itself. As a result, some individuals in the East may unconsciously accept these imposed identities and view Western ideals as benchmarks of development and modernity. This dynamic reflects a deeper colonial legacy, in which power not only subjugates the body but also reshapes the mind and self-perception of the colonized. In general, representation can occur through distortion, binary opposition and hegemony as detailed below:

3.1 Distortion

In postcolonialism, distortion refers to misrepresenting, simplifying, or manipulating the cultures, histories, and identities of colonized peoples. These depictions distort reality by creating simplified, stereotypical images that serve the interests of the colonizer. Colonial histories often erase or rewrite the pasts of colonized societies to glorify the colonizer's mission. Simultaneously, native achievements, resistance movements, or precolonial civilizations are minimized or ignored.

Said (1978) argues that Western depictions of the Orient were distorted to serve imperial power: "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (Said, 1978, p. 1). Said argues that the West distorted the East by creating a binary opposition: the West is rational, civilized, and progressive, while the East is irrational, backward, and exotic. Therefore, the Orient was not represented as it truly was, but as a constructed "Other" through literature, art, and academic discourse.

In continuation of this idea, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) explained, "The domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized" (p.16). Ngũgĩ shows how colonial powers distorted the mental and cultural realities of the colonized by imposing their own languages, thus alienating people from their indigenous identities.



Richard D. Ashmore and Frances K. Del Boca (1981) trace the concept of stereotypes within psychological research back to mid-20th-century social psychology (p. 1-35). Early studies, led by scholars like Allport, treated stereotypes mainly as fixed, negative in-group/out-group generalizations that caused prejudice. They define Stereotypes as socially shared cognitive schemas—generalized beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of particular social groups or categories. On the other hand, stereotyping refers to the cognitive process of applying these group-based schemas to individuals, especially in intergroup contexts.

Accordingly, Said (1978) states “Orientalism establishes and maintains a distinction between ‘the Orient’ and ‘the Occident,’ a distinction based not on geographical facts but on cultural stereotypes and power relations” (pp. 2-6). Said (1978) describes Western constructions of the Orient not merely as descriptions but as discourses shaped by imperial power (p. 3; as cited in Behdad, 1994, p. 3-11). He argues that these discourses define the Orient through a set of fixed stereotypes that frame Eastern societies as inherently backward, irrational, exotic, despotic, and inferior to the modern, rational, and moral West. These images are maintained through institutional and cultural practices underpinned by Western imperial interests.

By the same token, Shaheen (2009) illustrates the stereotype entry in movies. He states:

Filmmakers did not create the stereotype but inherited and embellished Europe's pre—existing Arab caricatures. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European artists and writers helped reduce the region to colony. They present images of desolate deserts, corrupt palaces, and slimy souks inhabited by the cultural "other"- the lazy, bearded heathen Arab Muslim (p. 27-28).

This passage highlights how Hollywood filmmakers did not invent negative stereotypes about Arabs, but instead adopted and intensified caricatures originally crafted by European colonial thinkers, travel writers, and artists—thereby cementing distorted images of Arab people in Western mass media.

During the early 1900s, imagemakers like the French filmmaker Georges Méliès portrayed Arabs as stereotypically riding camels, wielding scimitars, engaging in violent acts against one another, and obsessively desiring Western women while disregarding their own (Shaheen, 2009, p. 28).

The French term *exotisme* originally meant something foreign or from another country, but by the nineteenth century it had become almost synonymous with colonial discourse and superficial stereotyping. Victor Segalen (1908; cited in Charles Forsdick, 2003) defined exoticism as “the notion of difference, the perception of diversity, the knowledge that something is other than oneself,” with its true power lying in the ability “to conceive otherwise”

Exoticism is the portrayal of people, cultures, places, or traditions as unfamiliar, mysterious, alluring, or fundamentally different from the dominant, typically Western, norm. This concept often entails reducing non-



Western or colonized societies to simplified or romanticized stereotypes, presenting them in ways that appeal to Western tastes and fantasies, while ignoring their complexity and reality.

3.2 Binary Opposition

Binary opposition is a central concept within Orientalist and postcolonial discourse, where representation is constructed through unequal contrasts between the West and the East. Binary opposition operates through a series of hierarchical contrasts that divide the world into opposing categories. Within Orientalist and postcolonial discourse, these oppositions commonly include West versus East, self-versus other, modern versus traditional, white versus non-white, and rational versus irrational. Such divisions are not neutral; rather, they place the West, the self, modernity, whiteness, and rationality in positions of superiority, while assigning the East and the “other” to inferior or threatening roles.

In Orientalist and postcolonial discourse, the opposition between the West and the East functions as a structural division of power rather than merely a cultural or moral contrast. Binary opposition between the West and the East is a central concept in Said’s theory of Orientalism. Said (1978, p. 3) argues that the West’s understanding of the East is structured through binary oppositions in which the West is positioned as superior and the primary producer of knowledge, authority, and representation, while the East is constructed as an object to be observed, interpreted, controlled, inferior and threatening. From this perspective, the West occupies the role of the speaking subject, shaping narratives about the East, whereas Eastern societies are denied the ability to represent themselves. Said asserts that “the West is the actor, the Orient a passive reactor. The West is the subject of history, the Orient its object” (Said, 1978, p. 109).

In cinematic representations, this imbalance appears through Western-centered storytelling in which Western or foreign characters drive the plot, explain events, and define meaning, while Eastern spaces such as Yemen are reduced to simplified, stereotypical images and settings of conflict or spectacle. These binaries, he explains, are not objective representations but ideological tools used to assert Western superiority and justify colonial control.

Postcolonial theory views the self/other division as a process through which identity is formed by separation and marginalization. The “self” is defined as familiar, stable, and normative, while the “other” is produced as strange, unpredictable, and fundamentally different. As Behdad (1994) explains, representation functions by fixing difference, making the “other” visible in limited and repetitive ways that stabilize the identity of the self. In cinema, this self/other division appears through narrative focus and characterization: the self is granted complexity, emotional depth, and moral legitimacy, whereas the other is often silenced, generalized, or reduced to a symbolic threat.



The binary opposition between the civilized and the primitive has been widely examined in postcolonial theory which functions as a hierarchical system that ranks societies according to Western standards of progress and development. This distinction constructs the "civilized" as modern, disciplined, and morally advanced, while labeling the "primitive" as stagnant, violent, or incapable of self-governance. Said (1978) argues that such classifications are not objective descriptions but discursive tools that enable domination by presenting non-Western societies as naturally inferior and in need of external control.

These opposing binaries still affect cultural and political identities in the postcolonial period. Within the colonial context, the West often defined itself in opposition to the East, portraying itself as rational, civilized, and mature, while characterizing the Orient as irrational, primitive, and inferior. Yet, these identities are interdependent; the West required the East to affirm its own sense of superiority.

3.3 Hegemony

George Lipsitz (1988) describes hegemony as the process through which the ruling class maintains dominance by shaping common sense, everyday values, and cultural norms in ways that make the existing social order appear natural and inevitable.

In the same vein, Thomas R. Bates (1975, p. 352) clarified that the concept of hegemony is relatively straightforward. It refers to political leadership that is maintained through the consent of the people being led. This consent is achieved by spreading and normalizing the worldview of the ruling class. While the term "hegemony" is not new to Western political thought and is often associated with some form of domination, as Forsdick (2003, p. 25) notes Antony Gramsci (1929-1935); an Italian Marxist philosopher, journalist, linguist, and revolutionary politician and he is best known for his theory of cultural hegemony; use of the concept has a more specific historical background. Gramsci's understanding of hegemony can be traced to the political debates among Russian revolutionaries in the early 20th century.

Gramsci, however, extended the meaning of hegemony significantly during his imprisonment in the 1930s. According to Bates (1975), Gramsci moved beyond the idea of leadership and developed a theory in which ideology, culture, and civil society play central roles in maintaining class dominance. For Gramsci, the ruling class does not rely solely on force (or domination) to stay in power, but also secures the consent of subordinate classes by promoting its worldview as common sense and universal truth. This process occurs primarily through civil institutions such as education, media, religion, and the family.

In addition, Fanon explores the dynamics of hegemony in the colonial context, particularly through the psychological and cultural effects of colonial domination. Although he does not explicitly use the term "hegemony" in the Gramscian sense, his work deeply aligns with the concept. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon examines how colonial rule extends beyond political



and economic control to infiltrate the minds of the colonized. He describes how colonized individuals internalize the values, norms, and language of the colonizer, often resulting in feelings of inferiority and self-alienation. This internalization of colonial ideology represents a form of hegemonic control, as the colonized come to accept and reproduce the dominant worldview (Vichiensing, 2017).

Said, in his book *Orientalism* (1978), draws directly on Gramsci's idea of cultural hegemony to show how Western imperial powers maintained dominance not only through military and economic means but also through the production of knowledge. Said argues that the West constructed a dominant discourse about the East, portraying it as exotic, backward, and inferior, in order to legitimize colonial rule (Al Areqi, 2017).

The term *subaltern* was first introduced into critical theory by Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* (written between 1929–1935). Gramsci used the term "subaltern" (*subalterno*) as a strategic way to refer to social groups excluded from hegemonic power structures, especially the working class and peasants who lacked political representation. For Gramsci, the subaltern classes are those who exist outside the dominant power networks, they are subordinated in terms of class, voice, and agency. He was interested in how these groups could achieve political consciousness and challenge domination through counter-hegemonic struggle. He emphasized that subalterns are not completely voiceless, but their capacity for self-representation is fragmented and often mediated through elite discourse. As he wrote, "History has always been written by the dominant class," meaning subaltern perspectives are often erased or distorted in dominant narratives (Swati Chattopadhyay & Bhaskar Sarkar, 2005).

Although the concept of the subaltern, initially borrowed from Gramsci, it was significantly redefined by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who uses the term to refer to those populations that are socially, politically, and epistemically marginalized to such an extent that they are denied the capacity to speak or be heard within dominant structures of power and knowledge (Spivak, 1988). Spivak's seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) is one of the foundational texts in postcolonial theory and Subaltern Studies. In this work, Spivak critically examines whether the voice of the subaltern, those who are most socially, politically, and geographically outside the hegemonic power structure, can ever truly be heard or represented within dominant Western (Rashed Al Areqi, 2017).

Another key concept in postcolonial theory developed by Bhabha is mimicry. It describes a condition in which the colonized attempt to imitate the colonizer; such as Indians or Africans, adopt the language, clothing, political views, or cultural attitudes of their colonizers, like the British or French, but the imitation is always partial and never identical. Bhabha introduces the term mimicry, which he defines as the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite. According to Bhabha (1994), for mimicry to function effectively, it must always produce a certain degree of difference,



excess, or slippage from the original it imitates. This means that mimicry is not simply replication—it can also act as a parody that threatens colonial authority. Bhabha argues that this threat arises from mimicry's double vision, which exposes the contradictions within colonial discourse and, in doing so, undermines its legitimacy.

Conversely, by imitating those in power, one hopes to gain access to similar power or privilege, however it causes such confusion and disorientation that individuals may no longer have a stable or clear sense of identity to repress colonized. Therefore, mimicry is often perceived negatively, and individuals are frequently criticized by others within their own group. Mimicry, however, is not entirely negative. In Bhabha's essay *"Of Mimicry and Man,"* Bhabha suggests that mimicry can sometimes be unintentionally subversive.

Hybridity, one of the most widely used and controversial terms in postcolonial theory, often refers to the creation of new forms of interculturality in the contact zone created by the process of colonization (Umar & Nuhu Lawan, 2024). The term "hybrid" has recently been linked to the work of Bhabha, who explores how colonial and colonized societies are interconnected and how they shape each other's identities. Bhabha (1994, p. 37), who is a leading theorist of hybridity which he developed in *Signs Taken for Wonders* (1985) and other key essays, explains that cultural mixing takes place within what he calls the "Third Space." This is an in-between area where different cultures meet and interact, challenging colonial power structures and allowing new identities and cultural expressions to develop. Bhabha describes hybridity as the process where different cultures meet, interact, and mix, producing new, hybrid identities and cultural forms. It's not simply blending but a complex negotiation that disrupts fixed ideas of identity.

Within the field of postcolonial literature, numerous efforts have been made to define the term 'hybridity'. Hybridity appears in many forms: linguistic, cultural, political, and racial. Anita Dimitrijevska-Jankulovska and Milica Denkovska (2023) explain that Bhabha sees hybridity as a form of resistance. Rather than passively accepting the colonizer's authority, colonized individuals adapted and reinterpreted elements of colonial culture. This process disrupted the colonizer's efforts to classify and control colonized populations, as emerging hybrid identities no longer fit within imposed categories.

4. Discussions and Analysis

This section provides discussions and analysis of the depictions of Yemenis in the movie. Building on the theoretical framework outlined in the previous section, this section seeks to critically evaluate how cinematic narratives construct, reinforce, or challenge stereotypes about Yemenis. Hence, the current section was divided into three main subdivisions. The first centers on the distortion of Yemenis in the movie, the second focuses on the binary oppositions, and the third and last one emphasizes the hegemony.



4.1 Distortion of Yemenis in the Movie

The distortion of Yemenis in the movie was employed through the use of stereotyping and exoticism. Yemenis are portrayed as traditional, desert-dwelling people resistant to modernity. As shown in the events of the movie, Dr. Alfred's early remark about the idea: "You can't possibly expect salmon to survive in the desert. This is the Middle East, not Scotland." This reduces Yemen to a stereotypical desert; barren, inhospitable, and incompatible with progress or modern projects.

While the Shiekh is partly hybridized, he is still portrayed as a romanticized figure who must rely on British science and expertise to realize his vision, yet naïve. A British government aide dismisses the project: "So, the Sheikh wants to play at being a country squire with his tribe of Arabs?" This frames the Yemenis as a stereotypical "tribe," backward and primitive, incapable of serious modern undertakings. The stereotype here is rooted in orientalism rather than terrorism or dependency. Yemenis are represented as timeless, mystical, and in need of Western knowledge to achieve progress.

In addition to that, the film employs this form of stereotyping to justify the historical reality of Britain's past presence in Yemen. Yemen is depicted as a land of wealth and potential, symbolized by the Sheikh's riches, yet lacking the scientific knowledge or practical ability to utilize these resources effectively. Through this framing, the film suggests that without British expertise and guidance, Yemenis are unable to transform their wealth into progress, thereby legitimizing colonial intervention.

Moreover, the Sheikh is wealthy and spiritual, but his character is still framed through an "exotic" lens as well as the way he was referred to as Sheikh and the way he dressed. In addition, the other Yemenis in the film were depicted as uneducated people living in tents in the desert, with no permanent buildings, emphasizing difference from the British characters. British official dismisses the project as absurd: "You really think Yemeni tribesmen will care about salmon?"

In brief, the stereotyping of Yemenis in the film is deeply flawed and reductive. By portraying them as dependent, or exotic, the film erases individuality, ignore social complexity, and present a fixed, unchanging image of Yemeni society. Such depictions fail to acknowledge the significant development Yemenis have achieved in recent decades across economic, educational, and cultural spheres. These cinematic stereotypes thus not only misrepresent Yemenis but also perpetuate outdated and inaccurate notions that obscure the reality of their progress and agency.

In *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*, exoticism is strongly present in several ways. First, Yemen is not portrayed as a real, complex country but rather as a desert landscape filled with tents, camels, and barren mountains. The idea of introducing salmon fishing in such a desert environment is itself presented as exotic and absurd, emphasizing the stereotype that Yemen is a place of backwardness, lacking modernity, and far

removed from Western rationality. Dr. Alfred Jones, at the start of the project: "Fishing for salmon in the Yemen? That's like fishing for icebergs in the Sahara."

One more thing, Shiekh Muhammed is an exotic character. He is depicted as a wealthy yet spiritual, romantic and irrational figure who dreams of impossible, magical projects. The film makes salmon fishing in the desert sound like a magical, almost spiritual idea. This exoticizes Yemen by turning it into a stage for British dreams and fantasies, rather than representing it as a real country with political and social complexities. The Sheikh to Dr. Jones: "This project is about belief, Dr. Jones. Sometimes faith is more important than facts." Exoticizes Yemen as a place where "faith" overrides science — contrasting with Britain's rational, scientific worldview.

Furthermore, the visual and cinematic perspective reinforces the distorted representation of Yemen and Yemenis through recurring images of the desert, tents, traditional clothing, religious symbols, and other markers of cultural difference. These visual elements construct Yemen as an exotic, traditional, and culturally distant space in contrast to the modern British environment.

Beyond written dialogue, the film utilized cinematic apparatuses- such as color palettes, camera angles, and musical scoring- to visually and aurally reinforce the distortion of Yemenis. For instance, in the introduction of the Yemeni landscape Dr. Alfred Jones is looking at the initial proposal and photos of the Yemen project. The dialogue involves structural skepticism: *it is logistically impossible. Yemen is a desert country with zero infrastructure for Atlantic salmon.* Here the film transitions to the Yemeni landscape using a saturated, monochromatic sepia color palette, which strips the environment of any natural vibrancy and flattens it into a stereotypical, dusty wasteland. The musical score featuring disjointed, minor-key Middle Eastern instrumentation (oud and hunting woodwinds). The camera utilized a distorted, sweeping wide-angle lens that emphasizes vast, empty and inhospitable terrains.

Sheikh appearance (traditional clothes, his place in Yemen was tent, servants) highlights the "otherness" of Arabs. He is represented less as a real leader and more as a symbolic exotic ruler with money but without practical knowledge.

Moreover, Yemenis in the film are not given individuality; they appear as background characters, either as violent tribesmen or poor peasants. This reduction of Yemenis to faceless "others" reinforces exoticism by stripping them of modern identities and presenting them as part of a strange landscape rather than as people with agency. From the perspective of narrative characterization, distortion is evident in the limited and stereotypical characterization of Yemeni characters. While Sheikh Muhammad is presented as wealthy and visionary, his characterization is shaped by exoticized images of the Arab sheikh. In contrast,



ordinary Yemenis are largely reduced to unnamed tribesmen, farmers, and fishermen, which limits their individuality and narrative agency.

The distorted representation of Yemen and Yemenis can be understood in relation to several interconnected political, cultural, historical, and narrative factors. First, the representation reflects the influence of Orientalist discourse, through which Yemen is constructed as an exotic, traditional, and culturally distant space in opposition to the modern West. This discourse is evident in the film's repeated emphasis on the desert, tents, traditional clothing, tribal identities, and religious imagery. Second, the representation can be considered within the historical relationship between Britain and Yemen. Britain's former colonial presence in Aden provides an important postcolonial context for understanding why the film repeatedly constructs Yemen through encounters between British modernity and Yemeni tradition. The representation of the Sheikh as wealthy and visionary, yet dependent on British scientific expertise, can therefore be read in relation to historical patterns in which Western knowledge was positioned as authoritative in relation to the East.

In addition, the narrative requirements of the film contribute to the exoticized representation of Yemen. The central idea of introducing salmon fishing into the Yemeni desert depends on the geographical and cultural contrast between Yemen and Britain. The desert setting and the apparent incompatibility between salmon and the Yemeni environment create the unusual situation around which the narrative develops. Consequently, Yemen is not presented primarily through its social and political complexity but through its function as an exotic setting for an extraordinary project. Thus, Orientalist discourse, British-Yemeni historical relations, cultural perceptions, and the narrative function of Yemen work together to produce the film's stereotypical and exoticized representation.

In brief, the film employs exoticism to depict Yemen as an unfamiliar and dangerous place. Such portrayals strip Yemen and its people of complexity, reinforcing stereotypes rather than reflecting the country's diverse realities.

4.2 Binary Opposition

The film constructs a series of binary opposition that shape the representation of Yemen and Yemenis. The binary opposition between the self and other operates in a subtler, symbolic manner rather than through overt conflict. Similarly, a consistent pattern emerges in the depiction of the West versus the East. For example, the British scientific expertise and bureaucratic rationality are contrasted with Yemeni belief and idealism, reinforcing the image of the East as imaginative yet unstructured. In addition to that, the difference between the West and East was portrayed symbolically and culturally. Narrative characterization in the film is also constructed through binary opposition, particularly through the contrast between British and Yemeni characters. The British self-embodies rational planning, scientific expertise, and bureaucratic



pragmatism, exemplified by lines like “this is not scientifically feasible.” Yemeni characters, including the sheikh, are framed as imaginative, idealistic, and culturally aspirational, symbolizing hope and vision rather than practical capability. The East is romanticized, serving the narrative of Western problem-solving and adaptation, yet remains positioned as distinct and in need of guidance.

Besides, the binary opposition between the civilized and primitive was articulated through cultural and intellectual contrast. British officials rely on bureaucratic and scientific discourse, dismissing the project with remarks such as “there are too many variables” or “this goes against established policy.” Yemeni perspectives, however, are described using language associated with tradition and belief, including references to “faith” and “vision.” Although not overtly negative, this framing positions Yemeni culture as emotionally driven and pre-modern, while British systems represent rational, civilized modernity. Primitiveness here is romanticized rather than demonized, yet it still reinforces a hierarchy of progress.

The historical relationship between Britain and Yemen also provides an important context for this opposition. Britain's former colonial presence in Aden created a historical relationship characterized by political, cultural, and economic encounters between the two societies. Within a postcolonial reading, the repeated contrast between British expertise and Yemeni tradition can therefore be understood as reflecting a longer history in which Western institutions and knowledge were granted greater authority. At the same time, contemporary cultural perceptions of Yemen as a traditional and culturally distant society contribute to the persistence of these oppositional images.

The narrative structure of the film further reinforces these binaries. The salmon project requires the interaction of two apparently incompatible worlds: British scientific knowledge and the Yemeni environment. The conflict between what British characters consider scientifically possible and what the Sheikh considers possible through faith creates the central cultural tension of the narrative. Therefore, the binary oppositions are not produced by a single factor but emerge from the interaction of Orientalist discourse, historical British-Yemeni relations, cultural perceptions of East and West, and the narrative need to establish a contrast between the two settings and systems of thought.

In addition to dialogue, the film employs various cinematic apparatuses to construct and reinforce binary oppositions between the West and the East. The use of framing, camera angles, lighting, color, costume, and musical scoring contributes to the construction of contrasting images of Britain and Yemen. These visual and auditory elements are particularly significant because they communicate meanings beyond the spoken dialogue and position the two cultures within unequal representational frameworks. The following scene demonstrates how cinematic techniques reinforce the opposition between the modern and rational West and the traditional and exotic East.



A clear example of binary opposition reinforced through cinematic apparatuses occurs at approximately 12:04–13:08, when Dr. Alfred Jones discusses the feasibility of introducing salmon into Yemen. During this scene, Jones contrasts the environmental conditions of Britain and Yemen, stating, “Here it's very cold. It rains a lot. Here it's very hot. It doesn't rain a lot. Do you see the difference?” At the beginning of the scene, the framing and mise-en-scène positioned Dr. Alfred Jones as the scientific expert, and the discussion is organized around maps and geographical information. This visual environment associates the British character with knowledge, measurement, rationality, and institutional expertise. In contrast, Yemen is discussed as a geographical space whose environmental conditions must be examined and managed through Western scientific knowledge.

The camera framing is also important. When the film focuses on Dr. Jones while he explains the environmental differences, his position as the knowledgeable speaker visually reinforces his authority. The scene therefore does more than communicate information through dialogue: it constructs a hierarchy of knowledge in which the British scientist occupies the position of the rational observer, while Yemen becomes the geographical “Other” that must be examined and explained.

The dialogue initially constructs a strong opposition between the two environments: Britain is associated with coldness and rainfall, whereas Yemen is associated with heat and dryness. This opposition contributes to the construction of West/East and modern/traditional binaries. Yemen is initially reduced to its environmental difference, while British scientific knowledge is presented as the means through which the apparent impossibility of the project can be challenged.

In addition, the Yemeni landscape is repeatedly presented through warm, sandy, golden and earth-toned colors, with extensive shots of the desert and open landscape. The environment is visually associated with aridity, emptiness and harshness. By contrast, the British scenes tend to employ the visual characteristics of an urban, technologically developed environment—interiors, offices, streets, and controlled spaces—rather than the expansive desert landscape.

4.3 Hegemony

Salmon Fishing in the Yemen illustrates Britain's cultural hegemony by emphasizing Western expertise, knowledge, and rational planning as the only means to modernize Yemen, thereby diminishing local traditions and perspectives. Dr. Alfred Jones (rejecting the project at first): “It's fundamentally unfeasible. Salmon requires cold water, and Yemen is, well... Yemen is a desert.” Here, science and British expertise are positioned as the authoritative voice over Yemeni aspirations; a subtle form of intellectual hegemony. The hegemonic idea here is that Yemen needs Western knowledge and vision to become civilized and modern.



The concept of the subaltern is also reflected in the representation of Yemenis who are always filtered through outsiders' perspectives, British officials and Dr. Alfred, Yemenis do not control their own narrative. Yemenis are often presented only as nameless tribesmen rather than as developed characters with complexity. Even the Sheikh is surrounded by silent Yemenis (farmers, fishermen, tribesmen) who do not speak or contribute to the dialogue.

However, the Sheikh is given some voice and authority, speaking fluent English, negotiating with British officials, challenging them, and redefining the project according to his cultural and spiritual values. Thus, while the Sheikh resists total subalternity, his people remain subaltern—seen but unheard. Dr. Alfred doubts the project's feasibility, the British government aide says: "The Yemenis won't know the difference. All they'll see is fish in a river."

In the film, the British production explicitly foregrounds mimicry through the figure of the Sheikh, who embodies both traditional Bedouin values and Western modernity, speaking fluent English, investing in Britain, and envisioning a developmental project that fuses Eastern spirituality with Western science. The Sheikh and his servants continue to wear traditional Yemeni attire, and he is still addressed as 'Sheikh' by the locals, emphasizing that despite his wealth, Western connections, and occasional adoption of foreign practices, he remains firmly rooted in Yemeni cultural identity.

In addition, *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* emphasizes cultural hybridity through the interaction of the two cultures. The Sheikh's ambitious project of bringing salmon fishing into the Yemeni desert is a metaphor for hybridity itself: it blends Western technology, science, and leisure culture with Yemeni environment, faith, and traditions. For example, the Sheikh says: "Faith is the cure that we are most in need of. Fishing requires faith." Another moment is when Dr. Alfred Jones shifts from skepticism to belief, saying: "In the Yemen, in this desert, against all odds, they will swim upstream." This line reflects hybridity too: Jones, a British scientist, begins to adopt the Sheikh's vision, blending rational Western science with Eastern spirituality and imagination. The desert becomes a "third space" where two worlds merge.

Moreover, hybridity in the film is clearly embodied in the characters. For instance, Sheikh Muhammed, Dr. Alfred and the project coordinator, Harriet. Although Sheikh Muhammed maintains his traditional Bedouin identity; he never drinks; he prays; he has many wives, his clothes, he speaks fluent English, possesses extensive wealth and property in Britain, and engages directly with British governmental institutions. At the same time, he embraces modern scientific knowledge as a means of developing his country. Through these attributes, the Sheikh functions as a mediator between East and West, facilitating dialogue and cooperation across cultural boundaries.



Similarly, The British scientist, Alfred, also represents hybridity, as he gradually transforms from a reserved and purely rational figure, rooted in a strictly Western scientific environment, into someone who embraces a vision that merges Eastern wisdom and spirituality, embodied in faith and patience, with Western scientific approaches of experimentation and numerical analysis. In the same vein, Harriet, the project coordinator, becomes deeply engaged in the project and finds herself influenced by Yemeni culture as well as by the project's spiritual dimension. The political and media discourse itself in the film also embodies hybridity. Moreover, the scene of St. Patrick's Day provides a striking example of cultural negotiation. The Sheikh and his servants participate by wearing the festival's attire.

The presence of hybridity in this movie might be a result of Britain's colonial history in Yemen (Aden was a British colony until 1967). This historical connection meant that when Britain represented Yemen in cinema, it often drew on a deeper, more complex awareness of cultural encounters, shaped by colonial administration, trade, and migration. This makes it more likely for hybridity to appear in British films, where East–West exchanges are familiar themes.

One important factor is the historical relationship between Britain and Yemen, particularly Britain's former colonial presence in Aden. This history provides a postcolonial context in which the unequal relationship between Western and Yemeni knowledge can be examined. Although the film does not explicitly portray colonial rule, its emphasis on British scientific expertise and institutional authority can be read against this historical background. British knowledge is repeatedly presented as necessary for determining the feasibility and success of the Sheikh's project, while Yemeni knowledge and perspectives receive considerably less narrative authority.

Visual and cinematic techniques also contribute to the hegemonic representation of Yemenis by determining whose perspectives receive greater narrative visibility and authority. British characters, particularly Dr. Alfred Jones and government officials, are presented through institutional and professional spaces associated with scientific knowledge, political authority, and decision-making. In contrast, ordinary Yemenis are frequently positioned in the background and represented collectively as tribesmen, farmers, fishermen, or servants. Their limited dialogue and characterization reduce their individual visibility and narrative agency. Thus, the film's cinematic organization of characters contributes to a hierarchy of representation in which British voices occupy a more authoritative position, while Yemeni voices remain largely marginalized.

Political and geopolitical perceptions of Yemen also provide a broader context for the film's representation. Yemen is frequently understood internationally through images of political instability, poverty, tribalism, conflict, and cultural difference. Although *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* does not primarily



focus on war or terrorism, it draws upon some of the same simplified cultural associations by representing ordinary Yemenis through collective categories such as tribesmen, farmers, and servants rather than as fully developed individuals. This demonstrates that Orientalist representation does not necessarily depend on explicitly negative images; it can also operate through romanticization, exoticism, and the reduction of a complex society to culturally recognizable symbols.

The film's narrative purpose further contributes to this hegemonic representation. The story is structured around a project initiated by a wealthy Yemeni Sheikh but made possible through British scientific and institutional participation. As a result, the narrative gives greater authority and visibility to British characters who possess specialized knowledge and institutional access, while ordinary Yemenis remain largely in the background. This narrative arrangement reinforces the unequal distribution of voice and agency between the two cultures. Nevertheless, the Sheikh's ability to speak English, negotiate with British officials, and combine Yemeni traditions with Western practices introduces elements of mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity. Therefore, the film's hegemonic representation is shaped by the interaction of Britain's historical relationship with Yemen, Orientalist cultural discourse, contemporary perceptions of Yemen, and the narrative structure of the film itself.

Hegemony in the film is also reinforced through cinematic apparatuses that establish Western knowledge and expertise as authoritative. An illustrative example occurs in the early discussion of Sheikh Muhammed's salmon project, approximately 00:06:30–00:08:30, in which Dr. Alfred Jones and other British officials evaluate the feasibility of introducing salmon into Yemen. The offices contain desks, computers, documents, telephones, formal clothing, and other institutional objects. These aren't just background details. They create a visual environment of bureaucracy, professionalism, rationality, and administrative control.

The camera positioning contributes to a hegemonic representation by visually privileging the British experts as the subjects who possess the authority to assess Yemen, while Yemen is constructed as the object of their professional and scientific evaluation with expensive shots in Yemen landscape.

Furthermore, the introduction of water and greenery into the desert further symbolizes the Western model of development imposed upon the Yemeni environment. Through these visual strategies, the film constructs Western knowledge as authoritative while positioning Yemen as a space to be evaluated, managed, and transformed.

5. Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that these depictions are largely constructed through interconnected patterns of distortion, binary opposition, and hegemonic discourse. Distortion operates through stereotyping and exoticism, reducing Yemen to simplified and selective images. While binary oppositions such as



self/other, West/East, and rational/irrational reinforce hierarchical distinctions. In addition, hegemonic processes, including subalternity, mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity, reveal how power is maintained and negotiated within these representations. Overall, Yemen emerges not as a complex and lived reality, but as a symbolic space shaped by broader ideological narratives.

The study finds that Yemeni characters are characterized through a combination of positive, romanticized, and exoticized traits, while ordinary Yemenis are largely denied narrative agency. Visually, the film repeatedly constructs Yemen through desert landscapes, traditional clothing, tents, religious imagery, and other markers of cultural difference.

The study further finds that these representations are influenced by a range of political, geopolitical, cultural, historical, and narrative factors, which vary across the film. The British film draws on historically rooted cultural frameworks. These findings directly address the research questions by demonstrating both the nature of the depiction and the factors that contribute to it. Importantly, the results align with postcolonial theoretical perspectives, particularly those associated with Edward Said, as well as broader concepts of distortion, hegemony and binary opposition, showing how cinematic representations reproduce forms of “othering” and sustain unequal power relations.

In conclusion, this study underscores that cinematic representations of Yemen and Yemenis are not neutral reflections of reality, but are shaped by complex interactions of power, discourse, and ideology. By applying postcolonial theory and the concept of Orientalism, the research demonstrates how this film constructs Yemen as an “othered” and marginalized space within global cinematic narratives. Consequently, the study highlights the need for more nuanced and contextually grounded portrayals that move beyond reductive and stereotypical images, contributing to a deeper understanding of representation, identity and power in international cinema.

6. Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, a number of recommendations can be proposed to guide future research and improve the understanding of media representations. These recommendations are derived from the limitations of the current study and the gaps identified throughout the analysis:

- Future research should explore the representation of prominent Yemeni historical figures whose contributions challenge dominant stereotypes of Yemen and Yemenis. For example, further studies could examine the life and legacy of Sayyid Abu Bakr bin Sheikh Al-Kaff, a Hadhrami leader and philanthropist who used his personal wealth to support development projects and contributed to peace efforts in Hadhramaut. His public services were recognized by the British Empire, and he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in Aden in 1954.



- Future research should expand the analysis to include a larger number of films from different cultural and regional contexts, from different time periods and cinematic traditions in order to identify whether these representational patterns persist or evolve. Such research would provide a broader understanding of how Yemen is constructed within global media to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Yemen's cinematic representation.
- Additional studies may focus on audience reception in order to explore how viewers interpret and respond to these representations. Understanding audience perception would provide valuable insight into the impact of such portrayals on shaping attitudes, stereotypes, and cultural understanding.
- It is recommended that postcolonial frameworks, particularly Orientalism and hegemony, be applied to other underexplored regions and cinematic contexts.
- Researchers are encouraged to examine Yemeni or Arab-produced films to compare self-representation with external representations.
- Filmmakers and media producers should aim to present more nuanced and balanced portrayals that include local voices and avoid stereotypical or reductive imagery.
- Future studies may also integrate interdisciplinary approaches, combining film analysis with political and cultural studies for deeper insight to examine the relationship between media representation and real-world power dynamics.
- Finally, comparative studies could be extended to include representations of other Arab or non-Western countries, allowing researchers to identify similarities and differences in how media constructs "the other" across different contexts. This would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of representation within global cinema.

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