Konferans Bildirisi | Conference Paper

Reflections of Orientalism in Cinema as A Form of Domination: *'True Lies'*

Bir Tahakküm Biçimi Olarak Oryantalizmin Sinemadaki İzdüşümleri: *'True Lies'*

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Abstract

Hollywood cinema is a large industry that presents American ideology and traditional values to the viewer through representative policies. Films produced within this system, which has a vast production, distribution and screening network, are shown in many countries. The aim of this study is to reveal how American ideology and orientalist discourse are constructed in cinema. For the purpose of this study, the film *'True Lies'* directed by James Cameron in 1994 was chosen as a sample. *True Lies* is a high-budget, box-office success with a well-known cast and a popular movie that has many counterparts in Hollywood cinema. The film selected as a sample was analyzed according to the method of critical discourse analysis and ideological film criticism. According to the results obtained from the analysis, the main rhetoric of the film is in parallel with the policies that America followed in accordance with the new world order adopted at that time. In the film, both visually and semantically, the orientalist discourse based on the distinction between I/Western and other/Oriental is reconstructed and the stereotypes related to this duality are repeated. In the analysis, it was concluded that the image of the 'East' was created in accordance with the ideology of Hollywood and represented as the 'other'.

Keywords: Cinema, Orientalism, Ideology, True Lies.

Öz

Hollywood sineması, Amerikan ideolojisini ve geleneksel değerlerini temsil politikaları aracılığıyla izleyiciye sunan büyük bir endüstridir. Geniş bir yapım, dağıtım ve gösterim ağına sahip olan bu yapının içinde üretilen filmler birçok ülkede gösterilmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı sinemada Amerikan ideolojisinin ve oryantalist söylemin nasıl inşa edildiğini ortaya koymaktır. Çalışmanın amacı doğrultusunda, yönetmenliğini James Cameron'un yaptığı 1994 yapımı *'True Lies'* filmi örneklem olarak belirlenmiştir. *True Lies* filmi Hollywood sinemasında pek çok benzeri bulunan yıldız oyunculara dayalı, yüksek bütçeli ve gişede başarılı olmuş popüler bir filmdir. Örneklem olarak seçilen film, eleştirel söylem analizi ve ideolojik film eleştirisi yöntemine göre çözümlenmiştir. Çözümlemeden elde edilen sonuçlara göre filmin temel söylemi, o dönem Amerika'nın benimsediği yeni dünya düzeni doğrultusunda izlediği politikalarla paralellik göstermektedir. Filmde gerek görsel gerekse anlamsal olarak hem ben/Batılı ve öteki/Doğulu ayrımına dayanan oryantalist söylem yeniden inşa edilmekte hem de bu ikiliğe yönelik klişeler yinelenmektedir. Çözümlemede, 'Doğu' imgesinin Hollywood'un ideolojisi doğrultusunda yaratıldığı ve 'öteki' olarak temsil edildiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sinema, Oryantalizm, İdeoloji, True Lies.

Erciyes İletişim Dergisi | **Ekim/October 2022** Özel Sayı/Special Issue 3, 23-39
Special Issue for 5th Cultural Informatics, Communication & Media Studies Conference

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Introduction

Almost every society in history creates its own unique image of the East and the West at different periods. However, it seems that the West in particular defines and positions the East from its point of view. As a matter of fact, these Western attempts to define the East have been referred to as 'orientalism' and have become the subject of science. Although the East-West distinction emphasizes geography at first glance, the distinction mainly focuses on the perception of civilization based on culture, institutions and values (Yardım, 2018, p. 11). This distinction has brought with it the duality of 'I' and 'other'. In the orientalist view, it is the East that is separated, marginalized and placed in a secondary position. The West, which calls itself the 'I', constructs the East, which is the 'other', according to its ideology.

Orientalism is when someone who feels that he or she belongs to the political-cultural entity called the West (occident) talks about the elements of an entity he or she describes as the East (orient) (Kontny, 2002, p. 211). In fact, it is common for anyone to be the other, and being the other has something to do with containing differences that do not belong to everyone. In this sense, 'otherness' should be considered as a means of wealth. The main problem is not in the presence of the other and the pathological reactions developed from time to time against it; but in the displacement of the other and the declaration of the other as an outright enemy. (Uluç, 2009, p. 38) According to Bauman (2012, p. 51), in spite of everything, "emotional attachment and antipathy, trust and suspicion, security and fear, cooperation and contention" coexist in the 'I' and the 'other'. Whereas 'I' and 'enemies' have only antipathy, doubt, fear and strife (Uluç, 2009, p. 39). Therefore, while 'I' is always the most superior, the best, the most peaceful; 'the other', that is, the enemy, is always seen as the source of unrest (Erkan, 2009, p. 13; Pamuk, 2014, p. 46). The meanings and images attributed to the other can be encountered in many settings. For example, television, cinema, pop music and comics may seem like harmless mediums, but they can create negative perceptions of the 'other' and distort reality (Yahiaoui, 2022, p. 1). Douglas Kellner, author of Media Culture (1995), points out that social reality is recreated through radio, television, film and cultural products. According to Kellner, media content reveals who is powerful or powerless; who has the power to use force and brutality, and who is helpless (Kellner, 1995).

The perception that the West wants to create about the East and the products it puts forward in line with its stereotypical views are also seen in cinema (Yücel & Sürmeli, 2019, p. 111). Cinema plays an important role in shaping its audience's perception of 'I' and 'other' by the way it represents geographies other than the geography in which it is performed (Önal & Baykal, 2011; Yahiaoui, 2022). Cinema today is an arena of cultural representation, important for the conduct of political struggles (Armes, 2011, p. 43). In this direction, the orientalist discourse in the films is related to the representation of the East, its images and the creation of an Oriental atmosphere. Thus, the main purpose of this study is to reveal how orientalist discourse and American ideology are constructed in popular cinema. For this purpose, the 1994 film 'True Lies' directed by James Cameron was chosen according to the purposive sampling method. The film is reviewed according to the methods of critical discourse analysis and ideological film criticism. According to the results obtained from the analysis, orientalist discourse is constructed by making the distinction between the Western "I" and the Eastern "other" clear both semantically and visually.

Orientalism as a Concept

'Orientalism', also known as Oriental studies, is based on the Latin word oriens, etymologically meaning the rising of the sun (Germaner & İnankur, 1989, p. 9). Orientalism, is defined as "Eastern science" by Turkish Language Institute (2022) . In the Oxford Dictionary (2022), "Orientalism" is defined as *"1. Style, artefacts, or traits considered characteristic of the people and cultures of Asia. 2. The representation of Asia in a stereotyped way that is regarded as embodying a colonialist attitude."* In another definition, orientalism is defined as a point of view that bases its approach to the Middle East and the Arab world in particular on some general premises (Halliday, 2014, p. 88).

Orientalism, which studies the Western perspective on the East, has been discussed throughout history. The Decisions of the Vienna Council of 1312 were recognized as the starting date for orientalism as a branch of science. In line with the Vienna Resolutions, it was decided to establish chairs in Oxford, Paris, Avignon, Bologne, and Salamanque to teach Greek, Arabic, Syriac, and Hebrew languages (Said, 2008, p. 59). This decision paved the way for Western societies to study Eastern societies. Although the Orientalist point of view first appeared in Europe, over time it began to manifest itself in the United States (US), and many Orientalist scientists were trained in the US. Many scientists have been employed under the umbrella of various formations, especially the American Olympic Society founded in 1842 (Said, 2008, p. 109).

Orientalism soon gained worldwide fame with Edward Said's masterpiece "Orientalism", written in 1978. Said has suggested that the United States despises Eastern societies and is working systematically to place this perception in all minds. According to Said, Orientalism is "*all the theories, statements, attitudes, analogies, a kind of doctrine, regime, or form of government that deals with the East. In short, this kind of orientalism is the West's tactic of maintaining superiority, an attempt to establish authority over the East*" (Said, 1998, p. 14).

In his works, Said has discussed the relationship between East and West in a different way and from a new perspective than the studies that have dealt with it before. At first, the East-West problem was generally considered through general and broad concepts such as European colonialism, imperialism and racism, along with recent historical issues and current political events, but after Said's work, it was found that the issue was not as simple as it seemed. In the context of Foucault's theoretical grounding in general, Said argues that the West invented an imaginary geography of the East as the other (Yıldız, 2014, p. 9). In other words, orientalist discourse based on the relationship of interest and power is based on the concepts of 'I' and 'other'. At this point, the West has become the 'I' and the East has become the 'other' (Yardım, 2018, p. 23). In the center of the other are Eastern Muslims. Uluç (2009, p. 145), inspired by Said's approach, has used the expression, "*The West is watching itself in the giant mirror of the East*" for orientalism. Edward Said says the following about Orientalism (Said, 1998, pp. 26-27):

> "Orientalism is an unbalanced order of exchange that does not seem to be specifically related to political power, but arises from the differences in the power of various authorities and thus continues to exist. To some extent, this exchange goes on with political power, as in colonial and imperial administrations; with intellectual power in the field of linguistics, comparative anatomy or modern political sciences; with cultural power in the field of religion, institutions, value judgments, national taste and literature; with moral power in the circle of ideas based on "us" and "them". Ultimately, my thesis about Orientalism centers on the fact that it has a very wide reach in culture, politics and fashionable modern intellectual thought, but that it has very little to do with "our" world and the real "East".

In orientalism, which is considered to be a dominant discourse developed by the West with the aim of establishing its own hegemony over the East, according to Said (1998), studies and texts related to the East re-create the East. According to the Orientalist perspective, the reality of the East is the production of the West, seen as a cultural, political and economic power (Satır & Özer, 2018, p. 764). In this context, Berger and Luckmann (2008, p. 158) stated that "The one with a big stick has an even greater chance of imposing their own definition of reality." This argument is important in terms of making sense of the Eastern image created by the West (Satır & Özer, 2018, p. 764). Said (1998, p. 57) expressed what Westerners think about the East, especially the Arabs, as follows: *"They consider Arabs to be terrorists on camels. According to them, the Arabs are useless creatures who extend their twisted noses and poisonous tongues to everything and block the path of true civilization because of the unjust wealth they have acquired."* Edward Said's dogmas of orientalism is a succinct summary of Western perceptions of the Orient, revealing an essentially racist discourse that also appeals to the Westerner's own perception (Mather, 2020, p. 177).

Şerif Mardin (2019, p. 108), says the following about Said's views on orientalism:

> "Said's assessments have a resonance that is entirely palatable to our contemporary readers. The discourse of Orientalism has been adopted quite easily by our intellectuals. The explanation for this, I think, lies in the fact that the dominant discourse in Said's thesis and the theme he puts forward have long been present in us as an emphasis. The idea that we are constantly considered a "subaltern" by the West and that this must be opposed is a basic principle of our lives."

Orientalist discourses, as expressed by Mardin, have always been remarkable in that they articulate the discourses of the marginalization of the East, which is a wounded society in this regard.

Orientalism in Cinema

From the early 1900s onwards, in the films of Edison in the US and Pathé and Gaumont in France, Arabs representing the East were portrayed as thieves, bandits, invaders and corrupt people living in deserts and tropical oases with voluptuous harem girls. (Blauvelt, 2008). Today, especially after the September 11 attacks, it is possible to say that in the US's dichotomous relationship with Islam, it both defines Islamic identity as a 'cultural object' that must be known, and codifies it as an unknown other (enemy) that must be controlled (Keyman, 2011, p. 17) . Since then, there has been an increase in hate speech and government policies targeting both Arabs and Muslims in the US (Alsultany, 2012, p. 10). This situation can also be seen in the Hollywood movies. After the September 11 attacks, Arabs or Muslims in general are reflected as terrorists planning to destroy the West. Arab culture is irrelevant in these orientalist narratives; the important thing is to spread "freedom" and "democracy", which are nothing more than keywords that justify Western hegemony and US cultural exports and sovereignty (Blauvelt, 2008). In the fictional world of American cinema, it is possible to find sheikhs who kidnap white women, oil kings, flying carpets, tempting belly dancers, fanatical Muslim terrorists and more (Gider Işıkman, 2009, p. 179).

In his article "Reel Bad Arabs' Takes on Hollywood Stereotyping", William Booth emphasizes that Hollywood is obsessed with the stereotypes of the "belly dancer, the billionaire sheikh and the bomber" in its portrayal of Arabs, and that these three stereotypes have always been used to humiliate Middle Easterners (Booth, 2007).

Published by Jack Shaheen firstly in 2001, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifying a People* is a book that deals with the issue of the representation of Arabs in US films. Shaheen's book, in which he reviewed more than a thousand Hollywood films released between 1986 and 2000, leaves no room for doubt about American cinema's view of Arabs. Shaheen analyzed over two thousand Arab and Muslim characters in over a thousand films and found that only 12 of these films are positive, 52 are neutral, and the remaining more than 900 depict Arabs and Muslims negatively (Shaheen, 2003, p. 172). Shaheen (2003, p. 192) said, "At first, I had difficulty uncovering "regular" and admirable Arab characters-it was like trying to find an oasis in the desert." emphasizing how difficult it is to come across films that show the positive aspects of Arabs and Muslims in Holywood films. Therefore, in Hollywood films, it is not often that Eastern characters achieve heroic status. It is only Westerners who should have the potential to play the roles of heroes. The hero should always be a Western character, designed to be different and superior to the Oriental.

Shaheen argues that in Hollywood cinema, Arabs are presented as underdeveloped, violent, mystical, sensual, hateful, prejudiced and misogynistic (Shaheen, 2003). Shaheen gave the following statements in an interview about her book (Shaheen, 2006):

> *"And what I tried to do is to make visible what too many of us seem not to see: a dangerously consistent pattern of hateful Arab stereotypes, stereotypes that rob an entire people of their humanity. All aspects of our culture project the Arab as villain. That is a given. There is no deviation. We have taken a few structured images and repeated them over and over again. So now whether one lives in Paducah, Kentucky or Wood River, Illinois, we know basically the same thing. The Arab is a one-dimensional caricature, a cartoon cutout used by film makers as stock villains and as comic relief. And so, over and over, we see Arabs in movies portrayed as buffoons, their only purpose being to deliver cheap laughs...We don't care about them. We've been preconditioned to think that those innocent civilians, clones of Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein are one in the same and do not merit our sympathy, our understanding, and that's very dangerous."*

When Jean-Luc Godard was asked why US films are the most popular in the world, he said, "Because Americans tell the best stories. They can invade a country and immediately create a narrative that justifies it." With this answer, he criticized the orientalist point of view in American films (act. Blauvelt, 2008). One of the films that justifies Godard's words is the 2014 film "American Sniper" directed by Clint Eastwood. Through the film's protagonist Chris Kyle, the American invasion of Iraq is justified and glorified, while Arabs are stereotyped as "savages", marginalized and portrayed as terrorists (Uluç & Küngerü, 2018, p. 1). According to Blauvelt (2008), the reason for the US public acceptance of the invasion of Iraq, which began on March 19, 2003, was the constant negative portrayal of Arabs in Hollywood movies and television after 9/11.

While projecting negative images of Arabs, the fact that they are Muslims is often emphasized to equate Muslims with terrorism. In the 2001 film Black Hawk Down directed by Ridley Scott, Kathryn Bigelow's 2008 film The Hurt Locker and Peter Berg's 2013 film Lone Survivor, Muslims are equated with terrorism and portrayed as feared people (Türkmen & Özçınar, 2020, p. 1338).

In the 1981 film Raiders of the Lost Ark, Arabs are portrayed in movies not only as barbarians, terrorists and dangerous, but also as highly incompetent people, as in the scene in which the main character Indiana Jones shrugs his shoulders at a large Arab who swings a sword at him (Uluç & Küngerü, 2018, p. 4). In director Stuart Baird's 1996 US film Executive Decision, the story of the hijacking of a passenger plane by Middle

Eastern terrorists is told, and while the Middle Easterners, the "other", are portrayed as incompetent and weak, the heroes representing the western "I" -Hale Berry, Kurt Russell, Steven Seagal- who are trying to defuse the bomb that will wipe the entire USA off the map are shown as strong, confident and cynical heroes (Önal & Baykal, 2011, p. 112).

Not only Arabs, but also Turks representing the East are similarly portrayed negatively in American films. For example, in the 1978 film Midnight Express, which tells the story of an American prisoner arrested and imprisoned in Türkiye, Turks are portrayed as sadistic and torturous. In the 1962 film Lawrence of Arabia, the Turkish officer is an immoral character (Gider Işıkman, 2009, p. 186). Similarly, the image of Turkish people/ Türkiye in the films Passport to Terror (1989), Prison Heat (1993) and Taken II (2012) is full of orientalist images and discourses that negatively affect Türkiye and Turks on an international scale (Söylemez & Göktürk , 2021, p. 266).

Other races representing the East are often portrayed negatively in American films. In the 1997 film Air Force One, Chechens were portrayed as ruthless terrorists who hijacked a plane carrying the American president, his wife, daughter and senior government officials (Gider Işıkman, 2009, p. 186). Again, Zack Snyder's 2007 film 300 Spartans marginalized Iran by adhering to America's ideologies and reconstructed a war in history (Battle of Thermopylae) from an orientalist perspective. In the film, Persians are positioned as the other of the West through the contrasts established as *"East/West, primitive/civilized, abnormal/normal, savage/civilized, female/male, cowardly/brave, immoral/moral, emotional/rational, slave society/free society, warrior/peacemaker"* (Yiğit, 2008, p. 248).

The orientalist perspective in US-made films can also be seen in productions for children. For example, in the opening scene of Disney's Aladdin (1992), directed by John Musker and Ron Clements, Aladdin talks about the country he comes from, saying that it is far away, that camel caravans travel there, that it is a barbaric place, but that despite everything, it is his home (Alhassen, 2018, p. 10).

In the foreword to the report (Haqq & Hollywood: Illuminating 100 years of Muslim Tropes and How to Transform Them) by Maytha Alhassen, which focuses on the portrayal of Muslims in Hollywood films through race and ethnicity, it is stated that throughout the history of cinema and television, American pop culture has never reflected the diversity, richness and humanity of Muslim communities (2018, p. 7). As a matter of fact, with the orientalist perspective, the image of the East in general and the image of Arabs and Muslims in particular are produced.

The Aim and Method of the Study

The aim of this study is to reveal how American ideology and orientalist discourse are constructed in Hollywood cinema. In accordance with this main purpose, the film *'True Lies'* (1994) was determined by purposive sampling from non-random sampling methods. Balcı (2016) states that in the purposive sampling method, the researcher decides what or who will constitute the sample that is suitable for the purpose of the research by using his/her will. The film selected as a sample was analyzed according to 'critical discourse analysis' and 'ideological film criticism'.

Özer (2015, p. 201) defines critical discourse analysis, in which concepts such as "power, domination, hegemony, ideology, class, gender, race, discrimination, interests, reproduction, institutions, social structures and social order" come to the fore, as "the

systematic study of the functions and structures of text and speech in their social, political and cultural contexts".

Ideological film criticism is based on the idea that most films "contain explicit ideological messages about individualism, male-female relationships, the importance of family life, race or European history" and is based on the idea of identifying "the world and messages that the film presents to the viewer by considering the content of the film in a holistic way, as well as the problems with the characters and plot, narrative structure, use of cinematographic techniques, etc." (Corrigan, 2011, pp. 121-126) Ideological film criticism examines films as a reflection of society and the era in which they were produced. Therefore, it investigates how infrastructure relations with socio-economic foundations determine films -ideologically- as a superstructure product (Özden, 2014, pp. 166-167).

Findings about Orientalist Discourse in *True Lies*

True Lies is a high-budget, box-office success with a well-known cast and a popular film that blends humor and action, glorifying US values and ideology, and it has many counterparts in Hollywood cinema. After briefly mentioning the story of *True Lies*, which is the subject of the research in this part of the study, the film is analyzed by the methods of critical discourse analysis and ideological film criticism.

The Short Story of the Film

True Lies is a 1994 action comedy film directed by James Cameron. The film centers on the character Harry, who is actually a CIA agent, although he looks like a middle-aged family man working in a marketing business. Harry is involved in dangerous missions with his team Gibson and Faisil, while giving the impression to his wife Hellen and daughter Dana that he has a boring job. The development part of the film begins with a bilateral conflict. On the one hand, they receive information that Jamal Khaled, a Middle Easterner, has smuggled four warheads stolen from Kazakhstan into the US; and on the other, Harry learns that his wife Helen is cheating on him with a man named Simon. Harry starts to have his wife followed and her phones tapped. Simon is actually a con artist who is a car salesman but lies about being a spy to impress women. Helen has not cheated on Harry, she is only helping Simon with his so-called secret missions because she wants to feel useful. Harry, on the other hand, visits Juno with another identity, as he thinks that Khaled will smuggle the weapons into the country through an art dealer named Juno Skinner. Juno, working on behalf of Khaled, finds out that Harry is a spy and kidnaps Harry along with his wife. Helen learns Harry's true identity. Harry saves his wife from the terrorists, but Aziz, who works on behalf of Khaled, has kidnapped Harry's daughter Dana and taken her to the top of a building in the city center. Here he aims to detonate the bomb, then giving his messages to the media. Dana climbs the crane at the top of the building after stealing the key that will detonate the bomb. Aziz chases after her. Having received the news of the situation, Harry arrives on a combat jet, rescues his daughter and kills the terrorists. The film ends with a short scene in which Harry and Helen are working as spies together.

The Construction of American Ideology and Orientalist Discourse in True Lies

In the 1980s, the new understanding of the economic order adopted by the United States gradually began to spread all over the world (Kazgan, 2005, p. 15). This understanding is announced as the "new world order" to the whole world by the American President George Bush at the congress. The new world order includes the rhetoric of "freedom, free market economy and human rights" (Canar, 2012, p. 51) and finds its basis in the

Washington resolutions, in which NATO decided that it could intervene outside its area for "peacekeeping and humanitarian aid" (Oran, 2010, pp. 210-211). (Hale, 2003, p. xii) With the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the United States took its place on the stage of history as the world's only superpower. The US military and economic power is considered a world power due to its leadership in technology and effectiveness in international institutions, and due to all these developments, America's understanding of the new world order gradually reaches a global scope (Kazgan, 2005, p. 15). One of the most important tools that have had a global impact on the construction of this new world order has been the popular Hollywood cinema. Especially, the lack of a pole to provide balance in the face of America, especially during the production of the film that is the subject of this study, has led to the positioning of the United States as the world's superpower both in the media and in Hollywood.

The American film industry, if the short period up to the First World War is excluded, has dominated the world market almost since the beginning of cinema. As a result of Keynesian policies and the National Industrial Recovery Act, films have become mass-produced, distributed and consumed products under the monopoly of vertically integrated giant corporations. The American film industry, which also pursues an expansionist policy with its international trade agreements, has become popular in most of the world and has been ahead of the domestic film industries (Çetin, 2014, s. 290). The ideological direction of these films, which have reached a large number of audiences all over the world, has been questioned by many in the context of spreading American values (Ryan & Kellner, 2010; Kırel, 2010; Herman & Chomsky, 2012). These popular narratives are based on "white, Christian, heterosexual, patriarchal" middle-class values and contribute to the construction of a Western-centered worldview as well as these values. While positioning itself as a superpower, the US puts an image of the East as the signifier of all negativities and shortcomings with qualities such as "black, Muslim, homosexual, matriarchal". These negative characterizations are the subject of feminist film theory, Queer film theory and Orientalist studies.

The film *True Lies* depicts a typical middle-class American family. The Tasker family, who live with their dogs in a two-story suburban house with a garden, consists of father figure Harry, who works in the marketing business, mother Helen, who works as a secretary, and their teenage daughter Dana. This family structure, which forms the core of many films in different genres, also functions as the carrier of American ideology in *True Lies*. One of the main conflicts of the film is the question of whether Helen is cheating on Harry. When Harry learns that Helen is secretly seeing someone named Simon, he uses all the CIA's resources to illegally track her and uncover the truth about his wife. Harry finds out that his wife is going to meet Simon and follows them. They drive to a caravan outside the city center. Simon asks Helen to pretend to be his wife for a secret mission and tries to get closer to Helen, under the pretext of looking like a married couple. Harry and his team raid the caravan and forcibly abduct Helen from the caravan. Harry and his partner Albert Gibson take Helen to the interrogation room and accuse her of being a member of an international terrorist organization. Gibson asks Helen if she often cheats on her husband. Helen denies the accusation, saying that she did not cheat on her husband. Harry, this time more openly, asks if she had a sexual relationship with Simon. Helen angrily denies the accusation again. Harry offers Helen to work with them or go to federal prison so that she can return to her normal life and her husband will not be aware of what is happening.

Helen agrees to work with them under the code name 'Doris' and waits for news of the mission. Helen arrives at a hotel for the first mission and disguises herself as a prostitute. She is tasked with placing a wiretap on the phone in the room where Harry is, whom she thinks is an arms dealer. Harry asks Helen to undress and dance, then kisses her as she lies on the bed. Helen picks up the phone from the nightstand and hits Harry repeatedly on the head, not thinking that Harry, whom she mistakes for a dangerous arms dealer, is likely to harm her. She then tries to escape from the room by kicking him. Thus, it is emphasized that the woman protects her chastity even in the face of death. In the film, both in this scene and in the previous interrogation scene, the "discourse of a woman who preserves her chastity" is reproduced in all circumstances in accordance with American ideology.

The other main conflict that drives the movie is the smuggling of four warheads stolen from Kazakhstan into the United States by Middle Eastern billionaire Jamal Khaled. In the opening scene of the film, Harry and his team sneak into a party organized by Jamal Khaled in Switzerland. The orientalist discourse in the film begins to be established by Harry's behavior towards Easterners at the party. Harry enters the party through the kitchen door and in order to disguise his identity and look like a normal guest, he says hello to some people he passes and asks them how they are doing. A funny situation is created when people do not understand that they are being deceived and then respond. The party is mainly attended by Western-looking guests, while Middle Easterners are also present in their local clothes. The guests whom Harry makes fun of are all Orientals. Icons such as 'agel' belonging to the Middle East and Arab culture are often used in the film. On the other hand, stereotypes about Arabs are reiterated by showing Middle Easterners living a luxurious life, especially at the party in the mansion.

One of the main villains in the film is Juno from Kazakhstan. Juno is portrayed as quite beautiful, educated and confident, unlike other bad characters in the film. In one scene, Harry has a conversation with Juno, who looks flawless and is a US citizen, as follows:

> *Harry:* "Why are you helping these psychopaths?"
>
> *Juno:* "These psychopaths pay me a lot of money; I don't care what the Middle Easterners or the Americans want."

Although Juno is portrayed as a self-confident character, she shows a silent acceptance when Aziz slaps her in the later parts of the movie, leading us to think that her external image is a fiction. No matter how strong, independent and confident she appears, she is an Eastern woman who accepts the domination of men and the act of slapping, which involves humiliation beyond physical violence. It is also the Eastern character who commits acts of violence. In contrast, Harry, representing the West, does not act aggressively towards his wife even when he finds out that she is cheating on him or that his daughter is stealing. Harry shows controlled and calm behavior in all scenes.

The character Salim Abu Aziz in the film leads a terrorist organization called 'Crimson Jihad'. While the basic meaning of the word jihad in Islam is primarily to fight one's own faults, in many Western narratives it is used as a concept that refers to wars, massacres and acts of terrorism in the name of religion. In the film *True Lies*, the concept is used with a similar emphasis. The word 'Crimson' added in front of the word 'Jihad' can also be used to mean 'red' and 'blood'. With the name 'Crimson Jihad', the concepts of blood and war are evoked, implying that jihad means violence.

Salim Abu Aziz makes a video recording to make their voice heard to the Americans. He calls out to the camera, saying *"...Now you have seen that there is a force in your enemy that can attack you. Now you Americans will withdraw all your military forces around the Persian Gulf. Right now and forever. Otherwise, the Crimson Jihad will blow up a major American city every week. You will meet our demands. First, we will detonate one bomb on this deserted island so that you will see our strength..."* These words of Aziz are one of the most obvious indicators of the portrayal of Arabs as ruthless terrorists.

The way Aziz's organization's members are depicted participates in the film's orientalist discourse in two ways. They participate in the orientalist discourse of the film, firstly because they commit acts of terrorism, and secondly because they are uncontrolled crowds acting on their emotions, grunting in meaningless voices instead of speaking in intelligible words. Just as Americans are portrayed as clean, elegant, educated, civilized and rational, Arabs are portrayed as dirty, shabby, rough, rude, aggressive, uncontrolled, wild, cruel and emotionally driven crowds. The Middle Eastern actors and extras are all made up of people with dark skin and bushy beards. As a matter of fact, whether they are at a party in a luxury mansion in Switzerland or they are preparing a terrorist act in a strange place, their disguise also repeats stereotypes about Arabs. Thus, the distinction between the Western "I" and the Eastern "other" is highlighted both on a semantic and visual level, and the orientalist discourse of the film becomes more obvious.

The adjectives used by Harry and his teammates to describe the Easterners and the verbal expressions used by the oriental characters in the film are another topic that needs to be focused on. In one scene of the film, Harry identifies the Easterners who follow him with the names of the characters of Beavis and Butt-head, one of the most popular TV series in America. The series centers on Beavis and Butt-head, a pair of lazy teenagers characterized by their apathy, lack of intelligence, and unqualified humor. On the other hand, throughout the movie, Harry often refers to Aziz and others as psychopaths. There are hardly any scenes in the film in which other Middle Easterners other than Aziz utter intelligible words. They often sound like grunts and unintelligible shouts. Their understandable words, on the other hand, are repeated stereotypes about Arabic. Words such as "Yallah" are often used exaggeratedly to create a laughing element. Jack Shaheen states that in Hollywood, the word Allah-u Akbar is used in a way that contains ideological elements like Yallah. In American films, the word Allah-u Akbar is usually followed by bombings, explosions, killings, suicides, etc. (Shaheen, 2009, p. 177).

In addition to these verbal expressions, Harry always ends the fight scenes in a way that humiliates the terrorists. For example, in the scene where Harry fights with the man who is after him in the toilet, he puts the head of the man he beat and knocked unconscious into the urinal. Or in the final scene of the movie, when he tries to bring Aziz down, he makes the tail of the plane come between Aziz's legs. These actions not only create a funny effect but also emphasize Harry's power over his opponents.

There are many scenes in the movie in which the Arabs are incompetent and are ridiculed in serious situations. As Aziz speaks into the camera, the person filming says that the camera battery is dead. Aziz says *"Put another one on, you idiot."* This scene is an indication that the Arabs are reflected in the film as incompetent characters. Aziz, against the camera, says *"You are listening to the Crimson Jihad. You have seen the limits of our power. Don't try to use force against us and cause us to destroy this city. We are all waiting, ready to die. If we turn that key, two million people will die in an instant."* as he

realizes that he doesn't have the key to make the bomb explode. Harry's daughter, whom they took hostage, took the key. Aziz and many of the men with him realize only later that Harry's daughter has the key, and they even let her slip away. Therefore, dozens of Eastern men are ridiculed for their incompetence in a serious situation against a little girl from the West.

Conclusion

The representation of Middle Eastern societies in general and Arabs and Muslims in particular through negative stereotypes in the mass media serves to reinforce the West's idea of itself as 'I' and the East as 'other'. One of the most important mass media that plays a role in the emergence of this situation is cinema. Cinema functions as an ideological device for creating and reproducing stereotypes about the Middle East.

In this study, which aims to reveal how American ideology and orientalist discourse are constructed in Hollywood cinema, the film *True Lies* has been evaluated with the methods of critical discourse analysis and ideological film criticism. According to the results obtained from the analysis, the basic discourse of the movie is in line with the policies pursued by the US in line with the 'New World Order' adopted at that time. With the new policy adopted by America, a new 'other' was also created in Hollywood. Many pre-9/11 war and political thriller movies dealt with terrorist attacks and threats of attacks on America by Arab Muslims (Kellner, 2013, pp. 36-39). The political positions of the West and the orientalist point of view explain why Middle Eastern representations in movies have been subject to similar adaptations for many years.

From the first scene of the analyzed True Lies film, it can be seen that it reveals many things about the East from a mostly orientalist point of view. In the film, Americans are portrayed as strong, clean, educated, intelligent, reliable and civilized in every way; while Arabs are portrayed as rude, ugly, dirty, aggressive, dangerous, terrorist and incompetent. Thus, both visually and semantically, the orientalist discourse based on the distinction between I/Western and other/Oriental is reconstructed in the film, and the stereotypes about this duality are repeated.

The fact that the movie *True Lies* is equipped with false representations and messages about Arabs may cause Westerners to misidentify the East and spread prejudices. In other words, the film has the potential to lead to East-West polarization and Western antipathy towards Arabs.

As we have tried to show with various examples in this study, Hollywood's ideological and distorted understanding of the East is in line with Said's views and the research results of cinema researchers (Shaheen, 2003; Booth, 2007; Gider Işıkman, 2009; Önal & Baykal, 2011; Blauvelt, 2008; Alhassen, 2018; Uluç & Küngerü, 2018; Türkmen & Özçınar, 2020).

Hollywood filmmakers need to take moral responsibility for their persistent attitude to creating representations of the Middle East from an orientalist point of view. In this respect, the films in question should be analyzed through various methods and their ideological aims should be revealed. Thus, it can contribute both to attracting the attention of filmmakers and to helping viewers to watch films from a critical point of view.

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Bir Tahakküm Biçimi Olarak Oryantalizmin Sinemadaki İzdüşümleri: 'True Lies'

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Genişletilmiş Özet

İnsanlık tarihi boyunca hemen her toplum farklı dönemlerde kendine özgü bir Doğu ve Batı imgesi yaratmıştır. Özellikle Batı'nın Doğu'yu kendi bakış açısına göre tanımladığı ve konumlandırdığı görülmektedir. Öyle ki Batı'nın Doğu'ya yönelik bu tanımlama girişimleri 'oryantalizm' olarak ifade edilmiş ve bilimin konusu haline gelmiştir. Doğu-Batı ayrımı ilk bakışta coğrafyaya vurgu yapsa da esasen ayrım kültür, kurum ve değerlerden yola çıkarak medeniyet algısı üzerinde durmaktadır (Yardım, 2018, s. 11). Bu ayrım, beraberinde 'ben' ve 'öteki' düalitesini de getirmiştir. Oryantalist düşüncede; ayrıştırılan, ötekileştirilen ve ikincil konuma yerleştirilen Doğu'dur. Kendisini 'ben' olarak nitelendiren Batı, 'öteki' olan Doğu'yu ideolojisine göre kurgulamaktadır.

Oryantalizm, "*Doğu'yu konu edinen kuramların tamamı, verilen beyanatlar, takınılan tavırlar, yapılan benzetmeler, bir cins* öğreti*, yönetim biçimi veya hükümet* şeklidir*. Kısaca bu cins oryantalizm, Batı'nın* üstünlük *sürdürme taktiği, Doğu* üzerinde *otorite kurma* çabasıdır" (Said, 1998, s. 14). Başlangıçta çıkar ve güç ilişkisine dayanan oryantalist söylem 'ben' ve 'öteki' kavramları üzerine kurulmuştur. Bu noktada Batı 'ben', Doğu ise 'öteki' olmuştur (Yardım, 2018, s. 23). Ötekinin merkezinde ise Doğulu Müslümanlar bulunmaktadır. Uluç (2009, s. 145), oryantalizm için, Said'in yaklaşımından esinlenerek "*Doğunun dev aynasında Batı'nın kendi kendisini seyretmesidir*" ifadelerini kullanmıştır. Batı'nın Doğu üzerinde kendi hegemonyasını kurmak amacıyla geliştirdiği egemen bir söylem olarak kabul edilen oryantalizmde, Said'e göre (1998), Doğu'yla ilgili çalışmalar, yazılan metinler, Doğu'yu baştan yaratmaktadır. Oryantalist bakış açısına göre, Doğu'nun gerçekliği, kültürel, siyasal ve ekonomik bir güç olarak görülen Batı'nın üretimidir (Satır & Özer, 2018, s. 764).

Sinema, icra edildiği coğrafyanın dışındaki coğrafyaları temsil ediş biçimiyle, izleyicisinin 'ben' ve 'öteki' algısını şekillendirmede önemli rol oynamaktadır (Önal & Baykal, 2011, p. 108). Bu doğrultuda filmler, Ortadoğu'ya dair basmakalıp yargıların yaratılmasında ve yeniden üretilmesinde ideolojik olarak işlev görmektedir. Özellikle, 1920'li yıllardan beri dünya pazarına egemen olan Amerikan film endüstrisi tarafından üretilen filmler, bütün dünyada çok sayıda izleyiciye ulaşmaktadır. Bu popüler anlatılar, "beyaz, Hristiyan, heteroseksüel, patriarkal" orta sınıf değerlere dayanmakta ve bu değerlerin yanı sıra Batı merkezli bir dünya görüşünün inşasına da katkıda bulunmaktadır. Amerika kendisini süper güç olarak konumlandırırken karşısına "siyah, Müslüman, homoseksüel, matriarkal" gibi niteliklerle bütün olumsuzlukların ve eksikliklerin göstereni olarak bir Doğulu imgesi koyar. Bu olumsuz nitelendirmeler feminist film kuramı, Queer film kuramı ve Oryantalist çalışmalara konu olur. Özellikle 11 Eylül'ün ardından Hollywood filmlerinde Arapların olumsuz imajlarla yansıtıldığı görülmektedir. *Arapların olumsuz imajları yansıtılırken çoğu zaman Müslüman olmaları da vurgulanarak, Müslümanlar ve terörizm özdeşleştirilmektedir.* Dolayısıyla bu çalışmanın temel amacı popüler sinemada oryantalist söylemin ve Amerikan ideolojisinin nasıl inşa edildiğini ortaya koymaktır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda yönetmenliğini James Cameron'un yaptığı 1994 yapımı 'True Lies'

filmi amaçsal örneklem yöntemine göre belirlenmiştir. Film eleştirel söylem çözümlemesi ve ideolojik film eleştirisi yöntemleriyle ele alınmıştır.

Gerçek Yalanlar filmi, tipik bir orta sınıf Amerikan ailesini betimler. İki katlı, bahçeli bir banliyö evinde köpekleriyle birlikte yaşayan Tasker ailesi, pazarlama işinde çalışan baba figürü Harry, sekreterlik yapan anne Helen ve ergenlik dönemindeki kızları Dana'dan oluşur. Farklı türlerde pek çok filmin çekirdeğini oluşturan bu aile yapısı, Gerçek Yalanlar filminde de Amerikan ideolojisinin taşıyıcısı olma işlevini görür.

Filmin çözümlemesinden elde edilen sonuçlara göre filmde Batılı "ben" ve Doğulu "öteki" ayrımı hem anlamsal hem de görsel düzeyde belirginleştirilerek oryantalist söylem inşa edilmektedir. Filmin temel söylemi, o dönem Amerika'nın benimsediği 'Yeni Dünya Düzeni' doğrultusunda izlediği politikalarla paralellik göstermektedir. Batı'nın siyasi pozisyonları ve oryantalist bakış açısı, sinema filmlerinde Ortadoğu temsillerinin yıllarca neden benzer uyarlamalara tâbi olduklarını açıklamaktadır.

True Lies filminin ilk sahnesinden itibaren Doğu'ya dair birçok şeyi çoğunlukla oryantalist bir bakış açısıyla ortaya koyduğu görülmektedir. Filmde Amerikalılar her yönden güçlü, temiz, eğitimli, şık, akıllı, güvenilir ve medeni; Araplar ise kaba, çirkin, pis, kaba saba, kontrolsüz, vahşi, zalim, saldırgan, tehlikeli, terörist, beceriksiz ve duygularıyla hareket eden kalabalıklar olarak temsil edilmektedir. Ortadoğulu oyuncuların ve figüranların hepsi koyu tenli ve gür sakallı kişilerden oluşur. Böylelikle filmde gerek görsel gerekse anlamsal olarak hem ben/Batılı ve öteki/Doğulu ayrımına dayanan oryantalist söylem yeniden inşa edilmekte hem de bu ikiliğe yönelik klişeler yinelenmektedir. *True Lies* filminin Araplara dair yanlış temsiller ve mesajlarla donatılmış olması Batılıların Doğuyu yanlış tanımasına ve önyargıların yaygınlaşmasına neden olabilecek niteliktedir. Bir başka deyişle film, Doğu-Batı kutuplaşmasına ve Batılıların Araplara antipati ile yaklaşmalarına yol açabilecek potansiyele sahiptir.

Hollywood film yapımcılarının, Ortadoğu temsillerini oryantalist bakış açısıyla oluşturmadaki ısrarcı tavırlarına karşı ahlaki sorumluluk almaları gerekmektedir. Bu bakımdan söz konusu filmlerin çeşitli yöntemlerle analiz edilerek, ideolojik amaçları ortaya konulmalıdır. Böylece hem film yapımcılarının dikkatlerinin çekilmesine hem de izleyicilerin filmleri eleştirel bir bakış açısı ile seyretmelerine katkıda bulunulabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sinema, Oryantalizm, İdeoloji, True Lies.