

## READING THE IDEOLOGY OF CINEMA: CONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGY AND THE IRON LADY

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### *Abstract*

*We are witnessing revival of conservative ideology that underlines nationalism, adapting to the crises of modernism, free market, traditions and locality in our postmodern age that represents rupture from modernity and with the spread of Neoliberal economic policies all over the World. This ideology being very close to the thinking of Social Darwinism and quite problematic with the understanding of the social state, is also reflected on the cinema and is intellectually reproduced. The Iron Lady movie ("The Iron Lady", 2011) is one of the films in which this ideology is reproduced. As a means of creating meaning, these films are media contents of the type of ideology elements. It is very important to analyze the films from an ideological perspective, realizing how the dominant ideology is reflected in the cinema, consciously or unconsciously to reveal implicit or explicit meanings that have been produced in terms of critical political economy approach. In this article, the ideological character of the movie The Iron Lady is intended to be revealed. For this purpose, the critical method of ideological analysis is used in this study.*

**Keywords:** *Communication studies, media, ideology, cinema, The Iron Lady.*

## Introduction

Various ideologists make claims for the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production that prioritizes profit maximization, and they create a “false consciousness” by reproducing these claims through the media. One of these claims is that the increase in wages and public expenditures will result in inflation and lead to the bankruptcy of the economy. Throughout the history of capitalism, which wanted to increase their profits by reducing wages, undoubtedly contradicted by the claim that the increase in wages will be balanced by an increase in price. Along with this claim, it is asserted that the working class’s demand for an increase is stupid while trying to get them to accept a decline in wage is less stupidity. In other words, this claim asserts that the amount of wages will be constant depending on inflation. However, for instance, if the total amount we have is 8, the absolute limits of this number do not prevent change on the relative boundaries of the parts that make up this number: if profits are 6, wages are 2, wages may rise to 6, profits may fall to 2, yet the total amount remains 8. Thus, even if the amount of production is stable, it cannot be proved that the amount of wages is stable in any way. The main point here is that falling rates of profits as a result of the general rise in wages will result in having to spend less money on luxury objects since falling rates of profit will not be compensated by the rise in prices as claimed because the demand for these commodities will not increase. Thus, the general rise in wage rates will lead to a general decline in the rate of profit without any permanent change in commodity prices after a temporary irregularity in market prices. This is proved with the developments after the fifteen-hour law, which was enacted in the United Kingdom in 1848 and was one of the biggest economic changes (Marx, 2017). Despite this, it is seen that the myth that an increase of wage will cause to increase in inflation and this drives the state into bankruptcy is asserted by ideological devices to reproduce the capitalist mode of production. Undoubtedly, one of these ideological devices is the media.

Cinema, one of the most basic media outlets, is undoubtedly an effective tool in mind-steering. This myth, mentioned above, was also reproduced in the film *The Iron Lady* (*The Iron Lady*, 2011), a media output; Trade unions and workers’ demands for their rights, strikes, etc., were shown as the cause of bad process in the economy in the British Kingdom, it was asserted that public spending and wage increases drove the country to bankruptcy, but this cannot go on any longer and it is stated by Margaret Thatcher that they must fight against unions without fear. This is the first of two fundamental problems in the film, which focuses on the life and career of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Throughout the film, it is shown Thatcher’s political career, she cuts public spending and struggles with unions demanding wage increases, and she has faced criticism for this. The most important scene of the film is that Thatcher expresses why she struggles with it. In the film, Thatcher states that she is struggling for the good of Britain, and she says that in a short period of time the public may hate her but will thank her for generations, because Thatcher’s main argument in the film is that, as mentioned earlier, public spending and wage increases will lead the country into bankruptcy. Thatcher’s argument is, as stated above, an argument that remains only at the level of assertion and is necessary for the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production. Marx (2017) refuted this argument with numerous evidence in his work named *Wage, Price, Profit*. After revealing this contradiction between material reality and narrative, with this first question keeping in the mind regarding the film, it is the analysis of the second problem that needs to be done. Conservative ideology, which was soldered with neoliberal economic policies in the 21st century, turned into a stream of thought called Thatcherism during the Thatcher period. Since the critical political economy perspective requires recognizing the implicit ideology in the narrative and bringing it to light with its material contradictions, the film needs to be analyzed with the method of critical ideological analysis.

**Theoretical Framework:** Media, whose ideological importance and shaping effect is accepted by many communicators and political scientists, is the most important struggle area of the dominant ideology as an ideological device (Altun, 2016, p. 23). It seems very difficult not only for individuals but also for our society as a whole to escape from the shaping and determining the effect of media, which has become the main source of communication for people today (Golding and Murdock, 2008). Cinema, which is a mass communication tool and known as the seventh branch of art, is also used as a means of forming public opinion, political engagement, and changing the world (Jafarli, 2004, p. 3). Cinema, just like other mass media, is an ideological narrative, not only a tool that the audience prefers to have an enjoyable time but also an important tool in creating a reality (Erdönmez, 2019, p. 40). Cinema, one of the most basic media outlets, is undoubtedly an effective tool in mind-steering. A film emerges from the combination of technique and meaning. When filmmakers set up a platform to create a film, they place the camera in specific positions and put together the stacks of shots to form a coherent narrative, so, along with this process to make a film, they do not only tell a story but also create meaning. These meanings are created consciously or unconsciously. Movies are connected with the social world in which they are made, and unintentional meaning arises from this connection. Therefore, all films have historical, political, cultural, psychological, social, and economic meanings and refer to the world in which they are created in many ways (Ryan and Lenos, 2014). Ryan and Lenos (2014), underline that; dominant ideas, tend to be compatible with the institutions and practices of society, and mostly they do not defy the distribution of source and power, unlike, they make it stronger and they support it. Therefore, there are many contradictions between cinema which is a media output which conveys ideology and reality. Like all movies, there is a contradiction between material reality and meaning in *The Iron Lady*, which depicts the life of Margaret Thatcher, the first female prime minister to be nominated from the conservative Party of the United Kingdom. In the film, Thatcher is mostly portrayed as the brave woman who is able to reach the highest political position while working in a grocery store, struggling to pursue her political career as a woman in a male-dominated society, with high British ideals, devoting herself to the public, and fighting against unions. Whereas, when we look at the material reality, there is a period keeping interest rates high and in which millions of people are unemployed with the policies implemented by her to cut public expenditures. In this study, we examined the discourse of the movie which conveys Thatcherist ideology with the critical ideological analysis method, which is a method that keeps in mind the control of the dominant class over the means of production, is the most appropriate method for this study. Thatcherism is a kind of conservative ideology which identified with Margaret Thatcher. Conservative ideology which emerged in the 19th century and called the century of ideologies, has problems with all ideologies such as liberalism and Marxism. This ideology has many problems with the social state principles like state aid and states funds and very close to social Darwinism. Throughout the whole movie there are many discourses which contain social Darwinist principles. In the study, we revealed hidden aspects of discourse with the critical ideological analysis method. For example, these statements contain conservative, social Darwinist principles: “If there is any aid, we should solve this problem within ourselves as a society, not the state.”, “Soon they will nationalize even the air, you don’t say to breathe, it is state property. The industry is getting nationalized, unions are increasing, and Pound is getting worse, whoever solves this issue is my candidate.”, “We must break the chains of socialism and reach prosperity.” “Gentlemen, we will go bankrupt if we do not cut public spending.”, “we must break the chains of socialism and reach prosperity”. We examined the discourse of the movie to reveal the ideological character of *The Iron Lady*. Throughout the film, it is stated that conservative ideology is reflected in the discourses, and discourse against income justice, equality, trade unions, and public spending is appeared and developed. Thatcher is shown in the film as a person trying to implement her conservative principles and neoliberal economic policies, devoting her life to the people, she gave all this struggle for the good of all the British people and she took all the criti-

cism. However, when it is looked at the material reality, she increased the profit maximization by refusing demands to increase wage and by cutting public spending, and it caused the impoverishment of Britain's working class.

## Conceptual framework

A film emerges from the combination of technique and meaning. When filmmakers set up a platform to create a film, they place the camera in specific positions and put together the stacks of shots to form a coherent narrative, so, along with this process to make a film, they do not only tell a story but also create meaning. These meanings are created consciously or unconsciously. Movies are connected with the social world in which they are made, and unintentional meaning arises from this connection. Therefore, all films have historical, political, cultural, psychological, social, and economic meanings and refer to the world in which they are created in many ways (Ryan and Lenos, 2014).

(Ryan and Lenos, 2014), states that the way the vast majority of their films deal with themes that normalize and legitimize high-income injustice:

“The vast majority of the films that you see are the films that are shot in the capitalist countries and in these countries, those who have the most of the wealth, hold it in their hands with the way of producing their wealth (factories, work-life, companies, and such), and they control it. Those who do not own that wealth, have to work for the first group. The first group is owning it while the second group has to put their effort into it. They are connected to each other in a modern, capitalist way but the first group is stronger in terms of economic and political way. Well then, why is this important in order to understand the movies? Capital class, even though it can't directly orient the political institutions, it exerts considerable influence on society by possessing and controlling the means of distribution of ideas that guide society. They own the media outlet; for example, they make movies. Rupert Murdoch, owns and controls the media, all around the world. (Including Fox News) And, as a wealthy conservative, thoughts advocated by its affiliates support the power of wealthy people like him. These companies make the unequal distribution of wealth seem like a cost for “freedom” and they picture as if the distribution of the wealth in a more justified way through the state's hand is something unreasonable and dangerous.”

Ryan and Lenos (2014), underline that; dominant ideas, tend to be compatible with the institutions and practices of society, and mostly they do not defy the distribution of source and power, unlike, they make it stronger and they support it. The clearest example of this; in medieval Europe, the nobility was seen as superior toward ordinary people. The unfair class structure that reigns for centuries, seeing it as something normal and legitimate by the dominant idea of its time, people who believe in this idea indicate that this structure will keep living by reproducing itself.

Ryand and Lenos (2014), cites Working Girl (Nichols, 1988) as an example of films dominated by dominant thought. The film is about the life of a young girl named Tess McGill, who works as a secretary in New York at a time of high injustice in income and high rates on mass layoffs, and in the final, she finds herself working in a better company. Ryan and Lenos (2014) pointed out that to understand this positive and funny narrative is a good example for ideology, we need to look at material reality, they emphasized while the upper class profited greatly from the crisis on that period, the lower class's income was gradually declining and many middle-class Americans were pushed back to live in the mediocre and low-income lives. Asking the question of how such a painful reality was depicted so differently in an important film of the period, Ryan and Lenos indicate that the film took all the boredom and pain and turned the lead actor into a joyful, jovial, feel-good story of hope, success and personal transformation (p. 221). Ryan and Lenos state that the movies reach the highest ideological level in the period that social deprivation and potential anger is on the peak. Ryan and Lenos (2014) underline in these movies both that empty promises

and futile desires are created, and the spread of the feeling that the institutions of society are right and just, ignoring the inequalities they create.

Like in the movie named *Working Girl*, there is a contradiction between material reality and meaning in *The Iron Lady*, which depicts the life of Margaret Thatcher, the first female prime minister to be nominated from the conservative Party of the United Kingdom. In the film, Thatcher is mostly portrayed as the brave woman who is able to reach the highest political position while working in a grocery store, struggling to pursue her political career as a woman in a male-dominated society, with high British ideals, devoting herself to the public, and fighting against unions<sup>1</sup>. Whereas, when we look at the material reality, there is a period keeping interest rates high and in which millions of people are unemployed with the policies implemented by her to cut public expenditures.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, there is a paradox between the material reality and the generated meaning, in other words, “false consciousness” is produced in the movie. When the media is viewed with a critical economic-political perspective, it is necessary to examine and criticize the ideological character of the communication contents, which are the output of intangible intellectual production, and reveal the contradiction between material reality and the meaning produced through the media. In this movie, where the dominant ideology is reproduced, the character of the ideology produced will be analyzed using the “Ideological Critique” method used by Ryan and Lenos (2014).

According to McLellan (1999), ideology, which is the most complicated concept to define, was first used in 1796<sup>3</sup> by the French philosopher Antonie Destutt de Tracy as a mean of ‘the way of thinking correctly’ and it was used by Bonaparte as ‘the strange ideas of some men’ in negative mean (Altun, 2016, p. 6). On the other hand, Marx and Engels (1992) argued that ideology has functions<sup>4</sup> such as “false consciousness” and “inversion of reality”<sup>5</sup>, and Lenin claimed that ideology was “the world view of a class” (Alemdar and Erdoğan, 1994). While Althusser (1991, p. 31) refers to ideology as ‘a material practice’, Gramsci stated that ideology is like ‘a plaster that holds society together’ (Document, 1989, p. 220). According to Eagleton (1996), it is possible to conceptualize the concept of ideology as a world view in general (Örs, 2014) which does not have a consensus definition and has a pejorative meaning in the historical process.

As a product of superstructure, ideology is conveyed through narratives.<sup>6</sup> Narratives; Starting

1 <sup>2</sup> According to the movie, the reason behind Thatcher’s refusal of union’s demands is; the idea of the rise of the wages and practices such as public spending will increase inflation and this will conclude with bankruptcy. Since Thatcher wants the Britain to reach welfare so she does not accept these demands. However, the general rise in wage rates leads to a general decrease in the rate of profit, without any change in commodity prices, after a momentary, temporary turmoil in market prices (Marx, 2007). It is beneficial to mention about the analyze of material reality, that; The detailed analysis of the economic conditions of England at that time was not the subject of this study, but contented with the critical political-economy interpretation of Thatcher’s main argument in the film: “If wages rise, inflation will increase and the country will go bankrupt”.

2 For the emergence and meaning of the concept of ideology in the 18th century, see. H.M. Drucker, *The Political Uses of Ideology*, London, Barnes and Noble, 1974; Jorge Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology*, Hutchinson.

3 Antonie Destutt de Tracy explains why he preferred this term as follows: “I prefer to use the name ideology or science of ideas. This name is appropriate as it does not imply anything unknown or suspicious, does not associate with any idea of cause/effect. Even considering only the French word “idea”, its meaning is clear to everyone, because everyone knows what it is meant by “idea”, even if very few people actually know what it really is ... ‘ideology’ is an appropriate word because it is a complete translation of the science of thought.” (Çelik, 2005, p. 35).

4 As seen in the ‘Introduction’ section of the study, Ryan and Lenos (2014) use the concept of ideology in this sense.

5 Marx and Engels explain this issue in their book *The German Ideology*: “The thoughts of the ruling class are the dominant ideas in all ages, in other words, the class, the dominant material force of society, is also the dominant mental force. The class that possesses the means of material production also keeps the means of mental production in its hands., they are so intertwined that the thoughts of those who are not given the means of mental production are also dependent on this ruling class. The dominant ideas are nothing more than the intellectual expression of the dominant material relations”. (Marx and Engels, 1992, p. 70).

6 The superstructure is the institutions that correspond to the infrastructure or the foundation regarding the political, religious, economic, legal, artistic, and philosophical view of the society, corresponding to legal, political, and other institutions in the economic order

from the cave paintings produced in the early periods of humanity, there are many genres such as epics, fairy tales, operas, news programs, sports broadcasts, novels, television series, jokes, computer games, movies, advertisements containing symbols, figures, images, and visual elements. These are cultural products that contain feelings, thoughts, ethical values, and political views (Erdönmez, 2019). The idea that narratives can change and transform the infrastructure is quite old.<sup>7</sup> Plato (2012, pp. 75-85) also mentions in his work titled “The State” that some narratives such as stories or poems can lead young people, can be a bad example and this can cause radical changes in the state.

## Ideology and cinema

Media, of which ideological importance and shaping effect is accepted by many communicators and political scientists, is the most important struggle area of the dominant ideology as an ideological device (Altun, 2016, p. 23). It seems very difficult not only for individuals but also for our society as a whole to escape from the shaping and determining the effect of media, which has become the main source of communication for people today (Golding and Murdock, 2008). Cinema, which is a mass communication tool and known as the seventh branch of art, is also used as a means of forming public opinion, political engagement, and changing the world (Jafarli, 2004, p. 3). Cinema, just like other mass media, is an ideological narrative, not only a tool that the audience prefers to have an enjoyable time but also an important tool in creating a reality (Erdönmez, 2019, p. 40). Cinema, which enables the continuation of cultural representations and has the function of directing thought like other mass media tools, is used for propaganda in an ideological dimension (Schiller, 2018).

According to Ryan and Kellner (1997), movies that psychological stances that lay the groundwork for the construction of social reality are part of a broader system of cultural representations that sustain social institutions by guiding common thought about what the world is and should be. Almost all film theorists agree that cinematographic narration makes all kinds of content real, whether the content is realistic or not, and in this sense, it has become a powerful tool in ideology transmission. One of the definitions of ideology is as follows: “Ideology is coding reality.” The audience is in a universe where the illusion is very competent while they are watching the movie (as cited in Jafarli, 2004, p. 13). According to Fargier (1970), cinema represents the given ideologies, enables them to become widespread, and creates the impression of reality on the screen as a unique ideology. Thus, it creates the impression that reality exists as it is on the screen.

There are also meanings in films that have cultural, social, and political effects that are created not only consciously but also unconsciously. For this reason, cinema has meanings that are both produced consciously in line with certain interests and produced by the effect of the historical conditions in which the filmmaker is (Erdönmez, 2019, p. 40). In this context, the movie *The Iron Lady* is also a narrative that conveys ideology, encodes and constructs reality.

## Margaret Thatcher and Iron Lady

Margaret Hilda Thatcher, the longest prime minister in the UK and also the kingdom’s first female at a certain stage of the development of society. Each foundation has a superstructure corresponding to that foundation. For example, the foundation of the feudal order has its own superstructure, legal, political, and other views, and corresponding institutions, as well as the capitalist base has its own superstructure (Politzer, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> This argument is also true for Marx and Engels. Engels (2018), who defended the criticisms towards Marx’s being an “economic determinist” in his “Letters on Historical Materialism 1890-1894”, emphasized that the infrastructure internalizes the superstructure and that the superstructure internalizes the infrastructure and that it “interacts”, and he stated that it is the infrastructure that ultimately determines it.

prime minister, known as the “The Iron Lady”, has recently been one of the most influential people in the kingdom, with implemented neoliberal-conservative policies of her such as “privatization” and “cuts in public spending” called Thatcherism. Born in a small town called Grantham in Eastern England, Thatcher worked in her father’s shop, who was once the Mayor of Grantham and played an active role in local politics and ran a small grocery store. Having completed her chemistry education at Oxford University, Thatcher participated in the 1950 and 1951 elections as the youngest candidate of the Conservative Party, and at that time she met and married to Denis Thatcher, a wealthy businessperson. When the Conservative Party won the elections in 1970, she served as the Minister of Education and Science and implemented policies that restrict public spending. After the defeat of the Conservative Party in the elections in 1974, she became the Minister of Environment and Housing. During this period, she advocated a tax system called “head tax”, based on equal taxation by everyone, and gathered support for conservatives with this decision. Thatcher formed the government on May 4, 1979, becoming Prime Minister three times in a row, pledging to prevent the UK’s economic collapse and to reduce the state’s role in the economy. She considered that inflation rose to 21% in 1980 because of excessive public spending and borrowing, so, Thatcher aimed to get the money supply under control and raised interest rates to reduce borrowing. Increasing interest rates resulted in an economic stagnation and an increase in the unemployment rate, and it caused to get people’s reactions. Having disagreed with her own party on the economic situation and relations with the European Union, her deputy Geoffrey Howe presented his resignation to Thatcher. Following this incident, in 1990, another election took place for the leadership of the party, Thatcher resigned from the Prime Ministry stating that she would not be a candidate in the second round and left the Parliament in 1992 (Biography, n.d.).

The Iron Lady, a British-French co-production and released in 2011, is a semi-biographical film about Margeret Tatcher’s career and life. Alexander Roach, acts out her youth when Thatcher was at the beginning of her political career, and her later stages were played by Meryl Streep. The effects of the Conservative ideology, implicitly or explicitly, are seen in the film, in Thatcher’s statements, in her policies, etc.

## Conservative ideology

Conservatism, which manifests positions specific to each country and culture in a long historical period, differentiates and diversifies in itself such as moderate conservatism and neo-conservatism, in its most general terms, the “ancient order” or the period before the Enlightenment, Reformation and the French Revolution; It is a traditionalist ideology that argues that the old regime should be preserved and maintained. Conservative ideology, which emerged in the 19th century and called the century of ideologies, has problems with all ideologies such as liberalism and Marxism. It sees itself as above ideologies and is based on the idea that all emerging movements cause conflict and unrest in society. While conservatives prioritize society to the individual, liberalism glorifies “individualism”. Left ideologies glorify the ideals of the revolution, while the conservatives prefer reforms of conflict and inaction that lead to chaos whatever the cost. What is more deeply desired by conservatives is a state of religious acceptance, trust, and inaction. If a reform becomes necessary, this change must be slow and gradual. In fact, not reform, but “revision” should be realized. The conservative ideology against the social contractarian philosophy of liberalism and the class and conflict-based theory of socialism is based on the idea that the ancient regime and the given regime should be preserved as much as possible. It has been described by its opponents as “self-styled” because it was close to the medieval economy based on the guild and absolutist political system of the Middle Ages (Güler, 2014).

Looking at the way ideologies handle social formation and its unit is useful in revealing their specific side. Liberalism sees “the individual” as the unit forming the social formation while socialism and Marxism see “class”, and conservative ideology sees “society”. In this context, conservatism, which has an organismic worldview, is very close to nationalist ideology in this respect and, just like it, underlines the different cultural and historical aspects of locality in every country and proposes to preserve traditions, institutions, and culture.

Edmund Burke’s (1986) powerful work named “Thoughts on the French Revolution” has an important place in the formation of the conservative doctrine. Burke, as opposed to the French Revolution’s ideals of equality and freedom, argues that, contrary to socialist ideology, inequality is natural and does not disturb the unity and harmony of the whole. Conservatism, which has been strongly conceptualized since this period, has begun to form a center of gravity against left ideologies since the mid-1970s and called “neo-conservatism”. Conservatism, which was against the welfare state practices in this period, and accompanied by neo-liberal political initiatives such as privatization, achieved its cultural and intellectual victory with the United States (hereafter “USA”) Prime Minister Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and it can be said to have come to life again (Güler, 2014).

Conservative views, which have been effective in all US administrations since the 1990s, increased their effectiveness after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and followed an aggressive attitude rather than traditionalism. When the collapse of socialism made international institutions and organizations a topic of discussion again, in the document called the “New American Century Project” it has been underlined that the hegemony of the USA including the United Nations was narrowed by global organizations. What the USA needs to do is to follow an aggressive foreign policy regardless of such institutions. The most vocal advocates of this ideal have been the neoconservative ideology, that is why, it has been criticized for being an ideology that is very compatible with the needs of new imperialism (Güler, 2014).

## Method

Cinema is a device that Althusser defines as the “ideological apparatus of the state”, in other words, it is a mass communication tool that is used to adopt the ideology of the ruling class and the policies of those who have economic, political, and social power. For this reason, it is necessary to reveal the ideological point of view in movies, to analyze and position it in its place within ideologies (Erdönmez, 2019, p. 122).

The main purpose of the study, problematizing the contradiction between material reality and the ideological narrative in *The Iron Lady*, is to recognize the dominant ideology in the narrative and reveal its hidden aspects with a perspective of critical political economy.

The narratives, which contain many elements such as emotions, thoughts, ethical values, and political views, allow them to be analyzed and critically researched since they contain ideologies. According to Ryan and Lenos (2014), movies create certain meanings by using many methods. For example, the movie *Avatar* (Cameron, 2009) refers to the current debates between the humanism of liberal environmentalists and the conservatives who dominate the economy. Such films should be criticized in order to be handled, isolated, and analyzed in depth (p. 185). In this study, the method of ideological criticism, which is one of the frequently used methods in film criticism, will be used. Since the aim of the study is to reveal the ideological character of *The Iron Lady*, the critical ideological analysis method, which is a method that

keeps in mind the control of the dominant class over the means of production, is the most appropriate method for this study.

## Conservative ideology and The Iron Lady

The movie begins with Thatcher's late old age, when she stays in her home in the care of caregivers. In this house, Thatcher hallucinates about her deceased husband Denis Thatcher, and also talks to him. The audience watches Thatcher's past and career journey with memories she remembers from time to time. In the film, Thatcher's first memory shown to the audience is when she worked in her father's little grocer and listened to his political speeches. The film shows Thatcher's father, Alfred Roberts, had a major influence on the young Margaret Thatcher, along with the locals, watches her father's speech, a local preacher, grocer, and politician, with great attention and admiration. Her father uses the following expressions in his speech; "What is the lifeblood of a society? Trade. It is not only in big but also in small commercial institutions like mine. We, as those in this land, are strong, confident in ourselves. Sometimes we can be simple-minded. But we also love to help each other." Roberts' statement that the lifeblood of society is small and large commercial institutions reminds conservative ideology's longing for the ancient order based on guild organization. The reason behind the statement, "Sometimes we can be simple-minded," is associated with the conservative ideology's clear opposition to the new, rational, revolutionary ideals of Enlightenment philosophy, its preference for the old experienced for centuries over the inexperienced new, the principle of its preserving is calm against rootlessness, confusion and chaos, and its preference for the simple over the "hard". Conservative ideology, relying on historical continuity and the society that has taken its present form as a result of trial and error for centuries, prefers the simple, continuity, and inaction against the atmosphere of unrest created by the efforts of liberals and socialists to change the world (Güler, 2014). The reason behind Roberts' use of the phrase "we love to help each other" is related to the "minimal state" understanding of the conservative ideology. In conservative ideology, "aid" or "redistribution" is an issue that needs to be resolved within society, not by the state. Conservative ideology, which is against redistribution politics, distant to "welfare state" and "social state" policies and prioritizes "laissez-faire principles", emphasizes the power of the state but without intervention, and the vacant activity in this area should be filled by the local community, neighborhood, decentralization, church, and localism. Briefly, the subtext in Roberts' statement is as follows: "If there is any aid, we should solve this problem within ourselves as a society, not the state." This attitude of conservative ideology would be tantamount to leaving those in need of help to an uncertain tradition or the mercy of other members of society, by its opponents, especially by left ideologies. However, this has been criticized because what needs to be done is that those in need of help should be taken under protection without relying on others through "statutes" and "rational and central planning" by an organized and institutional structure, that is, by the state. When we look at the material reality of that period, it can be easily seen that there is a contradiction between Roberts' ideology and practice: In the period of Robert who brought the good society or good individual to the forefront against the social state, which is a rational regulation in the economy; during the processes when the industrialization phenomenon became widespread in the 19th and 20th centuries, the policies of liberal approaches that deemed necessary to liberate the market completely went into crisis because the market is in complete freedom; spontaneous processing caused great inequalities and tensions. The failure of this approach, which sets out from the assumption that human nature is good and competitive and foresees complete freedom in the economy, became more visible at the beginning of the 20th century. The solutions developed by each society regarding the new tensions differed. In some, the state intervenes in all areas, while in others, the state intervenes in social life for a fairer sharing with smoother transitions. For example, in England, more egalitarian and fair regulations in the economic and

political sphere advocated by Fabian socialists have gained weight; As a matter of fact, the ideological rise of the British Labor Party that emerged from this movement coincides with this period (Çubukçu, 2014, pp. 256-257).

The audience watches the old Thatcher hallucination after Thatcher's youthful memory. In the hallucination that Thatcher saw, the question that her husband Denis asked her while solving the puzzle in the newspaper and the answer he received is quite meaningful: "Anyone who opposes change?". Thatcher answers Direngen (Obstinate). Thatcher states that, just as conservative ideology predicts, those who oppose change are resistant, in other words, they must resist change. The reason behind Thatcher's anti-change statement is the conservative ideology's perspective on "change". The reason conservatives oppose change is due to the belief that society is in a spontaneous harmony and therefore a belief it is unproblematic. That is why the opposition's demand to shatter and change this sacred system of families and communities is perceived as an "external" effect that shatters the social structure and causes moral values to disappear. According to the history of conservative philosophy, while the Renaissance, Reform, and the age of reason, radically changed the world history, in other words, modern history is not a progress but a regression; The French Revolution, on the other hand, is a tragic result of the disruptive steps listed above. Joseph de Maistre explains his approach to reforms with the following words: "We do not want a counter-revolution. We want something that is the opposite of revolution." (Nisbet, 1986, p. 20). Middle Age resulted in the emergence of "modernity", which is thought to have an overwhelming and sweeping power called collapse and disintegration. Conservatives argue that the knight, gentleman, and aristocratic traditions are more civilized than modernity. While conservatives see and acknowledge the existence of change in history, this change should never be squeezed into a short period of time, it should be a deep belief in the "wisdom" that underlies the prejudices and institutions that societies have accumulated over centuries, gradually evolving, the ways and methods of the ancestors should not be tried to be changed with the modern reasoning methods. Otherwise, the change will drag humanity into new disasters (Güler, 2014). Therefore, Thatcher's answer to the question of her husband Denis should be read together with the attitude of conservative ideology towards change. Conservative ideology has been criticized in this context as being the status quo supporter.

This time, the audience is watching Thatcher's dinner with her daughter and family relatives who come to visit her. Thatcher uses the following expression to her guests at this dinner; "I never liked coalitions, and I never did." It is necessary to look at the management understanding of conservative ideology to reveal the implicit side of this statement. Sharing the administration by representing different-thinking segments of society through political parties in the parliament is an area where conservative ideology is problematic. Moreover, not only coalitions but the idea of a self-governing society is an issue to which conservative ideology is distant. Conservatives formed a conscious opposition movement against the idea of democracy that emerged since the end of the 18th century, as well as those trying to have the right to be represented in the parliament, and they opposed the conceptualization of a rational society based on the contract in order not to change the status quo. Conservatives, who are concerned that democracy will create unlimited freedom, foresee that the mentioned political order will not be stable as there will be no consensus in terms of spiritual values, and argue that the pursuit of democracy that emerged during the revolution period created anarchy as well as degenerative. Moreover, they think that this system will gradually lead to tyranny and one-man rule. Displaying such an approach increases the importance of the question of what is the normative management approach of conservatives in this case. Conservatives hold the idea that representation of a kingdom in the legislature is the basis of all legitimate governments, not just constitutional freedom. A political organization established without this basis will not be legitimate

and legal. The activities of the French Revolution aimed at destroying the old regime are also criticized by conservatives (Güler, 2014). In short, conservatives advocate that the legitimate base of the government is, or should be the absolute authority holders of the Middle Ages. For this reason, they deal with questions about where the kingdoms got their legitimacy from. In such a situation, it would be appropriate to emphasize that the concern over the possibility of the democracies carried by conservatives turning into tyranny hangs in the air. Despite all these objections, conservatives opposed the expansion of the democratic ground, symbolized by general suffrage, from the late 19th century to the pre-World War II, and it would be appropriate to reveal the ideology behind the narrative by taking into account the above-mentioned understanding of governing to evaluate Thatcher's statement on coalitions.

The audience watches the memory of the dinner, where Thatcher met with people to become a conservative party candidate in the parliamentary elections. One of the guests uses the following statements: "Soon they will nationalize even the air, you don't say to breathe, it is state property. The industry is getting nationalized, unions are increasing, and Pound is getting worse, whoever solves this issue is my candidate."

In the following scenes of the film, issues related to unions come to the fore again. In a heated debate in parliament at a time when Thatcher was Minister of Education and public workers were on strike, she spoke to the Labor Party as follows: "The gentleman knows that we have no choice but to close schools because his unionists deliberately launched a strike to undermine our economy. Teachers cannot do their work without heaters and lights in the classroom. And I'm asking you esteemed gentleman, whose fault is this?". Trade unions come to the fore in another scene of the movie. While Thatcher is teaching her daughter to drive in traffic, hears the following words on the radio: "We came to 1974, but you think that it is the years of World War II. There is no electricity, no oil, everywhere is complicated. Heath should resign immediately and it should be given chance for those who would not be afraid of dealing with the unions." Then, to tell the audience that this fearless person is herself, Thatcher tells her daughter: "You have to be brave to sit behind the wheel." In one of the later scenes of the film, Thatcher calls out to the public in the 1979 elections: "We must break the chains of socialism and reach prosperity." The issue of the union comes back to the agenda in a debate on coal mines in the parliament when Thatcher is criticized as following "This woman is the woman who did not even blink and did nothing when 10 men killed themselves in a hunger strike." She says as following "They believe in the strike but believe in working" in response to the criticism against her. In the scene, where the recommendations for her staff officer to take a step back as a result of public reactions to the leaked budget draft of Thatcher, Thatcher declares her determination as follows: "Gentlemen, we will go bankrupt if we do not cut public spending." Thus, the following inference can be drawn from the film regarding unions: Thatcher sees unions as an obstacle to achieving prosperity because they "disrupt production".

The reason behind these narratives is related to the economic perspective of the conservative ideology. First of all, it should be noted that the common denominator of conservatism throughout the 20th century, especially in the post-Cold War era, was respect for private property and anti-communism (Ball and Dagger, 1995). Thus, conservative ideology is against unions because these institutions are seen as interfering with the functioning of the market. Michael Oakeshott (1962), one of the leading British conservative thinkers, linked the civic idea of conservatism with the economy in his work "On Being Conservative" and supported that the state should be downsized and market forces should be liberated. In this context, unions are seen as shackles at the foot of the free market, and there is dissatisfaction with the "welfare state" practices in which the unions are active.

Neoconservatives such as Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, or Jeanne Kirkpatrick have also expressed this discontent. According to them, the government is doing too much (redistributing) unnecessarily, but what is done is making things worse, not better. This is the thought behind Thatcher's statement that "we must break the chains of socialism and reach prosperity"; unions are causing the country to become impoverished. Conservatism, which developed internal and external under the conditions of the Cold War with the discourse of "the danger of communism", represented a break from the social democracy/welfare state tradition after the 1970s (Gunn, 1989). Conservative ideology accepts a free market environment that individuals can compete with each other and underlines the need to minimize social state expenditures; the problems will be solved spontaneously not by the unions but by the "invisible hand" in the free market, and everyone will benefit from it in the end. This is the ideology behind Thatcher's statement, "They believe in the strike and I work." Trade unions are perceived as "external intervention" just like democracy. When it is considered that the conservatives are firmly affiliated with economic liberalism, the ideology, behind the dinner guest's statement "whoever solves the problem of expropriation and union is my candidate", will become clearer. Considering these approaches of the conservative ideology to the economy in general, the reason behind the veiled narratives of wage increases, unions, and public expenditures appears by itself. In this context, conservative ideology deals with the question directed by its opponents, "Why do you strive to strengthen and fortify your self-proclaimed legitimacy as a naked authority, even though you support the purification of the state from its social functions?" (Bora, 2003). Bauman (2015) also states that the thesis that the invisible hand in the market cannot ultimately be the only condition of prosperity that will reach the broad layers of the population, that wealth will flow from top to bottom, has been falsified throughout history and has turned into an impenetrable sieve, and as a result, he shows with the statistics that the neoliberal economic policies have become more widespread than ever before, and that income inequality has increased more than ever before. As a matter of fact, neoliberal economic policies, in other words, the "invisible hand" or "we love to help each other" discourses, have not been able to bridge this gap.

The audience is taken to the memory of Thatcher listening to her father's speech with the locals. Robert says in his speech; "There is no need to pretend that we are all equal, we are not, and we were not." The reason behind this narrative is, of course undoubtedly, that conservative ideology is opposed to the idea of equality. Burke (1986) clearly expresses this contrast as follows; "Equality is a monstrous fiction." According to him, the existence of the nobility in society is natural and what should be; the existence of different layers in the society does not disturb the unity and harmony of the whole. Trying to align segments of society that are naturally at different levels is both useless and impossible because political equality is against nature, and the idea of equality is a challenge to this natural order. Equality does not have positive references, since classical conservative thinking is based on an organic and feudal society. Conservatives react very strongly to the collectivism that has been reconstructed instead of old on the basis of urban poor public movements of Jacobenism, and they worry as the scope of democracy and equality expands; "Or will the feet be head, the head will be feet?" For Burke (1986), perfect democracy is the world's most shameless and fearless phenomenon (Güler, 2014). The reason behind Roberts' statements is based on the conservative ideology's view of equality and freedom. Conservatives are criticized by their opponents on account of the fact that inequality is created "by forcefully" because the surplus value produced by the workers is appropriated by those who own the means of production, and this situation is justified and naturalized in conservative ideology.

In another scene of the film that Thatcher, in a public speech, emphasizes the need to work hard and thus rebuild Great Britain, and in another scene in the film, it is seen that she uses this statement "I'm

proud to be British.” The reason behind this narrative is based on the relationship between conservatism and nationalism. Burke (1986), one of the most important theorists of conservative thought and also the British nationalist, developed similar nationalist discourses: “Britain should be one family, one body, one heart and one soul.”, “Freedom is not a right to be part of the human, but a remained legacy to the British people.”, “As the chosen race and the sons of England worship freedom, they will turn to you (the British Empire). As their number increases, your friends will also increase.” Considering Burke’s these ideas, Thatcher nationalist discourses become more understandable.

Lastly, after the memories of her being removed from her seat, by saying this statement “I made such difficult decisions, is there any benefit now? Don’t they know, when it is taken tough decisions... Yes, the people may blame you on that day, but they will thank you for generations”, she implies that the neo-liberal economic policies that she put into practice will ultimately increase the welfare of the whole people and implies that she has pursued those policies for her subjects. Moreover, Thatcher implies, in these words, that she knew that because of cutting interest and hence it causes unemployment and to cut public spending in order to achieve prosperity creates a difficult situation for the majority of the population for a temporary period, but she implies, prosperity will benefit future generations when reaching the prosperity in time. Conservative ideology has been criticized in this respect as well, on the grounds that it is susceptible to develop a kind of “immorality” that ignores those who are living in poverty (Güler, 2014, p. 136).

## Conclusion

Throughout the film, it is stated that conservative ideology is reflected in the discourses and discourse against income justice, equality, trade unions, and public spending is appeared and developed. Thatcher is shown in the film as a person trying to implement her conservative principles and neoliberal economic policies, devoting her life to the people, she gave all this struggle for the good of all the British people and she took all the criticism. However, when it is looked at the material reality, she increased the profit maximization by refusing demands to increase wage and by cutting public spending, and it caused the impoverishment of Britain’s working class. Cinema, one of the most basic media outlets, is undoubtedly an effective tool in mind-steering. A film emerges from the combination of technique and meaning. When filmmakers set up a platform to create a film, they place the camera in specific positions and put together the stacks of shots to form a coherent narrative, so, along with this process to make a film, they do not only tell a story but also create meaning. These meanings are created consciously or unconsciously. Movies are connected with the social world in which they are made, and unintentional meaning arises from this connection. Like all movies, there is a contradiction between material reality and meaning in *The Iron Lady*, which depicts the life of Margaret Thatcher, the first female prime minister to be nominated from the conservative Party of the United Kingdom. In the film, Thatcher is mostly portrayed as the brave woman who is able to reach the highest political position while working in a grocery store, struggling to pursue her political career as a woman in a male-dominated society, with high British ideals, devoting herself to the public, and fighting against unions. Whereas, when we look at the material reality, there is a period keeping interest rates high and in which millions of people are unemployed with the policies implemented by her to cut public expenditures. Therefore, there is a paradox between the material reality and the generated meaning, in other words, “false consciousness” is produced in the movie. When the media is viewed with a critical economic-political perspective, it is necessary to examine and criticize the ideological character of the communication contents, which are the output of intangible intellectual production, and reveal the contradiction between material reality and the meaning produced through the media.

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