Chapter 10
Images of Women
Resisting the Tide

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ABSTRACT

Many popular movies reproduce dominant cultural life, dominant viewpoints, and norms that we encounter in everyday life. And we also see a public sphere where the discourse of men is displayed as more important, but women are displayed as inferior and powerless in the movies. Against this problematic approach of popular films, the feminist film theorists take this issue into public debate. This study focuses on the concept of social gender through the female characters presented in the movies from a general perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Cinema is an art that sheds light on the problems, separations and many problems of the age that seem to be impasse since it is an activity that has been active for more than a century. Sometimes it became a partner of great disasters and sufferings, sometimes caused new debates and sometimes caused many events, which pass into oblivion, to become a current issue. The issue of social gender is one of these issues. The mainstream cinema, which has been shaped by male-dominated discourses and narratives from the beginning, and the issue of how and by which motives the woman, who has been exposed to a masculine view within this cinema sector, is reflected are important. In this sense, each film can produce various truths or mistakes due to the location at which it is positioned and the ideology that feeds it somehow. Also Özdemir says that classical narrative cinema iterates the discourses

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of social order. Contemporary narrative cinema, on the other hand, dislocates the codes of social order (Özdemir, 2019: 230). Although the existence of women in cinema differs due to the sociological and political changes in the world, it is possible to observe women being presented as a kind of sexual object since the first years.

As a natural consequence of feminist and queer movements in cinema, masculine dominant discourse and point of view has been abraded and especially with the eighties, much more positive character creations have been realized. In this sense, against certain narratives that confine women into certain stereotypes, a large number of films have been made depicting women and LGBTI members as characters who act, desire, produce as they wish and hold out on. In spite of all these positive points of view, even in contemporary cinema, there is still an approach that belittles women and makes them the object of masculine view.

Women, who are owned by a man or depicted on the level of some kind of sexual object, appear also in various media contents out of the cinema today. Within the scope of this study, an evaluation will be carried out based on cinema and films, which break the traditional problematic perspectives, make strong, resistant women appear and swim against the current, will be mentioned. But before that, it would be useful to make a brief assessment of how media tools in general spread dominant cultural and political understandings.

Media Works!

Of course, in daily life practices, mass media are the sources that people frequently resort to in their experiences such as desire, demand, entertainment, obtaining information and following the news. If borrowed from Athusser (2006) terminology, these tools are one of the ideological devices that spread the discourses and dispositive of power.

In particular, the mainstream media, through its publications, operates in a formative, restrictive way that drives people to cluster around certain thought flow networks. The mainstream media, which can be defined as a standardizing and similarizing device, is positioned as far away as possible from alternative or dissident intellectual approaches. While differences and colors in nature are ignored, the dominant cultural structure is tried to be popularized and normalized. However, it has a significant decisiveness and importance in the formation of people’s thoughts with its structure that can easily leak anywhere in the current life experience. Again, regarding Louis Althusser; it provides the production of the dominant ideology in ways that people establish in their conscience.

Today, mass media, which exercise influence over all of life, convey the messages produced through channels such as social media, television, newspapers, magazines, and radio to the recipients. Undoubtedly, the impact of each varies day after day
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