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Orientalist Representation of the Persian Society in Zack Snyder's 300

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Letter of Approval

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Abstract

This research focuses on Zack Snyder's 300, based on the post-9/11 movie that shows one of the famous events in the 'clash' between West and East: The battle of Thermopylae during the Greek-Persian wars. It does not claim to be history but a form of fictionalized history taken from a graphic novel by Frank Miller. This research claims that Zack Snyder depicts the Persian society through the orientalist stereotype which shows Persian society as 'mystic', 'barbarian', and 'tyranny' and that practices slavery. The assumption between the East and the West is inherited in his representation for the consumption of western audience. To prove this claim, this thesis uses theoretical insights of Edward Said, Ziauddin Sardar and Blaine Brown related to Orientalism.

Keywords: Orientalism, Clash of civilization, Barbarian, mystic

This research sheds light on Zack Snyder's 300, an English movie that shows clash between West and East during the Greek-Persian wars. This film is a product of orientalist gaze by American director to the culture, tradition, people and places of Middle East. The different dimensions of the movie is examining its historical accuracy, artistic representation, cultural impact, and directorial vision. It draws from a diverse range of sources, including historical accounts of the battle of Thermopylae, cinematic analysis, film critiques, as well as academic discussions on the depiction of ancient civilizations in modern media such as *American Classic League* (2007) by Subho Basu, Craigie Champion and Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, *Orientalism* (1994) and *The World, The Text and The Critic* (1984) by Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1999) by Ziauddin Sardar, *Cinematography: Theory and Practice: Image Making for Cinematographers and Directors* (2016) by Blaine Brown.

The visually stunning story of the movie raises serious questions regarding the way West it portrays the Persian Empire and continues Orientalist stereotypes. The film's visual glory and action sequences are certainly gripping but a deeper look through an Orientalist perspective reveals how the film frequently depends on certain clichés that form its story and portrayal of the East. The Persians are shown in this movie as an appealing and affluent society by greatly exoticizing them. Their elaborate garb, pricey jewels, and opulent lives are shown in a way that captivates the viewer, maintaining the Western idea of the East as an exotic and alluring place. This exoticization, which emphasizes Persians as belonging to a strange and enigmatic civilization, is a key component of the movie's presentation of Persians and has long been a staple of Orientalist discourse.

The process of "Othering" which results from this exoticization, creates a strong contrast between the heroic, righteous Spartans and the Persians, who are portrayed as the ultimate Other. The image of the Persians as repulsive, effeminate, and demonic creatures emphasizes even more difference between the luxurious East and the elegant West. The presentation of Persians as the ultimate opponent and an archenemy to be defeated in the movie serves to support the Orientalist idea that Western culture is better.

The Persian army itself has also been dehumanized, taking on the appearance of a faceless mass of exoticized and malformed creatures. This dehumanization is used as a technique to excuse the Spartans' acts of brutality. Humiliating the other is a typical Orientalist cliché used to make it easier for the audience to embrace violence against them. This dehumanization serves to strengthen the Orientalist narrative of the movie, which depicts the East as a threat that the noble West must defeat.

Even while moviepartially base its story on actual events, it primarily draws on anti-Persian prejudice ancient Greek sources because of political conflicts. Greek historical narratives are biased because of the Greeks' long-standing hatred of the Persians. This historical backdrop should be used to interpret how the Persian Empire looks in the movie. The plot is based on these Greek stories, maintaining the prejudices and presumptions that were common in the ancient world.

When viewed from an Orientalist angle, this research exposes the way it portrays the Persian Empire. While providing an entertaining cinematic spectacle, it also supports prejudices against Asian people and a Eurocentric view of history. In order to promote a more inclusive and accurate knowledge of many cultures, this critical study highlights the significance of media monitoring as well as the urgent need to contest and dismantle Orientalist tropes. It is essential to move past these controversial depictions and work toward a more balanced and respectful representation of other cultures on film in an interconnected globe.

By highlighting important viewpoints on the Orientalist gaze, this study hopes to shed light on how the movie creates ideas of the East-West dichotomy and exoticism. According to Subho's article "300: The Use and Abuse of History" The movie doesn't really make it clear that although, there were 301 Spartans, behind those soldiers there were about 7,000 other Greeks allied to Sparta. It's also impossible to know exactly what the battle of Thermopylae was like, but we do know it would have been a very untypical Greek battle because of the terrain. (2) Here he claims that there were not only 300 Spartans but there were about 7000 along with Spartans soldiers. Although the terrain was new to the Spartans but it surely favored them in the war. Still orientalist shows Spartans so heroic that only with 300 soldiers, they defended the whole Persian army, which in fact had already been

reduced by 90 percent by the storm. Thus, hiding their army numbers and demonstrating Persians in barbaric manner they have not only distorted the truth but represented it with fantasies reinforcing the orientalism and hatred towards the orientals.

In the same way according to Iran daily newspaper, emperor Xerxes was not a 10ft-tall god-king with multiple piercings. We can understand why the Iranians are upset about this. How they represented not only Middle East, but whole Asia as a barbaric, inhuman, cruel and tyrant. This shows they represent as Orient view. Iranian daily newspaper writes "Hollywood Declares War on Iranians" (2 May 2007).

Similarly, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's cultural adviser, Javad Shamaqdari, claimed that the US seeks to "humiliate" Iran blaming them for trying to overturn historical truth and "compensate for its wrong doings for provoking American soldiers and warmongers" against Iran. The release of the film shows with rising hostilities between the United States and Iran over the latter's nuclear program and the Iraq War. A source of pride for Iranians throughout the political spectrum, including those who oppose the current Islamic regime, the film was also perceived as an attack on Persian history, which is unrelated to politics.

The term "Orientalism," first conceptualized by Edward Said, offers a theoretical foundation for comprehending these phenomena. Said makes the case that historical Western depictions of the East have been characterized by a Eurocentric lens that exoticizes, caricatures, and frequently devalues non-Western civilizations in his landmark work, *Orientalism* (1984). This viewpoint has shaped a large portion of Western discourse about the Middle East, promoting an idea of cultural superiority and painting the area as fundamentally violent and backward.

Edward shows the image of the Middle East as a current haven for terrorism also exhibits a distinct sort of Orientalist vision. This narrative serves to support Western military operations and geopolitical goals in the area while simultaneously reinforcing preconceptions of violence and extremism. It furthers the idea of Western uniqueness by drawing a contrast between a civilized, advanced West and a risky, backward East. The release of the movie, together with stories of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, serves as an example of how popular media might support the story that is suggested by the hypothesis. While the distinctive Orientalist lens in current discourse on terrorism furthers the narrative of Western superiority and Middle Eastern otherness, Edward Said's idea of Orientalism offers a theoretical framework to examine this phenomenon.

In 1984 Edward Said's *Orientalism* was published. Orientalism is considered to be one of the most influential books of the late twentieth century. Said's Orientalism is a study of how the western colonial powers of Britain and France represented North African and Middle Eastern lands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although Said draws upon other historical moments too. "Orientalism refers to the sum of the West's representation of the Orient" (39).

According to Sardar "the supposed knowledge derived from the orientalist vision is based not on accuracy and utility but by the degree to which it enhances the self-esteem of the westerner. It achieves this by making fiction more real, more aesthetically pleasing than truth. Orientalism is thus a constructed ignorance, a deliberate self-deception, which is eventually projected on the orient" (4).

Here, Sardar shows the people in the west construct the discourse about us. When that discourse begins to function, we are hegemonies. Said borrows the word hegemony from Italian intellectual Antonio Gramsci. He defines it as the consent of the ruled who

agree to be ruled. The orient due to the discursive function of orientalism gets hegemonies. As a result, they began to consent their domination by the west. They feel their domination is natural as well as inevitable.



Figure 1: Narrow Passage where 300 Spartans defend themselves. (00:05:56)

The above picture shows a narrow passage next to the sea, which was only wide enough for two chariots. For two days Xerxes, the king of Persia, hurled his best troops at the Spartans, but as the way was so narrow that only few could reach the Spartans at a time. We see the Spartans fighting monsters, the rhinoceros and war elephants which were obviously a fantasy. But the most controversial aspect of the film is the portrayal of the Persians. They look similar to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles in which the director tries to show the cruelty of Persians to portray them as barbaric and deadliest fighting force in Asia. This shows how Asian looks like in their perspective.



Figure 2: Ninja Fighters (00:15:07)

Here this figure denotes those Asian soldiers looking deadly fighting force with same masks and inhuman appearance. With the same mask for all character, movie maker wants to show that it is generalizing individual existence. Here non-westerners are taken as same place without any sorts of individual persons.

According to one of Iran's biggest daily newspaper, Hamshahri states:

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President states that movie shows very humiliate subject in very serious time were there was tension between US and Iran for nuclear program and Iraq war. In such time US releasing such debatable movie is provoking other for fight. According to president advisor, he also stated that US tried to distort truth of history by manipulating them through the use of media.

In this movie, the God-king Xerxes leads the Persians, a race of slaves, against

the protagonists, who are simplistically portrayed as the Spartan king Leonidas and his devoted Spartan warriors, the guardians of civilization, honor, and freedom. The movie has drawn criticism for anti-Iranian sentiment, by showing Persians as inhuman and barbaric. There seems to be little doubt among critics that the themes, most prevalent in movie are drawn from an orientalist discourse, highlighting the Persians barbarism, mysticism, slavery, savagery and sexual perversion, characteristics set in opposition of the equally fantastical brave, reasonable, honorable, civilized and pure Spartans. As we can see how Leonidas behave with messenger of Persian as they were killed by Leonidas which provoked Persian army where they just came to leave some messagesaying, “He leads an army so massive it shakes the ground with its march. So vast, it drinks the river to dry. All the God-king Xerses requires is this: A simple offering of earth and water...”(00:11:58)

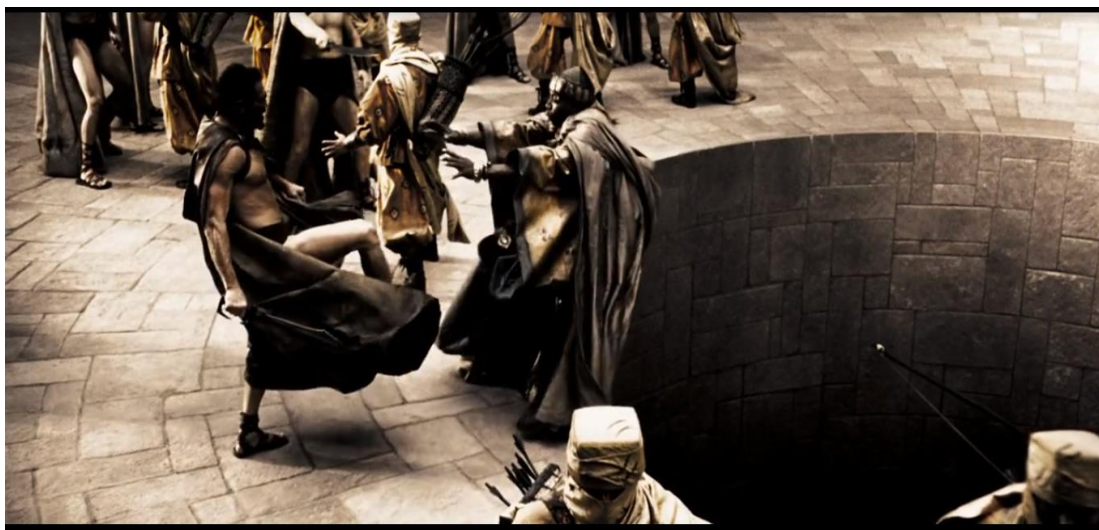


Figure 4: Messengers killed by Spartans (10:04)

This scene reveals how Persians were purposefully portrayed as monsters. Spartans even killed messengers who went to give information of war. This visualizes how movie maker tries to draw eyes of world and showed that they have each and every right to do even by killing messengers. Messengers were presented as cruel men and ethics less who threaten them.

According to a statement released by the Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran on March 22, 2007, The Spartans portrayed positively and the Persians negatively represent two sides of the same coin. The Persians are the repository of the messy parts of the Western identity, all those traits that are incommensurable with the version of ourselves that we would like to project. They cannot be an authentic other, irreducible to the occidental self. The Iranian government privileges that the movie is a blatantly deceptive propaganda piece meant to further Western misconceptions about the Middle East and demonize Iran. The movie has been criticized for its racism and anti-Iranian prejudice. This demonstrates how Persian was purposefully shown as a monster. The Persian people are depicted in the film as "a dangerous, bestial force fatally threatening the civilized "free" world," according to critics who claim that this is a racist stereotyping (3).

Here this newspaper states that this film disrespects the Iranian culture, honor, freedom, etc. They were concerned on how Persians were depicted inside this movie and demonstrated how Persians were purposefully shown as a monster and inhuman.

According to the Associated Press, the independent Ayende- newspaper carried a headline that read, "Hollywood declares war on Iranians," on Tuesday, March 14, 2007, 4:07 am +0545.

Thermopylae was a battle fought in 480 B.C. in which a group of 300 Spartans successfully repelled a vast Persian army at a mountain pass in Greece for three days. The movie, which made \$70 million in its opening weekend, is based on a comic book fantasy rendition of the conflict. Even several reviews from Americans recognized the political undertones of the West-against-Iran plot line, as well as how Persians are portrayed as decadent, sexually

flamboyant, and malevolent in contrast to the honorable Greeks. The film has not yet premiered in Iran and most likely never will give the government's limitations.

Here this news states that Hollywood declare war on Iran which shows the connectivity of Persian and Iranian. This draws an image of how this movie is taken as Anti-Iranian prospective. This directly shows, West against Iran as middle easterners is portrayed as decadent, sexually flamboyant and malevolent in contrast to the honorable Greeks.

Likewise, Hamshahri, Iran's biggest circulating newspaper, also wrote that this movie is "serving the policy of the U.S. leadership" and predicted, it will "prompt a wave of protest in the world. ... Iranians living in the U.S. and Europe will not be indifferent about this obvious insult" (1). The journalist mentioned that this movie is serving policy of U.S leadership.

It is also quite evident from this that Iranians residing in the United States and Europe will not care less about this offensive film. where they are constantly subjected to bullying or humiliation. The way the West denigrates Eastern culture in order to paint a portrait of them. This film provokes people throughout the Middle East, including Iranians residing in the United States.

In the same way, Radio free Europe Radio Liberty published on March 21st, 2007 (13:35 GMT), by Breffni O'Rourke writes news regarding movie 300, by saying: "A Hollywood film with the simple title "*300 Spartans*" is arousing anger in Iran.

Directed by up-and-coming filmmaker Zack Snyder, the film portrays the ancient battle of Thermopylae, where 300 Greek Spartans barred the way to the grand army of Persian King Xerxes. But many Iranians say the movie gives a distorted view of the Persians as decadent, cruel, and stupid. The Iranian government has taken the row

over "300" to the United Nations. In a letter to the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Iranian Ambassador Mohammad-Reza Dehshiri described the film as an "insult" to Iranian culture. He called on UNESCO to take up its responsibility to promote coexistence rather than "hatred, war, and arrogance"(2). In Tehran, *Time* magazine correspondent Azadeh Moaveni said there was a general sense of outrage among Iranians. Iranians living abroad were also disturbed.

This dissertation aims to investigate how Western nations' media, popular culture, and political discourse contribute to the maintenance of these stereotypes and how they affect citizens' perceptions and decision-making. It also seeks to look at the larger effects that such narratives may have on world geopolitics and the interactions between Western and Middle Eastern countries.

The 2007 release of the film provides a painful illustration of how popular media might support the narrative described in the theory. The Battle of Thermopylae between the Greek city-states and the Persian Empire is depicted in the Zack Snyder-directed movie. It emphasizes their foreign look and associates them with supernatural characteristics by portraying the Persian army, headed by King Xerxes, as a gigantic, monstrous swarm. This image reinforces the idea that the Persians are barbarians and outsiders by essentially dehumanizing and demonizing them.

The debut of this movie was crucial in deflecting attention away from the complexity of situations like those involving Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden. The film supported an incorrect simplistic narrative that extolled Western involvement in the Middle East by maintaining the idea that the region is inherently violent and barbaric. This made it possible to ignore the larger historical, political, and social causes that led to the complicated situations in Iraq and Afghanistan and

instead concentrate on the immediate threats posed by people like Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden.

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At this point, Edward shows the image of the Middle East as a current haven for terrorism also exhibits a distinct sort of Orientalist vision. This narrative serves to support Western military operations and geopolitical goals in the area while simultaneously reinforcing preconceptions of violence and extremism. It furthers the idea of Western uniqueness by drawing a contrast between a civilized, advanced West and a risky, backward East. The release of this movie, together with the stories of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, serves as an example of how popular media might support the story that is suggested by the hypothesis. While the distinctive Orientalist lens in current discourse on terrorism furthers the narrative of Western superiority and Middle Eastern otherness, Edward Said's idea of Orientalism offers a theoretical framework to examine this phenomenon.

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of the Orient” (39).

Said gives three definitions about *Orientalism*. According to him, “Anyone who teaches, writes about, or research the Orient and this applies whether the person is anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist either in its specific or its general aspect is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism”(1). Here, it lives on academically through its doctrine and theses about the orient and the oriental. Said states that now orientalism is less preferred by specialist because it is too vague and general and it connotes the high-handed executive attitude of European Colonialism of nineteenth-century and early twentieth century.

Giving his second definition, “Orientalism is a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and the Occident” (2). This is where Said clarifies that a vast majority of writers, poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators have come to accept the fundamental difference between the West and the East as the foundation for intricate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts about the Orient, its people, customs, minds, destiny, etc.

The third definition of Orientalism is “Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient dealing with it by making statement about it, settling it, ruling over it; in short Orientalism as a western style of dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient” (3).

Moreover, orientalism is a discourse constructed by the West about the East. Said employs Michel Foucault notion of a discourse, as described by him in “*The Archaeology of Knowledge*” to identify Orientalism. For Foucault discourse is the combination of representation and power of truth. Therefore, Orientalism as a whole has to be understood as a discourse consisting of three things: Power, Knowledge and

Truth. Orientalism cannot be seriously understood without the westerner's force or without the configuration of power. The relation between the West and the East is that of the relation between power and domination. The former is symbol of power and latter is dominated by the power holder. People in the power are constructing knowledge or representation about the orient. And that knowledge has turned out to be the truth. From this point of view orientalism is discursive. Sardar says, "texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality which then turns into tradition" (69). Discourses in societies are created through various act of representation by people who are in power. Discourse for Foucault is important because it joins knowledge and power. Power is circulated through different forms that written, audio, visual, oral, etc. Such power which is represented creates the truth and becomes truth for everyone. It means power determines truth. Truth is creation of power:

Orientalism is a system of truths, truths in Nietzsche's sense of the word. It is true, then, that every European who has anything to say about the Orient is by definition racist, imperialist, and nearly entirely ethnocentric. Thus, it supported the tendency to sharpen the distinctions between the European and Asian regions of the world. All of these factors, however, highlight the crucial fact that orientalism is a comprehensive system of representation that is part of a political dominance structure. The purpose of orientalist representation is to defend Western colonial control over Eastern regions. They greased the political and legal systems, which upheld colonial power by physical force, and legitimized the hegemony of other people.

As said in an article which was published on Britannica by Jean Louis Huot, states that emperor Xerxes was not a 10ft-tall God-king with multiple piercings. We can understand why the Iranians are upset about this. How they represented not only Middle East, but whole Asia as a barbaric, inhuman, cruel and tyrant. This shows they

represent as Orient view. Iranian daily newspaper writes “Hollywood Declares War on Iranians” (2 May 2007). They usually use special effects that show a kind of historical fantasy-cartoon having a great story to tell.



Figure 3: Cruel Xerxes (01:12:05)

Here, we can see example of Orientalist gaze that they depict Xerxes as he looks like a monster and his army as ninja character. Few cultures have celebrated the naked male body in the way Greeks have done. But the Spartan king Leonidas refers to the Persians as “boy lovers”, suggesting they are decadent. The irony is that the Spartans were literally boy lovers. They incorporated form of pederasty into their educational system, as a way of turning a boy into a warrior.

In the 18th century, Britain and France started search for geographical knowledge, which was the base of Orientalism. They traveled non-western countries for expansion, travel and to search market. This helped them to collect information about orient. They had close contact with Eastern. The Orientalist today represents the orients as opposed to westerns and construct the truth that orient is stoic, uncivilized, innocence, superstition. As we can see how it is represented in movie where a soldier is shown as monster and uncivilized.



Figure 5: Deadliest soldier all over Asia which was shown inside movie. (1:00:23)

Here a Persian is shown as inhuman character where it directly reflects the intention of movie maker as how Persian looked like and barbaric. However, this claim is neither true nor false because this discourse is created by power holder to dominate the orient. This is the westerner's perspective not absolute about non-westerns. The primary issue, though, emerged when Europeans began to generalize the traits they identified with Orientals and began to depict these manufactured traits in their western world through their scientific publications, literary works, and other media sources. It shaped a certain perception of Orientals in European minds, which then introduced prejudice into European perspectives on Orientals. The Orientalists were proven to be biased, and this prejudice affected all of their publications and scientific investigations. Even now, there are still stereotypes attached to Orientals. For instance, Arabs are defined as primitive people, and Islam is thought to be the religion of terrorists. They present Arabs as camel riders, terrorists, hook-nosed and venal lechers. They even present Chinese as perfidious, Indians as half-necked and Muslims as passive.

There have been two main components in the relationship between East and West since the middle of the seventeenth century. In addition to the growing body of literature produced by novelists, poets, translators, and skilled travelers, there was also a growing body of systematic knowledge about the Orient in Europe. This knowledge was reinforced by the colonial encounter and widespread interest in the strange and foreign, which was fueled by the emerging sciences of philology, comparative anatomy, history, and ethnology, travel and creative writing, which reinforced the distinction between the many ethnic, geographical, and temporal sections of the Orient made by Orientalists. Rich and important in its contribution to the development of the Orientalist discourse is this literature. Another feature of oriental European relations was that Europe was always in pole position for strength.

It is important to grasp Said's argument that, Western views of the orient are not based on what is observed to exist in oriental lands, but is the result from the West's dreams, fantasies and assumption about what this radically contrasting place contains. Orientalism consists of nothing but representation which has little to do with the real orient. It is constructed series of images as the Oriental's reality for those in West. This contrived reality can never reflect what Orient may or may not actually be in itself.

The west is considered as the place of historical progress and scientific development whereas, the Orient exists as a timeless place, changeless and static, cut off from the progress of the Western history. Essentially no difference of Orient is considered between the twelfth century and the eighteenth and it was just trapped in antiquity. Thus, the Orient was often considered as 'primitive' or 'backwards' in representations.

"The Orient is strange", is the stereotype used by Orientalists who are

engaged depicting orient are strange. The Orient is not just different but unusual, fantastic and bizarre. The Orient's eccentricity is frequently served as a source of myth, wonder, and curiosity for Western writers and artists. In the end, the radical oddity of the Orient was seen as sufficient proof of its inferiority if the Occident who are westerners as rational, sensible, and familiar, and the Orient was irrational, extraordinary, and abnormal.

In the Western representation, Oriental people often appear as example of various discriminating racial stereotypes. Assumption was often made about the inherent 'racial' characteristics of Orientals. The murderous and violent Arab, lazy Indian and the inscrutable Chinamen are often depicted in the representations. The Oriental's race somehow summed up what kind of person he or she is likely to be despite their individual qualities and failings. Thus, categories like 'Arabian' and 'Indian' were defined within the general negative representational framework, which is typical of Orientalism and provided Orientalism with a safe of generalized types. i.e. all Arabs were violent, and all Indians were lazy. Also, in the movie the introduction of Persians where one spartan army Diliosexpress his word as given,

“But this beast is made of men and horses’ swords and spears. An army of slaves, vast beyond imagining, ready to devour tiny Greece. Ready to snuff out the world's one hope for reason and justice. A beast approaches.”

(00:01:18-00:01:40)

Similarly, popular gendered stereotypes circulated, such as the Oriental male or the sexually promiscuous exotic Oriental female. The oriental male was frequently deemed insufficiently 'manly' and displayed as luxurious and foppish, that made Xerxes appear a grotesque parody of the gentler female sex. By Western standards, men are meant to be active, courageous, and strong but by same token women are

meant to be passive, moral and chaste. But oriental men and women are not shown to comply with these genders' roles, their gender roles and identity is transgressive. This visualization adds to the general sense of oddness and abnormality ascribed to the Orient.

Moreover, Said complains that the occident sets the orient in the male perspective. In the patriarchal social structure, male think female as inferior or irrational creature who need to be controlled, dominated and corrected. Male looks towards the female from the narrow point of view. In the same way the west sees non-west inferior and irrational creature that need to be controlled, dominated and wants to correct the non-west. So, Said claims that the orient has suffered from the male gaze of the west. Oriental stereotypes emphasized traits like cowardice, sloth, distrust, impulsivity, laxity, violence, and desire. They showed Persian as uncivilized and showing necked woman for no reason. Here Spartans women are just replica of uneducated and slavery women.



Figure 6: Ephialtes enjoying with slave women inside King Xerxes camp

Here Persian women are shown as object rather than human. This shows how movie maker tries to prove Middle East as slavery, barbaric, inhuman, etc. Which further shows the ideology of movie maker and western discourse regarding the representation of eastern society.

In other words, orientalism promoted the idea that individuals from Oriental should be brought to Occidental society and forced to adhere to the supposedly superior moral standards that the West upholds. Therefore, Orientalism once more used the notion that Oriental people needed to be saved from themselves to justify the legitimacy of colonialism in order to create these illustrations. The knowledge about literature or culture is taken to be pure knowledge. Knowledge of society, economy and the politics is taken as the political knowledge in the west. West always emphasizes on pure knowledge and knowledge about the Soviet-Union is taken as the political knowledge. But Said is not satisfied with this line of argument. For him no knowledge is pure: all knowledge is political. The writer is always located in the historical and political situation. One cannot go away from the world one is living in. So, Said accept that he himself is politically motivated and his writing is covered by politics. Likewise western interest over the non-west is itself political. So, neither western interest is pure nor is their writing. The Orientalist goal is to rule and to learn and then to compare the Orient with the Occident. Though systematically Orientalism has begun right from the eighteenth century onwards its history goes back to classical time. They have been always studying us. So, we cannot exactly pin point the scope of Orientalism. Once they acquire the knowledge from various sources. They began to dominate the orient. Most of the time they imagine orient in the classroom, court houses and the prison where they hope to improve the orient. This is to say they had the corrective strategy towards the orient. They said that they ruled orient because they wanted to civilize them.

Edward Said divided Orientalism into two parts, Latent and Manifest Orientalism. He has taken this term from Sigmund Freud. For Freud what is latent? That is hidden or unconscious. What is manifest? That is conscious and that can be

seen. In the west latent Orientalism is non-west that is poor, irrational, vulgar, emotional, backward. What is there is in the unconsciousness that has been manifest in western literature, philosophy, theory, history, movies, etc. At manifest level there are differences among the Orientalists regarding their view on oriental aspects. These variations in their perceptions of the Orient can be classified as just obvious distinctions or variations in shape and individuality. The basic content in their ideas about the orient is the same. For instance, the Orientalist scholar, Goldzieher calls Islam as an exterior theology, whereas, Macdonald believes that Islam is heretical Christianity. Still another Orientalist Becker says that Islam is an undeveloped religion. However, in all of them the common or basic concept of Islam as an inferior religious is there in the latent level. The Latent Orientalism's consistency, stability, and endurance remain largely unaffected regardless of any changes that may occur in Orientalism.

The occident is negative towards the orient, especially towards the Arabs. So, in the western literature Arab is always shown in the terrorist who need to be control in one way or the other. Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as a citizen or even people, but as problems to be solved or confirmed or as the colonial power openly coveted their territory-taken over. (207)

Said's arguments propose that the underlying or hidden foundations of orientalism are always the same, even though particular styles and perspectives, as well as historical details, will cause their expressions to change. Whereas Manifest Orientalism is found in the numerous variations that may be constructed from essentially the same blueprint, latent Orientalism is similar to a blue print. Regardless of any differences in forms or techniques, an orientalist portrayal by a writer or painter will always be

based on the same presumptions.

For Ziauddin Sardar power is an essential ingredient of Orientalism. Said says that knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge. To have knowledge about orient is to have power to dominate orient and to have authority over it.

According to Sardar “the supposed knowledge derived from the orientalist vision is based not on accuracy and utility but by the degree to which it enhances the self-esteem of the westerner. It achieves this by making fiction more real, more aesthetically pleasing than truth. Orientalism is thus a constructed ignorance, a deliberate self-deception, which is eventually projected on the orient” (4).

Here, Sardar shows the people in the west construct a certain discourse about us. When that discourse begins to function, we are hegemonies. Said borrows the word hegemony from Italian intellectual Antonio Gramsci. Said defines at the consent of the rule who agree to be ruled. The orient due to the discursive function of orientalism gets hegemonies. As a result, they began to consent their domination by the west. They feel their domination is natural as well as inevitable.

Orientalism refers to the westerner’s mentality regarding the non-westerns. The westerns always regard the non-western as weak, inferior, irrational and sober. They give all positive attribute to themselves and negative one to non-westerns. Orientalism is the division which makes distance between the Orient and the Occident. Both are viewed as opposition to each other. The Orient is viewed as being everything which is not the west. Thus, it cannot be taken as an opposition of equal partners. Negative adjectives are often used to characterize the Orient, supporting the idea that the West is stronger and better. If the west is taken as the reservoir of knowledge and learning, then it follows that the Orient is region of ignorance and naiveté. The West

occupies a superior rank and Orient is viewed as subsidiary to it as 'other'.

Sardar states that, "Orientalism is the great lie at the center of the Western Civilization: a lie about the nature of the great cultures and civilizations to the East of the West, a lie about us and them" (54). In the addition, he explains that Orientalism was concerned one of the study matters of Asian civilization and interpreting the text of these civilization and they found Asian Civilization has no sense of rationality; reason was only privilege of the Western Civilization. He accused many Orientalists note, Islamic and Hinduism is obstacle to the development in the orient. It is causes of the orient backwardness. Orientalist have thesis that is only one model, all civilizations must follow the course that has been set by the west. Inside movie makers even didn't leave to harm feelings of non-western by stating dialogue regarding inhuman where one of Sparta soldier utter which goes like this, "We are doomed. The child speaks of the Persian Ghost, known from the ancient times. They are hunters of men's soul. They cannot be killed or defeated. Not this darkness. Not these Immortals"(00:32:29-00:32:53).

He explains that the concept of modernity needs and deploys elements and techniques of Orientalism to established westerns supremacy, its expansion and its physical and intellectual conquest of the Orient. Ideas about the orient are a part of the movement of ideas in the west. It moves towards study based on the agenda of improving the orient making it modern. Modernity is a yardstick by which the orient is measured and the spirit of Eurocentrism is kept alive. He explains that the Orientalism remains largely in the same but only the thing is changed that the manners became polite. In the final analysis of their text, they provide confirmation or what the Orientalist representation had always advocated the inferiority and backwardness of the orient.

He further describes that Orientalist to give their argument some validity, they often had to present an inversion of reality. Moreover, because of the assumptions buried in their methods of identifying and describing, which were laden with all the old Orientalist values, they could only see reality upside down. The Orientalized Orientals are a very specific Western creation a product of over a century of conscious policy. Orient are inside blood and are seen in color whereas English is inside their taste, in their opinion, in their morals and in intellect as well as. The sole purpose of this is to replace a clear white colonialism with a murky brown colonialism.

Samuel P Huntington says, “the unity of the non-west and west dichotomy are myths created by the west. These myths suffer the defects of the Orientalism which Edward Said appropriately criticized for promoting ‘the difference between the familiar (Europe, the west, us) and the strange (the orient, the East, them) and for assuming the inherent superiority of the former to the latter’”. (33)

Orientalists are most of the time think to divide people into two parts which result as us and them, our-group and the others group, our civilization and those barbarian civilization. Many scholars have seen from the gaze of the Orient and the Occident, center and superior.

Edward Said also quotes ideas from great philosopher Karl Marx and gave clear vision on how orient is represented, “They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented”. Here, they mean orient. So according to Marx Orient can't represent them, westerner must represent them. In other words, Orientals are believed incapable of representing themselves: they were made to be represented for the shake of Western audience. Edward Said finds Oriented are represented through television screens films. T.V. serials, Articles survey advertising journals and media all of

which gives orientalist stereotype image about Orient. Oriental is attached with negative value by orientalist thought different representation. The representation of uncivilized, barbaric and ignorant eastern is deeply etched in Hollywood.

Consciousness that they are now used as standard plot devices in Hollywood Film Industry. For instance. Oscar winner Slumdog Millionaire which won 8 Oscar.

Orientalize India by representing barbaric and ignorant slum life of Mumbai. So, the representation of the orient as inherently violent, irrational characters is pervasive in the vocabulary of Hollywood films.

Orientalism is binary opposition between the east and the west constructed by westerners to who talks that West is superior and East is inferior. Westerners put them in center and non-western in periphery. Orientalist constructs the truth by binary opposition, between East and West. Orientalist divide the world into two party by using the concepts of our and theirs. Orientalism is a western prejudice towards the eastern countries. It is negative discrimination. Arabs are often representing as cruel and violent people among the world. Muslims are always considered to be terrorist. Thus, they generalize the orient and gives negative attribute. This show that even with the increasing globalization and awareness. Such things were found in the people of so-called developed countries. Most of the representations of the orient gives by orient list are inaccurate. So, we can see it is a political vision of reality whose structure seems to promote the difference between west and east. In the others words, this vision in sense creates gap between the west and the east. Its goals are first to give justification to their colonialism, second to rank western in the superior position and last but not a least is to dominate and take orient in control, in terms of political and economic.

Character named Ephialtes who was abnormal asked Leonidas to join his

army but because of his appearance he was not kept in his team where he requests king by saying “I am Ephialtes, born of Sparta. My mother’s love led my parents to flee Sparta...lest I be discarded” he urges that because of his mother love towards him they went out of Spartan society just to protect him as Spartans would have kill him or discarded him. This can show how Spartans were cruel enough and not even have moral values.



Figure 7: Ephialtes Abnormal Person (01:15:05)

Here, an abnormal character is begging his position in war but the so called king Leonidas refuse to be his member in terms of his physical appearance. This also shows that how inhuman and unethical laws are spreading in Spartans society. So, he joined Xerxes army and told Xerxes the gateway of narrow path, which leads to all Spartans soldiers death.

The battle of Thermopylae gave heart to the Greeks, who later that year won a decisive naval victory at Salamis. A victory on land followed the next year, and Xerxes withdrew, ending the Persian attempt to extend its empire into Europe. As he returns in his own land and completed his all construction works and other projects.

Still, it touched a sensitive nerve. Javad Shamghadri, cultural adviser to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, said the United States tries to “humiliate” Iran in order to reverse historical reality and “compensate for its wrongdoings in order to provoke American soldiers and warmongers” (1) against Iran.

The movie comes at a time of increased tensions between the United States and Iran over the Persian nation’s nuclear program and the Iraq war. But aside from politics, the film was seen as an attack on Persian history, a source of pride for Iranians across the political spectrum, including critics of the current Islamic regime.

“The film depicts Iranians as demons, without culture, feeling or humanity, who think of nothing except attacking other nations and killing people,” (2) Ayende-No said in its article Tuesday.

“It is a new effort to slander the Iranian people and civilization before world public opinion at a time of increasing American threats against Iran,” (2) it said.



Figure 8: Millions of Persian Army (06:19:55)

Here, some observers believe the Iranian government is exploiting the anger over the Hollywood production to advance its own political agenda. They say the authorities are provoking nationalistic feelings to get Iranians to rally in support of the

government at a time when the Islamic republic is under international pressure over its nuclear program.

The U.S. film distributors, Warner Brothers, deny that this movie is deliberately meant to disparage any culture. They say it is a fictional work with the sole purpose of entertaining audiences. The film is proving something of a hit among the public, taking in \$70 million in its first week. *Movie* tells the story of the battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC, when 300 Greek Spartans were able for three days to block the advance of a Persian army numbering in the hundreds of thousands.

Thermopylae is a narrow pass between the mountains and the sea, where the sheer numbers of the Persians was to no advantage. Repeatedly the Persians attacked, only to be thrown back with heavy casualties. In the end, through an act of Greek treachery, King Xerxes' army was able to surround the Spartans, who were all killed, along with their leader, King Leonidas.



Figure 9: Dead Spartans(01:47:00)

Here, the film sticks closely to the account given by ancient historians, including Herodotus, a Greek. It's the portrayal of the two warring sides that has caused the antagonism. The Greeks are seen as noble defenders of Western culture, while the

invading Persians are seen as decadent, irrational, and barbarous, with King Xerxes receiving a particularly unflattering portrait.

American satirist and critic Joe Queenan state that, "Sparta was a slave society, so the whole idea of them being upholders of democracy is kind of ridiculous". The Athenians did not let women vote and had a lot of slaves, but still the situation concerning democracy was not completely out of control there like in Sparta, where they killed children. They killed deformed children. They killed a lot of girls. It was a total militaristic society, so there is a direct line from the Spartans to the Junkers and Prussian military, to the Nazis. "Thus, director present such things in starting of his movie "when the boy was born like all Spartans, he was inspected. If he'd been small or puny or sickly or misshapen he would have been discarded". Through this we can see that how cruel was Spartans society.



Figure 10: Fighting with Animal by Child (01:05:00)

Here, cinematography is the craft and art of making motion images and pictures by capturing a story visually. This is a science and art of writing with movement and sound. It is the skill of creating images we watch on screen. Camera movement, camera placement, shot composition, lighting, camera focus and shot size all under

the essential elements of cinematography. Its careful tricks help to make the movie shine. In *Cinematography: Theory and Practice: Image Making for*

Cinematographers and Directors Blain Brown Observes:

The term cinematography is from the Greek roots meaning "writing with motion". At the heart of it, filmmaking is shooting- but cinematography is more than the mere act of photography. It is the process of taking ideas, words, actions, emotional subtext, tone and all other forms of non-verbal communication and rendering them in visual terms. The tools of cinematic technique are used by both the director and DP, either working or in doing their individual jobs. It is far more than just "photographing" what is in front of the camera - the tools, the techniques and the variations are wide ranging in scope; this is the heart of the symbiosis of the DP and the director. (11)

Brown opines that cinematography is important in communicating the script visually with the mind of viewers. It is about telling a visual story at its best. A good cinematographer works closely with the director to help the director realize their creative vision, through composition, camera movement, lighting and framing. One of the significant elements of cinematography is camera placements which plays a crucial role in affecting the reaction of the audience to the shot. It aids to convey character behavior and have emotional impacts as well. For instance, if a character has to be seen as rude, the camera must be placed closed to the character's mouth.



Figure 11: Xerxes as a monster (01:28:00)

This shows how should camera focus to portray Xerxes as a monster and rude through his facial expression as blain talks in his cinematography. This is intentionally showing a devil god king. Here, we can see which color are represented to present Persians and Spartans where Spartans are presented in mostly in red color where as Persians are represented in black and grey color which gives good image to Spartans and evil image to Persians. Color also plays vital role in cinematography where they represent the tone of scene before any actors utter any word. Where red is used as passion, danger or power and grey and black are represented as grief, fear, mystery and evil.

To talk about camera element, it is one of most vital elements of cinematography which is just helpful for heighten the suspense and emotions shown in the movie. Similarly, to make movie great, the role of shot size and composition, sound and visual effect also play crucial role.

Examining the assumption that Western culture presents other civilizations as terrorist and barbaric finds that media has been important role in shaping these myths. This issue goes beyond simple distortion; it is a deliberate attempt to create an impression of superiority and use it to support imperialist acts. This conclusion will highlight the negative effects of propagating such myths by closely examining the writings of Edward Said, Ziauddin Sardar, Baline Brown, critical evaluations of the film "300 Spartans" and Radio Free Europe's investigation of historical misrepresentations.

Orientalism, as defined by Edward Said, provides a crucial framework for comprehending this phenomenon. He explains how historical Western perceptions have created a uniform, exoticized picture of the East, particularly the Middle East, highlighting its purported backwardness and vulnerability to violence. Said's criticism is pertinent given how the Persian Empire is portrayed by the West in the film "300Spartans". The development of Orientalist themes is seen by the film's depiction of the Persians as cruel and barbarous while idealizing the Spartans. By establishing a handy contrast between the 'civilized' West and the 'barbaric' East,' this cinematic distortion not only distorts history but also legitimizes Western interventionism.

Ziauddin Sardar expands on Said's criticism by highlighting Orientalism's pervasive influence on current discourse. According to him, stereotypes are still perpetuated and geopolitical interests are justified because of these long-held beliefs about the East and the West. The idea that Middle Eastern civilizations are automatically aggressive and prone to terrorism is a striking example of this. By explaining acts that have frequently resulted in extensive instability and human misery, such images seek to shift attention away from Western operations in the region.

Through analysis of the film "300 Spartans" it becomes clear that this work of popular culture has a key role in maintaining Orientalist narratives. The film's depiction of the Spartans as disciplined and honorable soldiers, in contrast to the dehumanization of the Persians, is an example of how history have been manipulated for ideological reasons. The movie aims to validate Western ideas of cultural and military dominance by exaggerating the events of the Battle of Thermopylae. The critical analysis by Radio Free Europe highlights this deception even further by raising concerns about the truthfulness of history and moral ramifications of such a portrayal.

In conclusion, the hypothesis positing Western society's construction of narratives that portray other cultures as barbaric and terrorist is substantiated by a wealth of evidence from various scholarly perspectives and critical analyses. The Orientalist views of Edward Said, Ziauddin Sardar, and Subho Bashu provide a theoretical framework for understanding how these stereotypes are perpetuated. The case of the movie "300" and Radio Free Europe's examination of historical misrepresentations further exemplify the damaging consequences of such narratives. It is imperative to recognize the insidious power of media in shaping public opinion and to question the narratives that are presented. By doing so, we can work towards dismantling these harmful stereotypes and fostering a more nuanced and empathetic understanding of cultures beyond the confines of Western-centric perspectives. Only through this awareness can we hope to pave the way for a more just and equitable global society.

Therefore, in order to preserve world peace and for the sake of a flourishing world, there should be no historical deception of any kind. Westerners' attempt to portray the Middle East, in particular, as harsh, barbaric, enslaving, cruel and

unjust. In a situation where the two regions were at war. Therefore, they created this controversial film to demonstrate their superiority, democracy, and all of these things while also portraying the Middle East as being starving, cruel and inhumane slave-like, primitive, etc. This demonstrates how the media can distort history and control the whole planet.

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