

MISE-EN-SCÈNE ANALYSIS OF ORIENTALIST STEREOTYPES IN VISUAL SUPERHERO NARRATIVES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MS. MARVEL AND CAPTAIN MARVEL

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Abstract

This research examines the construction of the East and the West in the visual and ideological representation of female superheroes in Ms. Marvel (2022) and Captain Marvel (2019). The mise-en-scene (Gibbs, 2002) and historical/cultural analysis are used to approach the question of how visual form and narrative ideology demonstrate the Orientalist power structures within a theoretical framework of Edward Said's theory of Orientalism. The Comparative study finds that even though Ms. Marvel presents a Pakistani-American heroine as an example of inclusivity, the character is nonetheless mediated by Western constructs that endorse diversity within controlled parameters. On the contrary, the character of Captain Marvel exists as a symbol of Western rationality, technological development, and individualism. The results indicate a reproduction of Orientalist binaries in Marvel Cinematic Universe, where the East is mystified and emotional and the West is a center of science and rationality as the universal ideals.

INTRODUCTION

The genre of superhero has been used since ancient times as a tool of cultural influence, achieving the notion of heroism, righteousness, and hierarchies of power across the globe. One of the biggest contributors to the formation and spreading of these ideas is the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), which is one of the most prevailing franchises globally. Although the superhero films might seem to be universal, they are highly political texts, which are founded on historical and ideological structures. Amidst these frameworks, Orientalism, as explained by Edward Said, is one of the most influential. According to Said (1978), the West created the East as its contrasting image such as mystical, emotional,

archaic, and exotic so as to know itself as being rational, modern, and superior. According to him, "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). The fact that orientalism is not only a set of prejudices but also a methodical creation of knowledge to make the domination possible. In visual culture, the process is realized in the images of Eastern and Western characters whose characteristics, dresses, and backgrounds perpetuate power binaries. Orientalist assumptions tend to determine the storyline and the shape of the cinema. Hollywood, being an important locale in cultural production,

has traditionally employed visual aspects of difference, including color, costume, and space. Eastern characters are usually images of mystique, religion, and richness of feelings, whereas Western heroes are characterised by intellect, independence, and technological control. These trends are maintained to this day in supposedly diverse and inclusive blockbusters. Celebrated as a worldwide brand with suggestive aspirations, the MCU is bargaining identity within the context of Western thinking. These tensions are observed by the comparison between Captain Marvel (2019) and Ms. Marvel (2022), both female-centered stories that seem to be progressive and are, nevertheless, rooted in the same cultural logic.

Captain Marvel is a Superhero which is based on the story of Carol Danvers, a former U.S Air Force pilot, who acquired her powers by being exposed to alien technology. Her fiction is founded on science, military discipline, and personal claim. Her path to empowerment is in line with the principles of Western modernity, rationality and self-determination, which are enshrined in Enlightenment ideologies. In comparison, Ms. Marvel presents Kamala Khan, a Pakistani-American Muslim teenager whose powers are in the form of a mystical bangle that was inherited by her grandmother. Her birth connects heroism to the origin, spirituality, and the memory of the familial memories which have been historically coded as Eastern. The fact that there is a contrast between sources of power and iconography is a visual indicator of what is held to be different: one is that of the power of intellect and experimentation; the other is that of the power of lineage and mysticism. These two characters make the Marvel Cinematic Universe repeat the binary that Said discovered 'the rational West and the spiritual East', only to rebrand it in the liberal discourse of diversity.

This paper will take a look at how Ms. Marvel and Captain Marvel resist or reproduce Orientalist myths at visual and narrative level. Kamala Khan is the symbol of the multicultural figure negotiating the hybrid identity, whereas Carol Danvers is the symbol of an independent Western agent. Though they are both put into the feminist category as icons, but there is difference in visual

worlds in which they belong and represent different hierarchies of meanings. The Western heroine relies on feminine strength, which is the product of scientific development and individual strength, whereas the strength of the Eastern heroine is the gift of the past and the religiosity of a community. This symbolic difference supports one of the time-old trends of cinematography in which the East is set as something mystical and externally reliant, whereas the West represents the mastery of control and inner power.

The previous research has discussed the visual elements of this discourse but rarely in comparison. Studies about Ms. Marvel have mostly made her out to be seen as a breakthrough in the representation of Muslims and South Asians in Western media. Research underlines her hybridity as culture, diasporic and feminist. However, not many have questioned how her presence can be incorporated into a liberal discourse in Western society that constructs 'acceptable' Muslim identity as assimilated and apolitical. On the same note, Captain Marvel has received much publicity as a feminist success story, which is concerned with women's empowerment and independence in a male-dominated genre. Nevertheless, her militarized identity and technological strength are rarely related to the Western ideological traditions of dominance and intervention. Both of the characters has been discussed in terms of their feminist functions but not in the oriental equivalent lens. This study aims to address that gap by placing both heroines in the same system of discursive practices that analyses differences represented as hierarchy.

The study uses a two-fold methodological approach of mise-en-scene analysis and historical and cultural analysis to achieve this. The mise-en-scene analysis puts emphasis on the spatial arrangement of the visuals i.e., lighting, costume, color, setting and movement of the actors, as such in showing how the meaning is made in the frame. Specifically, it is useful in determining the manipulation of ideology using a visual design and not only dialogue. As an example, the soft and warm lighting of the domestic scenes with Kamala and the metallic color scheme of the intergalactic ones with Carol convey different perceptions of

the world. In keeping with this, both historical and cultural discussion looks at how these representations are framed by the context of production, the way they are received by the audience, and the ideological circumstances surrounding them. It takes Disney and Marvel, Western corporations as they create the images of inclusion worldwide, yet the images are still political and cultural agendas as well. The impact of these approaches can be a reading that enables a connection of visual form to historical power formations, which dictates the infusion of aesthetics and ideology.

Through the elements of *mise-en-scene*, including the use of color palette and costume design, and the space arrangement, the analysis examines the reproduction of Orientalist binaries by cinematic language. The color choices of purple and pink and the color choices of blue used in Ms. Marvel and Captain Marvel, respectively, are beliefs and feelings and diligence. Costume and setting also emphasize the split: the culturally inspired attire that Kamala wears borders on South Asian borders and features moderate outfits and uniforms worn by Carol border on a futuristic military uniform. These visual oppositions serve as ideological codes through which they evaluate varying types of power in all the cultural positions. The *mise-en-scene*, therefore, goes to refer to a text of difference, not only what is revealed but also the manner in which it is revealed conveys hierarchy. This study frames its argument as part of the bigger debate on cultural representation in world media. When inclusion is now sold as a currency, the MCU studies are becoming beneficial case studies on how the Western industries are able to increase diversity without erasing current hierarchies. The paper does not refute the importance of Ms. Marvel as an Islamic breakthrough or feminist connotation of Captain Marvel; it challenges the ideological space of these images. Although both characters, regardless of empowerment plots, are inside a visual and cultural system, this system has prominently foregrounded Western rationality as the standard of examination of universality. This is not the criticism of the advances made in this direction but the uncovering of the unspoken

Orientalist homily that lingers behind the discourse of representation.

This paper uses the lenses of Orientalism and *mise-en-scene*, comparison of Ms. Marvel and Captain Marvel reveals how visual storytelling perpetuates the power inequality across the world in the name of inclusion. The paper initializes the contextualization of Orientalism as a reading approach of visual media, followed by the description of the dual methodology, and finally proceeds with a detailed review of the chosen scenes in which ideological contrast is replicated by lighting, color, and costume. The application of the cultural theory and the visual analysis enables this research to serve as an addition to the recent discussion of diversity, representation, and media imperialism. It suggests that empowerment in the MCU is still grounded on Western concepts of knowledge and aesthetics, in which the East is presented to the world only when it can be placed under the Western gaze.

Literature Review:

Marandi and Ghasemi Tari (2012) discuss the Orientalist gender stereotypes in American fiction after 9/11 in the name of realism. Western authors, like John Updike and Don DeLillo, shape the identity of Muslims through the prism of 'feminist Orientalists' in which Muslim women become oppressed, deprived of their voices and hyper-sexual objects that Westerners have to save (Marandi and Ghasemi Tari, 2012, p. 7). This conversation fits the concept of Spivak as a white male savior of brown women and perpetuates the oppositions of liberation and slavery, civilization and barbarity. Foucault's idea of power/knowledge exposes how such representations are not fortuitous, but rather elements of dominant Western epistemology, which supports cultural hegemony. The image of Muslim women in medieval works and in contemporary novels is still determined by the same colonial logic according to which Islam is associated with misogyny and despotism and thus authorizes the intervention of the imperialist power (p. 10). The concept of 'contrapuntal reading' allows unveiling the hidden imperial motives in literature and revealing the way so-

called liberal depictions continue to work along Orientalist paradigms. These representations misrepresent Islamic messages and perpetuate the power of the West because of the knowledge that legitimizes the political and moral domination of the East (p. 19). The seminal article of Lila Abu-Lughod (2001) "Orientalism and Middle East Feminist Studies" criticizes the manner in which Western academic and media discourses still construct Muslim women infused with their cultural superiority camouflaged as feminist concern. A large part of western feminism engages in 'the moral geography of the empire', in which rescuing Muslim women from their own societies becomes an excuse to intervene in the political sphere (Abu-Lughod, 2001, p. 105). This ideology is based on the 'homogenized image of Muslim societies' as patriarchal and stagnant, disregarding the diversity of experience of women in the Islamic world. Said's theory of Orientalism clarifies that such feminist discourses are not indifferent, but belong to their larger systems of knowledge production, in which the 'Western dominance' is maintained (p. 108). She demands a 'cross-cultural feminist discussion' based on the historical and political context, not on moral superiority (p. 112), and asks how even well-intentioned portraits can be reproducers of colonial assumptions. The political uses of gender should be attentive to the service of empire (p. 116), making it close to the contemporary visual media, such as the depiction of Muslim women in global entertainment. When applied in the context of this work, the knowledge offered by Abu-Lughod tends to bring out the way Ms. Marvel by Marvel rearticulates the feminist Orientalism by making the culture seen in the context of Western liberal acceptance.

The political representation of Ms. Marvel is identified in research on the transnational media. The article "Ms. Marvel: Changing the Muslim Representation in the Comic World" (2022) identifies how the character of Kamala Khan (the titular Ms. Marvel) and some other females in the comic challenge the image of Muslim women in Western culture popular culture, although they have to negotiate the limitations of cultural acceptance. Kamala molds the transition between the usual portrait of Muslims as one-dimensional

terrorists, villains neither is she the usual portrait of a Muslim woman being beaten by the religion and males. (p. 1) However, such a change is not as unbiased as Orientalist framing as her portrayal shows a tendency towards being filtered through the prism of Western liberalism that tolerates diversity only when it is put into secular and apolitical standards. Kamala's hybridity, a balance between Pakistani-American lifestyle and her heritage is commodified as a representation of 'safe difference', a kind of inclusion that strengthens, along with cultural hierarchies, instead of causing the transformational change (p. 3). Postcolonial and feminist critique concludes that while Ms. Marvel is a positive reflection of Muslim visibility, it still perpetuates ideological power constructing an 'acceptable Muslim identity' in the Western discourse of tolerance (p. 5). "Ms. Marvel: Transnational Superhero Iconography" (2022), discusses Kamala Khan as an international cultural icon that balances the aesthetics of the Western super-heroism with the iconography of South Asian ethnicity. Kamala Khan has a complex Muslim-American 'dual identity' even without wearing a superhero outfit (p. 874). Kamala's attire in South-Asian mod-style works as a negotiation of modesty and empowerment, she is able to both live as her ethnicity and superhero (p. 876). Nevertheless, another aspect is that the film adaptation of Ms. Marvel does not engage with South Asian culture as comprehensively as it should be interpreted due to the need to adhere to Western visual standards of 'exotic authenticity' (p. 881). Ms. Marvel is a transnational text, that combines cultural particularism with 'corporate universality', an attempt at expanding the portrayal at the expense of flattening it into spectacle (p. 880). The article by Robingah et al. (2023) is a visual and symbolic analysis of the Ms. Marvel series as 'Western neo-Orientalism critique'. 'Hybridity' by Homi Bhabha and the theory of 'identity' introduced by Hall insist that the series is a reflection of the Western power status, and, at the same time, challenges it. Kamala's admiration towards Captain Marvel is a metaphor of 'postcolonial dependency' (p. 4). Ms. Marvel embraces the aesthetics of diversity, colorful imagery, religious

symbols, and cultural conversation, but depoliticizes the aesthetics by making the content humorous and attractive to consumers (p. 9). The implementation of 'liberal containment', is an example of the incorporation of the East in global media industries, which only happens when the 'Western cultural centrality' is reiterated. Ms. Marvel thus becomes a symbol of neo-Orientalist inclusion, where the representation is allowed and still is controlled by Western ideological discourses (p. 11). Ultimately, Ms. Marvel is a product and a commentary of the neo-Orientalist discourse, demonstrating how popular culture perpetuates and pushes Western ideas of hegemony on those posing a threat.

These critical paths together result in critical trajectories. They unveil how the modern Western media has transformed into less direct forms of orientalism with regard to appointing subtle forms of ideological control with the help of inclusion and discourse of diversity. However, the focus of the current scholarship lies more in the areas of narrative and representation as opposed to cinematic form. The past research talks about identity, diaspora and cultural hybridity but do not understand how mise-en-scene, lighting, setting, or costume make these ideological negotiations visible. In addition, the discussion does not extend much beyond Ms. Marvel as a text. The approach involving parallel heroines in the same franchise within Marvel Studios has not yet been compared to create a comparative study on the way this franchise builds the East and the West.

This gap frames the scope of present research by combining mise-en-scene analysis and historical-cultural interpretation. This research places Ms. Marvel and Captain Marvel in the same production ideology that imagines Western rationality as an internal experience and Eastern mysticism as an outer one. It extends the past research from representational discourse to visual semiotics, to reveal the influence of the Orientalist logic aesthetics of empowerment as the core of Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Research Methodology:

This article follows the qualitative approach to explore the presence of Orientalist tropes in Ms. Marvel and Captain Marvel. The analysis combines two approaches: mise-en-scene analysis and historical/cultural analysis.

In French, 'Mise-en-scène' literally means "the action of putting on the stage" (Gibbs, 2002, p. 6). It is the deliberate arrangement of visual elements within the film frame, including setting, lighting, costume, figure movement, and composition. These elements work together to create meaning and guide the viewer's interpretation of the scene. These factors demonstrate what the visual world consists of for each hero. Tradition and belief are manifested in Ms. Marvel through warm colors, home interiors, and cultural props. Metallic tones, uniforms and technological settings in Captain Marvel are connotations of Western domination and rationality. The visual difference between the two reveals the Orientalist separation of feeling against reason and religion against scientific ideas. These visuals are located in the social context of the historical and cultural background. It examines the background of the filmmaker, the cultural production and reception of the film by the audience. Ms. Marvel is a part of the post-9/11 generation that will demand Muslim representation in the media. Captain Marvel is based on a tradition of Western cinema, which associates power with science and the military. An analysis of the two readings reveals that cultural history defines the picture of heroism.

Through this approach, the paper follows the manner in which cinema structure and cultural context interact to generate Orientalist discourses. Mise-en-scène demonstrates the way the ideology manifests itself in the image and the design. Cultural and historical analysis clarifies the reason why those images have power in certain traditions. The two discover the construction of the Western understanding of the East through individual visual tales.

Theoretical Framework:

The research is based on the idea of orientalism advanced by Edward Said (1978). According to Said, it is a structure where the West constructs its

identity by envisioning the East in its distinctiveness and inferiority. This resistance builds a world order where the East embodies faith and emotion, whereas the West is an embodiment of progress and dominion. This type of thinking reflects on cultural goods such as literature and film. In the cinema, the Orientalist notions are depicted visually. Setting, color, and costume are often adopted by directors to allude to non-Western space as bizarre or mysterious. The Western setting is predisposed to appear to be orderly and developed. Such differences contribute to the notion of Western supremacy. So, Orientalism does not merely concern language; it is manifested in images and style.

This is a theory that informs the study of Ms. Marvel and Captain Marvel. Both tales deal with the topics of power and identity; however, they rely on cultural visions opposite to each other. Ms. Marvel associates her power with her family and society. Captain Marvel attributes hers to science and military organization. Such distinctions reveal the fact that the hierarchy between East and West is either strengthened or undermined by the power of cinema.

The framework used by Said also encourages visual interpretation. Ideological meaning can be contained in any element of the mise-en-scene, which may be light, costume, gesture, or space. Using such details, the Orientalism is revealed on screen. The theory allows the research to follow the way of familiar oppositions between faith and reason, emotion and logic, tradition and modernity, to be seen in the visual design of the two films. The paradigm situates Orientalism as a critical viewing. It assists in discovering how power relations are expressed through cinematic form in subtle ways. Through this lens, the study explores how the global superhero films transform historical attitudes into the present-day visual codes of identity and domination.

Analysis and Discussion:

Disney and Marvel Studios are some of the largest media creators in the world. The two productions fall under the umbrella of Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), owned by Marvel Studios, and supported by the Walt Disney Company. Their

movies are watched all over the world and influence the jazzed modern concepts of heroism, identity, and power. Every production represents a familiar visual and ideological style that is recognizable. These studios invest huge sums of money, visual effects and known narrative patterns to introduce their vision of advancement and ethics.

The Disney brand is based on fantasy and emotional narratives. It enhances principles of hope, individuality, and universal values. In the hands of Disney, Marvel takes the same vision with the help of the superhero genre. Its heroes are the embodiment of bravery, intelligence, and scientific power. These are the qualities that the company poses as international benchmarks of success.

However, this image is still Western-based across the world. The language of the screen tends to pass technology as virtue and weakness, and emotion as virtue. The studios come up with narrations in which Western rationality is the driving force, and the non-Western ideological systems are portrayed as the ornament of the culture. By means of its recurring imagery of high-tech laboratories, military bases, and utopian cities, Marvel and Disney make normal an image of the West as the seat of power.

Both Ms. Marvel and Captain Marvel have the same production background. They happen to adopt the same film forms but convey two cultural approaches. Captain Marvel goes after the American style of the soldier, who is disciplined and a scientific heroine. Ms. Marvel presents a Muslim teenager, the strength of which is in the family, faith, and community. The comparison of the two movies demonstrates how Marvel tries to diversify its image, at the same time keeping the world-heroics narrative in its sense.

This section examines how these ideological patterns are reflected in the visual form of each movie. The analysis is through mise-en-scene analysis and cultural analysis, where the balance of power between East and West is illustrated through light, color, costume and setting. Every scene demonstrates the way in which the global image of Disney and Marvel works in cinema: inclusion, glorification, and defense of the overall Western power.

The paper examines the manifestation of this ideology through the screen. It dwells on the significant change moments in which the two heroines acquire their powers. It is these situations that signify the onset of the identity of each character as a hero. The mise-en-scene and cultural reading techniques shown through the scenes demonstrate how the visual form is implemented in the image of ideology. Comparison reveals the way in which Western cinema categorizes strength, emotion, and belief using pronounceable cultural language. Every frame is a testimony to the way in which the global narrative of Marvel shows diversity through the prism of Western organization.

In Ms. Marvel, Kamala Khan, a Pakistani-American teenager living in Jersey City, gains her powers in a small storage room of the house. The space is full of old trunks, boxes, and family objects, which reveal indications of memory. Kamala goes there in search of a dress to wear at a costume party and discovers a bangle of her grandma's. Once she puts it on, the light in the room starts flickering. The shadows go over her face, and there is a gentle golden radiance coming out of the bracelet. The music in the background is traditional South Asian music, and the rhythm creates the feeling of spiritual intensity. The scenery and sound give her strength an ancestry and faith. It is a personal and emotional kind of atmosphere and not mechanical or scientific. The strophic lighting and proximity framing make her transformation internal, nearly religious one. Domestic and cultural symbols are the means through which the film forms its identity with the help of these details.

In the Captain Marvel movie, Carol Danvers acquires her powers on an open battlefield. It starts with the scene when she is pointing a gun at her enemy and then shoots at a high-tech ship and corpses of dead soldiers around her. The light is metallic and bright. The effect of the camera is to record her with a hard, blue-white light facing her opponent. The Pegasus space engine blasts and radiates a blinding flash that pervades the frame. The sound is mechanical and harsh and reminds us of the power of technology and war. Her military flight suit is her costume, which identifies

her as an institution of order and discipline. The moment when the energy of the Tesseract comes into her body is like a triumph of order over chaos by means of science.

The difference between the two heroines is not confined to the setting and expands to the colour systems that define their powers. The powers of Kamala are manifested in purple/pink shades. These tones are all about emotion, intuition, and the mystical aspect of power. These are powers of affiliation and sympathy. The powers that arise in Carol are blue, which is a colour associated with intellect, logic, and power. It is an indication of control and physical force. The films convey two ways of heroism, one that is emotional, relational, and the other that is rational, mechanical, through these colour codes.

The comparison of the two changes demonstrates the way the same studio puts the cultures in different frames. The power of Kamala occurs through a memory space and a relic in a family. The source of power for Carol is a machine that was made through research and command. One act uses customization, and the other evolution. The application of warm and cold light, home and military environments, and ancestral and scientific pieces of furniture construction creates the contrast of the visuals of emotion and reasoning. This contrast depicts an Orientalist trend in which the East is associated with spirituality and the West with technology. However, Ms. Marvel makes this framework more complicated by centering the agency around a small Muslim girl who gets to know that her heritage is her strength. Captain Marvel, on the contrary, maintains its hero inside the system of logic and military power. The two scenes combined demonstrate that the Marvel and Disney visual system is a way of promoting a global hierarchy. Diversity is exhibited, although power is still characterized by Western shape and language.

The body in both stories is the initial location in which power and identity are acted out. The manner in which both heroines travel through space indicates their association with power. Gestures made by Kamala Khan are uncertain and self-pitying. She is very close to her parents and peers in narrow interior scenes. The blocking

confines her to the centre but is frequently surrounded by the furniture, walls, or even the family members. The camera stands far enough to see her, turning her stifled and self-conscious nature into the visual realm. When she speaks to her mother, the exchange “In this house, we follow the rules,” followed by her reply, “But what if the rules don’t make sense?” (No Normal, 2022) reveals a body negotiating limits. She moves very slowly and deliberately, implying compliance and defiance. Her physical space is turned into a negotiation zone between the set limits and individual autonomy because of the *mise-en-scene*. This performance sends the message that the strength of Kamala will be built through relation, and not in isolation and that her insurrection is not bombastic, but intimate.

The movement of Carol Danvers is of another grammar. She features in blank and symmetrical locations that have to be in the scene, frequently as the focal point of the view of command rooms or battlefields. Her posture is conclusive and straight; she walks or stands up with her shoulders upright. Dominance has been posted with a low angle and an expanded composition in the framing. When she declares, “I’m not going to fight your war. I’m going to end it” (Captain Marvel, 2019). Her gesture denies submissiveness and occupies the frame. Her self-confidence is reflected in the camera, as it also tracks her at a steady camera speed. The autonomy and self-black sphere are also demonstrated by staging and blocking as an embodiment of Western principles and a bondage between freedom and individual mastery.

The power possessed by Kamala Khan lies beyond her. It relies on an external ornament- the bangle that is used as an antique to direct the energy with the help of her hands. The decoration is present, ornaments, and material, making her power a kind of beautiful thing that she should put on to reach. This source of the outside links her to the past and religion, yet this is also the sign of her reliance on the cultural inheritance, instead of her natural ability. This concept is supported by the visual design: the bangle glows, expands, and projects, yet never really integrates with her. Power is not something she internalizes but is granted.

Conversely, the powers that Carol Danvers possesses are consumed by her body. Her body combines with the radiation of the explosion of the Tesseract on the molecular level. The source of her light and energy is internal, thus she is a self-reliant source of power. The contrast is both symbolic and visual. Kamala is an external heritage; Carol is an internal mastery. One is the continuation in the object and lineage and the other is the independence in the self-generation. The *mise-en-scene* of any of these changes reflects this disconnection: Kamala surrounded by the glow of an artifact, Carol surrounded by her own. Their creativity and imagination allow them to visualize the Orientalist opposition between inherited faith and control, between worn and lived power.

The contrast between these two visual systems is ideological. The locations of Kamala are restrictive to movement occurring in common domestic or communal places, and the settings of Carol are in institutional and technological locations. The distinction indicates that *mise-en-scene* creates gender and culture using spatial logic. The weakness of Kamala and his negotiation bargaining contributes to granting the Eastern image of responsibility and morality. The broad gestures of Carol restate Western liberation of physical superiority. Both kinds of movement recreate historical codes of representation, locating the East as relational and the West as rational (Said, 1978). However, Kamala carries a few gestures that make this dichotomous. Her silent resistance, which is manifested in the gesture and speech, redefines restriction as a struggle and innovation.

The same contrast of ideologies is supported with costumes and props. The costume of Kamala transforms in the manner of casual, slightly modest clothes to a more hybrid superhero costume that consists of cultural themes. There are remnants of some traditional embroidery in the red scarf and blue tunic. Her costume merges *shalwar kameez* and the smoothness of the Marvel one. This amalgamation makes the cultural dress a metaphor for visualizing hybridity. The bangle is a relic and a weapon that was inherited by her grandmother. It transfers memory between

generations, making her skills part of the family tradition and not innovation. When Kamala says, "I'm not sure I want to be a 'normal' Muslim girl. I want to be me" (No Normal, 2022), she has already been accomplished by her costume, the fusion of faith, heritage, and individuality. The texture and colour of the costume serve as marks of affiliation, rather than exoticism. The power of this prop is situated in a moral and communal heritage; the material and history of the prop locate this power.

The costume is, on the contrary, a military design, just like that of Carol. The flight suit with the insignia as well as protective construction, makes her belong to an institutional order. The geometry together with the high-polished surface of the costume points to the technology, discipline and precision. The second she takes control of her powers, the suit literally turns into a literal arm of her body, the metallic and streamlined suit. Her words, "I've been fighting with one hand tied behind my back. What happens when I'm finally set free?" (Captain Marvel, 2019). It is accompanied by a visual change, in which the suit begins to emit blue energy. Costume becomes armour and identity simultaneously, transforming human weakness into a machine. The mise-en-scene encourages the Western ideals of success in dominating the material world, which gives strength.

Such visual options place the two characters into their cultural settings. The costume in Kamala is the result of family space; in Carol is the military space. First depends upon its power, memory, and collective value; second is command and innovation. These differences in the films are not viewed as an incidentality; they are rather interpreted as ideology through material form. The visual world of Kamala bears traces of the continuation; that of Carol leads to discontinuity and conquests. This trend repeats the Orientalist hierarchy that places the East, emotion, and heritage, whereas the West is connected to intellect and progress (Said, 1978).

These visual differences are brought into reality through the dialogues in both stories. The heroism of Kamala is connected to 'grater jihad', inner morality as well as violence. Kamala's moral

reflection "The Quran tells us that the struggle of the heart is greater than the struggle of the sword" (Generation Why, 2022), links her heroism to inner ethics rather than violence. Spirituality becomes agency through the statement. The nonconformist style of home language, as she does, is when her mother berates her by saying, "Beta, good girls do not go to parties" (Generation Why, 2022), and then Kamala shuts everyone down in her silent protest. Both of the interactions occur behind the visual threshold of the house, demonstrating that ideological conflict occurs within the confines of cultural everydayness. These words in combination with the mise-en-scene of family interiors, turn the personal space into a platform of cultural conversation.

The scenes of Carol are played in mechanical and political places. Her resistance to patriarchal and institutional power comes when she declares "I'm kind of done with you telling me what I can't do" (Captain Marvel, 2019). Her statement, "Because before, you didn't have me" (Avengers: Endgame, 2019), positions her as the saviour figure, a symbol of self-reliance. This interpretation is supported by the visual field, which is bright, open and filled with controlled movement. The isolation of the blocking further entraps her against other people, making her independent. The combination of the speech and the image introduces Western liberation as the individual will.

These two characters demonstrate the gendered Orientalism through costume, staging, and speech. Kamala has a socially constructed identity, whereas Carol has an institutional construction of identity. The former is burdened with the responsibilities of family and faith and the latter with the influence of facts of science and government. The mise-en-scene of the world in which Kamala lives in is thick and warm and full of colour. Carol is minimalist and metallic. These decisions are not only an expression of legal taste but also an expression of ideology. They conceive who is the mind of feeling, who of reasoning, who bequeaths and who creates. According to Said (1978), Orientalism transforms difference into a hierarchy; these frames do the same using light, texture and costume.

Nevertheless, Kamala makes the structure more complicated by her narrative despite these hierarchies. Her obstruction develops throughout the series. In subsequent episodes, she takes the open streets and school grounds, posing in motion instead of being in containment. She is surrounded by the community and acts as a focal point to the community. The domestic demarcation is altered to a social ring of appreciation. Her increasing domination of space is indicated by the change between the interior and exterior environments. *Mise-en-scène*, therefore, documents her transformation from being an inhibited figure to being an agentic object. A comparable pattern can be traced in the path that Carol takes, but of opposite meaning. And she starts in the military rigor and concludes in cosmic solitude. The space that was seen as the symbol of power transforms into nothingness. Her hegemony becomes her loneliness. These two arcs are the reflections of each other, with the representation of how spatial movement certifies change.

These systems of visuals are further comprehended through cultural and historical reading. The western tradition of media that glorifies scientific advances and ethical action on a case-by-case basis continues in the world of Carol. Her identification with the U.S. Air Force and NASA can be linked to the national and institutional mythmaking. The story also makes her a guardian of the universal order, reminiscent of colonialist principles where the West is a savior of the rest. In her story, Kamala, on the other hand, is set in the diaspora. Jersey City and her Pakistani household represent the hybrid environment, which brings about the conflict between inclusiveness and the majority. Her ethical and inherited forces are in opposition to the reasoning of power with the reasoning of nurturance. These two settings emphasize the way in which ideology not only determines narrative but also defines the construction of visual reality itself.

Both heroines represent gendered paradigms of opposition. Kamala opposes invisibility with involvement and righteousness. Carol is assertive and controlling in resistance to subordination. Both of them criticize restraint but in different

manners: one associative, one technical. The *mise-en-scène* of the world Kamala lives in, its domesticity, its overcrowded scenes, its domesticity, the rhythm of the family, is an ethics of the ties. The *mise-en-scène* is precise, symmetrical, and bright, Luke, making Carol an independent into a spectacle. These comparisons make the visual language of Marvel turn feminism into a culture-unbroken spectrum.

The way costume, blocking, and space are treated in the films eventually gives us the way ideology works in form. Each colour, motion, and word of speech makes up a cultural assertion. The purple and pink lights used by Kamala create an image of communal power; the blue light used by Carol represents control and reason. Both are types of empowerment, but the framing favors Western universality over cultural specificity. The discussion reveals that *mise-en-scène* has a history and ideology of being read: It converts the difference into the hierarchy. But within the same structure, the story of Kamala is given back its representation by transforming the cultural identity into its strength. Her costume, gestures and words become performances of authorship which reframe the meaning of power internally within the global frame.

The Western media usually advocates inclusion, but the inclusion operates in a limited region, whereby its ideology dictates its actions. The concept of diversity is acceptable when it reinforces the current discourses of progress and domination. Ms. The cultural representation seems to be praised in Marvel, although its form is a disguised hierarchy in the disguise of admiration. The heroism of Kamala Khan starts with her admiration for Captain Marvel; she is not depicted as her own individual, but as a fan of a Western superhero. She can only become legitimate because of her relationship with Carol Danvers. This story reveals the opportunity of the East to be seen when it reflects the Western principles of heroism. The relationship between them becomes exactly the same power relation outlined in Orientalism: the West is the leader, the East is the follower (Said, 1978). The framing turns Kamala's difference not into a challenge, but a charm. The studio dictates the appearance of the East by

having her in the legacy of Captain Marvel, which is contemporary, compliant and utterly conformable to Western virtue. This representation makes inclusion appear as success and cultural control to remain with the Westerners.

Visual and cultural interpretation of both stories shows that the language used in the motion picture by Marvel is inclusive by means of control. Mise-en-scene reveals the work of light, costume, movement, and sound as ideological vehicles, and the presence of a continuity of Western hegemony, revealed by the tools of historical and cultural analysis, is the language of diversity. The story of Kamala Khan restores the belief, emotions, and the community as a valid strength; still, her representation is framed within the context of the Western framework that shapes her identity by idolizing Carol Danvers. The world that Carol lives in still values modernity as being synonymous with reason, discipline and self-reliance. The two stories create a graphical chat in which the East is seen and yet might be steered by the West's perception. The films demonstrate the possibilities of the representation to extend the frame of sight, without repositioning the framework of power, through cinematic form.

Conclusion:

This research article has looked into Ms. Marvel (2022) and Captain Marvel (2019) in the context of Orientalism and film form. Through mise-en-scene and historical/cultural analysis, the study followed the reproduction of cultural inequalities through visual design and narrative setting in the background of inclusion. It was found that although Ms. Marvel presents a Muslim and South Asian heroine, her abilities, identity and even heroism are still modeled in terms of Western ideas. The reliance on some external thing and her fascination with Captain Marvel help to see that the East is accepted only when reflecting the Western codes of morality and aesthetics. Captain Marvel, on the contrary, introduces a sense of power that is inner, logical, and scientific, which has been a hallmark of Western self-conception. Combined, the two stories visualize an unequal

conversation in which the East is being presented and not reinvented.

The results affirm that the diversity of the western media remains an appropriation of diversity into a series of mediated dissimilarity. The mise-en-scene of the two films in the form of costumes, lights and space conveys a superiority of the Western mode of being and impersonates the Eastern as one that serves as a subject of culture at best and a spectacle of cultures at most. Still, the depiction of Kamala Khan is a step towards establishing oneself in the framework that previously obliterated identities. Her story makes faith and community dynamic sources of power, indicating that agency may exist even in constraint.

The study fits into existing literature in the sense that it combines the theory of Orientalism with the formalism of film, a relationship that is usually ignored in terms of popular media. The majority of critical works discuss ideological representation, but hardly relate it to the material language of cinema, its light and colour, gesture and sound. Through filling this gap, the research shows how ideology is perpetuated by visual form itself. It further points out the duplicates in the project of inclusion that the Western media has undertaken: representation without redistributive narrative power.

The influence of global franchises appropriating difference to suit their aesthetic and ideological platforms can be further examined in future studies in a range of other Marvel or Disney texts that claim to be culturally inclusive. The results confirm that cinematic difference in Western media is still partial, conditional-an inclusion put into place in terms of the very power formations it is said to scrutinize.

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