



Postcolonial Politics and Muslim Women in Hollywood Cinema: A Narrative Analysis of the Movie "In the Land of Blood and Honey"

Majid Soleimani Sasani ^{*1} 

1- Department Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 02 March 2021

Accepted: 06 July 2021

Article Type

Research paper

Keywords:

Orientalism,
islamophobia, Hollywood,
Narrative analysis,
Postcolonial politics

ABSTRACT

Using a narrative analysis approach, this article aims to explain how gender and Muslim women are represented in Hollywood cinema. As a result, the narrative of the film "In the Land of Blood and Honey" (Angelina Jolie, 2011) is analyzed using the postcolonial theory approach in the critique of Orientalist discourse in the field of semantic construction of Eastern and Muslim women, as well as liberal feminism. This film is one of the most significant movies in Hollywood that devotes the majority of its narrative to the representation of a Muslim woman. The study's findings indicate that the film's storyline conforms to orientalist gender stereotypes and effectively depicts the contrast between liberal and postcolonial feminist approaches, with Eastern and Muslim women despised by both their Western sister and community. The Muslim woman in this picture is likewise the object of American cinema's orientalist generality; she is subjected to sexual and gender stereotypes and is accused of betrayal against the world system, for which she is sentenced to death. Analyzing the film's narrative can provide new perspectives on postcolonial feminism and new avenues for advancing Muslim women's rights.

Citation: Soleimani Sasani, M. (2021). Postcolonial Politics and Muslim Women in Hollywood Cinema: A Narrative Analysis of the Movie "In the Land of Blood and Honey". *Journal of Woman and Family Studies*, 9(4), 43-62. doi: 10.22051/jwfs.2021.34202.2591

¹Correspondence: msoleimani@ut.ac.ir

Introduction

The "*West*" is not a geographical opposition to the "*East*," but a unified entity with a universal historical and metanarrative structure. By "Western," we mean developed, industrial, urban, and secular societies that evolved in Europe following the defeat of feudalism, and by "*modern*," we mean any society that possesses these features. Thus, the West is an idea (Hall, 1991). Today, this concept has become common knowledge; it speaks of a dominant viewpoint and regards itself as the proper mode of writing, description, and interpretation (Shahrabi, 1991: 8). This is where the concept of power and discourse takes hold, as well as the knowledge of "*Orientalism*." Orientalism is the Western nations' view of the East, and the West needs a description of the "*other*" in order to define itself and establish a superior identity. That is, until there is no "*other*," Western hegemonic identity is meaningless. Thus, Orientalist discourse is constructed in order to alienate Eastern nations, particularly Muslims, from Western culture and literature. Others in Oriental literature have sometimes been the general East and sometimes the Jews. However, with the rise of Muslim beliefs and major upheavals within Islam – most notably the Islamic Revolution in Iran – the collapse of communism and the decline of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, the migration and spread of Islam, the growing Muslim population in the West, and events such as 9/11, Orientalist discourse has become increasingly focused on Muslims.

One of the dimensions of Orientalism knowledge is the representation of gender and Oriental woman, or in other words, Muslim woman, to the point where Muslim woman has been one of the main objects of study in Orientalist texts; an object that provided a sexual and imaginative sense of the West while making the Eastern Muslim woman a myth of fulfillment of desires. The narrations offered from the legends of "*The One Thousand and One Nights*" provide a historical example of this portrayal. Ziauddin Sardar argues that the translation of this story has provided the West with a popular image of the East for years and that many Western tourists, without ever setting foot in the East, produce travelogues and plays based on this work. Most European writers, according to Sardar, ascribed their suppressed sexual desire to their image of the East and sought it in the Islamic culture, and attributed any possible sexual deviations to the East (Sardar, 1999). For example, in her



travelogue, "*Clara Colliver Rice*" depicts Muslim women as "ghosts" who lack lofty goals and love (Colliver Rice, 1976).

The first incidence of Muslim women being portrayed in Hollywood cinema dates all the way back to the early years of filmmaking and the film "*Fatima's Coochee-Coochee Dance*" (1897). The film depicts a Muslim prostitute who tries her best to entice men. Subsequent films retell the same scenario, and Muslim women are typically depicted as sexually attractive dancers. "*The Sheik*" (1921), "*A Cafe in Cairo*" (1924), "*The Son of the Sheik*" (1926), and "*Desert Bridge*" (1928) are also early examples of orientalist stereotypes about the discovery of sexual attraction among Muslim women in harems. This portrayal of Muslim women in Hollywood appears to have remained intact. Because the story of "*Ajla*" is replayed in the movie "*In the Land of Blood and Honey*." Another example is the 1965 movie "*Harum Scarum*," which uses similar stereotypes and follows the character of a Muslim prince named "*Aisha*" to Las Vegas. In this movie, a Muslim woman, with the assistance of a Western man, is liberated from the grips of Muslim beliefs and satisfies the man's sexual needs.

"*Death Before Dishonor*" (1987) and "*Rules of engagement*" (2000) both explore the representation of Muslim women in action films against a backdrop of terrorism. As is repeated in *The Land of Blood and Honey*, these films justify the murder of women and children. The Muslim woman is portrayed as a terrorist in these movies, instilling dread. Another instance is the character of a Muslim woman named "*Fatima Blush*" in the 1983 film "*Never Say Never Again*," who is portrayed as a violent and frightening terrorist. In *Land of Blood and Honey*, the film appears to have inherited Hollywood's historical narrative of Muslim women because it encapsulates two broad and essential narratives about women in the cinema's history. One story in which Western men prefer the sexual discovery of a Muslim woman as Orientalist stereotypes, and another narrative in which violence against Muslim women is justified. As such, this picture serves as an excellent case study for the current research. The article's primary question is how Hollywood cinema portrays the subject of gender in connection to Muslims, as well as how the Muslim woman and related themes such as women's rights and feminism are portrayed.

Review of the literature

There are, nevertheless, a number of lessons that can be used to comprehend the issue of women's colonial objectivity. There are, nevertheless, a number of teachings that can be used to comprehend the issue of women's colonial objectivity.

Homi Bhabha, one of the most influential figures in postcolonial studies, uses semiotic theories of language and Lacan's work on subjectivity to highlight the ambiguous nature of colonial relations. "*Hybridism*" addresses the fact that colonialism is not inherent in nature but instead results from the colonial power system's dualistic structure. That if you've lost your religion and your land, consider the upside: you've evolved into a hybrid (Stam, 2017). "*Hybridity*" refers to the way colonial discourse operates in such a way that the language of the master and those in authority becomes hybrid in any action. Hybridism is an object that articulates colonial and indigenous knowledge. Hybridism is an object that articulates colonial and indigenous knowledge. Hybridism, according to Bhabha, is a "*problematic representation of colonialism*" that reverses colonialism's repercussions; hence, it is a name for "*strategic inversion of the domination process*" (Young, 2020). In other words, the colonized person accepts dominion through racial heterogeneity, or he accepts humiliation and domination in the face of colonial feminism because she is a woman and has experienced oppression in Eastern patriarchal society. Robert Young also draws on Bhabha's research and examples of "*hybridity*" to make sense of the hijab issue among Muslims and its Western image. The hijab is a symbol of Eastern gender and patriarchal Islamic societies from a European perspective; nevertheless, from the perspective of many Muslims, it is a sign of social dignity and, for a large number of women, a representation of religious and cultural identity (Young, 2020). In his analysis, he used the term "*postcolonial feminism*" to refer to the colonial state's involvement against societal norms that appeared to favor women but frequently ended in their loss. The French colonial strategy of unveiling the compulsory hijab in Algeria is an example of such actions, which resulted in the emergence of a type of national resistance and placed women in colonial countries in a contradictory and ambiguous position. To the degree that any attempt by women to oppose colonialism was accused of absorbing Western ideas and complicating matters for local feminists (Young: 111-141). Gayatri Spivak takes a similar position, criticizing feminism's heterogeneity, stating that Western feminism exclusively tackles the needs of middle-class white women



and ignores women from other parts of the world (Spivak, 1999). Spivak's work might be regarded as the beginning of the rethinking of Western feminism, as one of his core themes is the emphasis on oppressed women in the postcolonial world as the new target of the postcolonial program (Morton, 2003).

Leila Gandhi, on the other hand, thinks that "*feminism*" and "*postcolonialism*" are products of the "*marginalized others*" mindset and serve no function other than toppling the gender/culture / racial hierarchy; Leila Gandhi, on the other hand, thinks that "*feminism*" and "*postcolonialism*" are products of the "*marginalized*" mindset and serve no function other than toppling the gender/culture / racial hierarchy; However, three key differences undermine the unification of feminism and postcolonialism: the debate over the image of Third World women; the problematic history of the feminist as an imperialist; and, finally, the colonial use of feminist criteria to bolster the appeal of the civilization-building mission (Gandhi, 1999). In other words, the Third World woman is marginalized both by her patriarchal society and the colonizer. According to Gandhi, "*liberal feminism*" is not truthful in its work, and she values the "*otherness*" of Third World women. As a result, she suffers at the hands of his western sister (Gandhi, 1999). As a result, she is represented as an ignorant, impoverished, illiterate, traditional, housewife, family-oriented, and victim who lacks control over his physical and sexual features (Gandhi, 1999). As a result, the Third World woman is incapable of representing herself, and it is up to the Western woman to do so (see: Ameli & Kharazmi, 2016). As a result, the postcolonial perspective regards liberal feminism as a form of "*neo-Orientalism*."

On the other hand, the Muslim woman in the film is enchanted by the masculine gaze as well. Laura Mulvey has always viewed formal filmmaking as impacted by the masculine gaze, owing to her feminist critique of the film and her knowledge of women's gender structures. Hollywood cinema, she believes, is patriarchal and should be desexualized (Hayward, 2018). He claims that the "*gaze*" is related to male voyeurism and the ideological impacts of patriarchal culture and that it enables the male voyeur to identify with the camera's and protagonist's masculine gazes (McGowan, 2012). Voyeurism transforms the male into the narrative's active subject, while the female becomes the passive object of the gaze (Mulvey, 1989). The "*dominant gaze*

of the male protagonist" is a characteristic of classic narrative film, and "cinematic codes" operate as representations' formulations mechanisms and by instilling a "voyeuristic impulse" and the underlying enjoyment of viewing another person as an erotic object (Mulvey: 87). The woman becomes the man's property in the "narrative" of traditional Hollywood films, and the viewer might indirectly own the woman by identifying with the male actor (Mulvey: 81; see: Ganji Et al,2019). Thus, the film is a well-established representation of the gender difference in which men are watching, and women are watched (Mehdzadeh, 2010: 162). Finally, one of the domains of postcolonial theory is the critique of Western feminist perspectives, with postcolonial feminist critics examining issues such as gender, desire, and instinct in the process of colonial formation.

Table 1

The framework for understanding Muslim women in postcolonial studies

	Approach		Implications
Bhaba	Hybridity	Dominance through Hybridity in gender, race, and culture	Muslim women' acceptance of domination and humiliation in the face of colonial feminism forms
Young	Postcolonial feminism	The colonialist's confrontation with the social customs of the Muslims that apparently benefited women	lowering Muslim women's social prestige in their culture
Spivak	Critique of Western Feminism	Addressing the concerns of middle-class white women	Ignoring and humiliating non-Western women (Eastern sister)
Gandhi	Imperial feminist	Applying feminist criteria to promote the colonial approach	Marginalization of the Muslim woman both by her patriarchal and colonial system

Narrative analysis as a theory and method

"Representation" is a theory and concept that is sometimes referred to simply as the "function of language"; however, in a social sense, it is defined as the customs and norms that the mass media use to show images of specific social groups (Edgar and Sedgwick, 2009). It is a structured process that is responsible for the reconstruction of identities in specific theories. These identity constructions are interrelated to terms like "power," "ideology," "gender," and "race." On the other hand, "narrative" in its theoretical sense



has attempted to give a structure for representation analysis, taking into account its language and discourse aspects. These identity constructions are interrelated to terms like "power," "ideology," "gender," and "race." On the other hand, "narrative" in its theoretical sense has attempted to give a structure for representation analysis, taking into account its language and discourse aspects. Everyday life is filled with innumerable universal, transhistorical, and transcultural narratives (Barthes, 1966), and narratives exist everywhere humans exist (Scholes, 1974). They are all around us, and they help us recognize and comprehend the world (Naqibossadat, 2002: 127). Narration tames the wild environment by allowing humans to live and dream via storytelling (Reck, 1993).

The narrative is defined as a "set of events" with a particular sequence and a distinct preface, middle, and end (Bennett and Royle, 2016), and it denotes "the act of communication" and "the act of transmitting the message in the media" (Rimmon-Kenan, 2003). But a text is considered "narrative" when it has two characteristics of "story" and the presence of a "storyteller" (cited in Okhovat, 2002: 8). A narrative is a series of events that are tied to one another and have a clear relationship between them (Toolan, 2013). One of the most significant aspects of the narrative is "construction," and each narration contains "trajectory," "narrator," and "change of position or displacement" (Toolan, 2013). As a result, the narrative is a cultural and discursive construct that necessitates the existence of a "communication process." The narrator's and audience's presence gives the narrative meaning. It has a "sequence" and a "meaningful order" that is "structured" "recognizable."

Narrative analysis has a methodological aspect as well as a theoretical aspect. Considering various approaches to narrative analysis, this study proposes a combined model for analyzing the film narrative using a variety of techniques, including narrator analysis, genre analysis, plot analysis, time analysis, causal and sequence analysis, frequency and repetition analysis, personality analysis, and dyadic interaction analysis. In the following sections, methodological aspects will be discussed, along with the film analysis.

Results

The film "*In the Land of Blood and Honey*" is an excellent choice for narrative analysis on the subject of postcolonial politics and the representation of gender and Muslim women. The film is produced by Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie (2011), which narrates the story of a love affair between a Muslim woman and a Serbian man during the 1992 Bosnian war. Earlier, the movie "*Grbavica: The Land of My Dreams*" (2006) by Bosnian female director Jasmila Zbanic also addressed the issue of "*Muslim women*" being raped throughout the war, but in a different way. The movie narrates the rape of women by the Russians during World War II. Other famous films depicting women being raped during the war include "*Two Women*" (1960), "*Rashomon*" (1950), "*Kuroneko*" (1968), "*La Peau*" (1981), "*Hotel Rwanda*" (2004), "*City of Life and Death*" (2008), and even Bahman Ghobadi's 2004 film "*Turtles Can Fly*."

Narrative's central propositions

The film's central narrative might be described as a love story between a Christian and a Muslim guy, which is intercut with other narratives, such as the Serbs' war with the Muslims in Bosnia.

- 1- The city is peaceful, with residents of various religions and ethnic groups coexisting peacefully, including Croats, Serbs, and Muslims.
- 2- In a nightclub with his Muslim girlfriend (Ajla), the protagonist (Daniel) is having a good time drinking and dancing.
- 3- A group of individuals attacks the nightclub (probably Muslims).
- 4- Tension between Muslims and Serbs is intensifying as a result of Muslim-related disputes. In the protagonist's father's speech, statements are made demonstrating that Muslims, particularly Turks (referring to the Ottoman state), perpetrated numerous crimes against Serbian Christians and now deserve punishment.
- 5- The Serbs occupy significant areas of Bosnia, killing a considerable number of Muslims and kidnapping women for sexual gratification and services.
- 6- The Serbs have no qualms with murdering Muslims, including mercilessly murdering the infant sister of the protagonist (Leila).
- 7- Muslim women are frequently exploited sexually in military camps.



- 8- As a Serbian soldier, the protagonist (Daniel) locates and protects his lover among the captives.
- 9- The protagonist connects with his lover.
- 10- The protagonist escapes the soldiers' camp and rescues his lover.
- 11- After meeting a group of Muslim fighters, accompanied by her sister (Leila), the lover connects with the film's protagonist in order to spy on him.
- 12- While the protagonist is convinced of his love for the Muslim lover, he discovers his betrayal and kills her.
- 13- Because he believes that Muslims do not attack the church, the protagonist loses faith in all Muslims. However, by disclosing the whereabouts of Serbian forces to Muslim militants, the lover caused the church to be attacked by Muslims.
- 14- After the murder of the Muslim lover, the protagonist surrenders to NATO forces.

Although the Serbs commit crimes against Muslims in the film's narrative, it is thought to be rooted in the historical behavior of Muslims. The "*Muslim woman's betrayal*" to the protagonist in love is also in line with this narration because the protagonist regards his participation in the war as forced and wishes peace. He trusted in his lover, but he is confronted with her betrayal.

Narrator analysis

The filmmaker, actor, camera, technical and visual elements of the film can also be mentioned as narrators. Gérard Genette refers to "*the analysis of the narrator's viewpoint and angle of view*" and "*the issue of the distance and form of the narrator's narrative*" in his narrator analysis (see: Scholes, 1974; Eagleton, 2011; Ahmadi, 1999; Guillemette & Lévesque, 2011). The link between the main narrator or the implied author of the film and the narrator is addressed in narrator analysis. The narration of the film is "*omniscient*," according to Genette's model and from the perspective of "*focalization*," because the camera does not tell the story through the eyes of "*Ajla*" or "*Daniel*" in any sequence. In this situation, the story's narrator is matched the film's author, resulting in "*realism in the film's narrative*." The issue of "*perspective and angle of view*" is equally significant because it has the

potential to influence the audience's attitude. The "*narrator's point of view*" can be determined by all of the pictures and attitudes that the film's characters express regarding Muslims or Serbs in the dialogues. We may think of a few examples in this regard:

- 1- A text is given to the viewers at the opening of the film and before the commencement of the credits that directly recounts the opinion of the main narrator of the film:

"Bosnia was one of Europe's most racially and religiously diverse countries before the war." Muslims, Serbs, and Croats lived together peacefully."

This text informs the audience of something that has shattered Bosnia's peace.

- 2- The film's narrator discusses the causes of the civil war, Muslims, Serbs, and even religions. He frequently employs the words of "*General Vukojevic*," for example. In conversations with his children "*Daniel*" and "*Ajla*," he argued the Serbs' attack on Muslims. The general attempts to persuade the audience of the war's justifications by presenting the story. But there is no argument from Muslims. The general, for example, argues:

To Daniel: "*We Serbs fought the Turks for 500 years ... This land is soaked with Serbian blood and now they want us to live here under Muslim rule? "*

To Ajla: "*August 1944... Thirty Turkish and Muslim robbers raided the village and slaughtered all my family...*"

- 3- However, the narrator's attitude toward the Serbs is communicated in only one instance through the words of the Muslims, and that is through hatred of the "*racist Chetnik Serbs*" who despise all religions other than Christianity. However, all Muslims are betrayers and untrustworthy, even attacking churches.
- 4- The narrator's view of NATO forces and US politicians as beneficial to world peace is reflected in the general's exchange with the newscaster, as well as in the film's climactic scene and Daniel's surrender to NATO and UN forces, stressing the US's worldwide role.

In the narrator analysis of the film, it should be noted that the narrator has viewpoints and ideas on "*the grounds for the war*," "*Muslims*," "*Christians and Serbs*," "*the role of NATO and UN forces*," "*US leadership and*



mediation," *"betrayal*," and, most significantly, the *"issue of rape"* and *"Muslim culture."*

An Analysis of film genres in terms of narrative

The terms *"genre"* and *"style"* refer to the classification of films based on *"narrative similarities"* and are used to refer to both the method of classification and the common features that can influence the meaning of the story (Makaryk, 2000; Edgar and Sedgwick, 2009). Thus, it is critical to understand why Julie chooses to show her film under the romantic drama genre alongside the war genre. The film's primary focus is not on the war genre narrative, as there are no prominent action scenes, and most of the *"war ruins"* are depicted. However, Julie's romantic narrative is likewise an unfulfilled romance, with Ajla betraying Daniel and murdering her.

Generally, the audience expects the romance genre film to conclude in such a way that if the two characters do not reunite, they will leave each other with a romantic mentality. While the film's narrative is solely about the *"failing end of love for a Muslim woman,"* Daniel eventually murders Ajla for her betrayal. Thus, the audience is convinced that a Muslim woman can never be afforded genuine love. As a result, Julie's picture alternates between the romance and war genres. He places the war genre's protagonist in a romantic connection with a betraying woman and then gets the result of his story.

Character analysis in the film narrative

In character analysis, a list of the story's most significant characters is prepared, and their structural relationships are studied in regard to the study topic and the story as a whole. Ubersfeld's approach to *"character analysis"* addresses the *"actant," "trope," "metaphor," "reference,"* and *"implicit meaning"* of the character in the narrative, as well as the characteristics that contribute to the character's interest or lack of interest (Aston & Savona, 2013). The narrator leads the narrative and constructs semantic constructs through the use of personality qualities. As a result, Daniel's *"actant"* is *"love"* and *"hope for life,"* both of which desire tranquillity and harmony. Darko is also a continuation of Daniel's character, which, of course, is not neutral in war. He refuses to kill Muslims in one scenario and then murders several of them in another. Daniel's character's *"implicit meaning"* is a return to the

concept of "*global citizen*" and accepts NATO's legitimacy. He is always kind, and his nature is devoid of hatred, even when he murders Ajla.

However, analyzing Ajla's character is complicated by the fact that she is caught between Muslim and ethnic tendencies, with a free relationship and a lack of restraint, and her positions are not explicit. She is a female artist; Daniel, on the other hand, does not believe in her "*love*." His return as a spy demonstrates that she has aspirations. Ajla is a "*trope*" of a Muslim woman who is willing to sacrifice her body to accomplish her purpose. She is a "*metaphor*" for an Oriental woman, with all feminine deceptions and seductions, as well as a "*reference*" for the characters who embody the Oriental woman's sexual myth. Ajla's "*implicit meaning*" is also in the pursuit of ideology at all costs, and after the betrayal and bombing of the church, she is presented with a disgusting face. She is readily swayed by sexual urges, and the Western masculine gaze can place itself within Daniel's character and realizes how easy it is to seize ownership of a Muslim woman's body.

The narrator juxtaposes additional characters with these two central characters. Leila, Ajla's sister, evokes an aspect of the reality of an idealistic Muslim woman whose "*actant*" is "*revenge*" and who serves as a "*trope*" for the Muslim, ethnic, and idealistic Muslim character as well as a "*metaphor*" for the Eastern woman whose sex has reached its expiration date. However, the narrator does not portray genuine Serbs as repulsive, and the "*actant*" of the "General" character is not an "*avenger*"; rather, he is "concerned about Muslim authority" over the Serbs and is "*trope*" of the "*patriotism*" character who is aware of the danger of Muslim rule. Peter's character is also a continuation of the general's character.

Analysis of film's plot

The plot is defined as a sequence of events in the narrator's language (Martin, 1987). Griemas developed a model for plot analysis called the triple actant, which includes "*subject*" vs. "*object*"; "*sender*" vs. "*receiver*"; as well as "*helper*" and "*opponent*" (Bertens, 2013). According to his approach, each narrative's plot contains three distinct types of actants:

"*Subject*" and "*object*": The subject is on the search for a valuable object while other subjects circle around it. On the other side, the narrative's subject is "*Daniel*," who, despite his pessimism about war, pursues love in the shadow of peace and tranquillity, and the value object is this love. Ajla, on the other



hand, can also be regarded as a subject, as she has been attacked by Serbs, and her liberation and destruction of the Serbs is important to her. As a result, her value object in the form of spying for Muslim soldiers is evident.

"*Sender*" and "*Receiver*": The sender sends the subject in search of a value object and subsequently accepts the action. There is another duality here, according to the film. Daniel's sender is his father, who succeeds in demonstrating a Muslim woman's betrayal through argument. This action results in Ajla's murder. On the other hand, Ajla's sister, Leila, and other Muslim fighters are the senders of Ajla for spying. By acting as a lover, Ajla is convinced to infiltrate Serbian soldiers and spy on Muslim fighters.

"*Helper*" and "*opponent*": The helper or auxiliary agent is the force that assists the protagonist in accomplishing his goal. Additionally, the opponent is the force that inhibits the protagonist from achieving his goal. Ajla cannot be regarded as the narrative's protagonist for a variety of reasons, including betrayal in love, and Daniel is the protagonist. Daniel is not like other Serbs or his father, and he values human rights. He did not kill certain Muslims, but he simply killed Peter since he regarded his existence as an affront to humanity. Ajla's murder also makes sense using the same reasoning. Because his existence is detrimental to humanity. With this in mind, Daniel's ultimate goal of peace is achieved by surrendering to NATO forces, and his experiences recognizing Muslims and Serbs can be viewed as assisting him in accomplishing this goal. The opponents, in this interpretation, represent his character's struggle to choose between Muslims and Serbs. Daniel's ultimate opponent is love, which hinders him from making the correct choice and accomplishing the goal.

An analysis of the film's visual narrative features

To fully comprehend the narrator's narrative and the plot, we must convert cinematic codes into written text. Thus, using the terms "*Mise-en-scène*" and "*technical codes*" (Selby & Cowdery, 1995), we can refer to the narrative's visual features.

We can highlight the staging and stage equipment at the opening and end of the film in terms of *Mise-en-scène* codes. At the start of the film, the peace of the city and the happiness of its people are represented through nice and clean streets, suitable flats, and a nightclub, which culminates in a nightclub explosion

caused by Muslims. On the other hand, the only area that inspires peace is Daniel's suite for Ajla upon her return. This white-walled room, in the midst of any projected chaos outside, is a haven of peace—particularly given Daniel's request for her to paint in quiet in that location. However, Ajla does not appreciate this blessing and is killed in this very location, and her blood spills on its walls. Regarding the costume codes, it can be claimed that the two facets of the film's narrative - which may be considered in both the romance and war genres - are clearly reflected in the costumes of the two main characters, and of course, these two types of clothing contribute to the film's narrative.

From the very beginning and in the same nightclub, Daniel is clothed in a military uniform from the start and introduces himself as a powerful and loving western guy, which fits with his abilities to take possession of Ajla's slender body. Ajla, on the other hand, is frequently seen with a seductive covering and draws the attention of other guys. At the start of the film, just before heading to the nightclub, Leila cheerfully tells him that her dress is "*sexy*" and capable of seducing. This is one of the primary stereotypes about Muslim women perpetuated by Orientalism. Ajla's nakedness contributes to the idea that a Muslim woman who previously wore the headscarf is easily accessible in numerous scenes.

One of the most critical technical codes in the narrative is the film's composition, which is "*dynamic*" and depicts chaos and confusion. The film's romantic and erotic sequences are depicted with "*soft*" clarity, while the lighting is "*slightly contrasted*" and "*darker*," with "*cool*" hues to convey realism, sadness, and pessimism.

Time analysis in the film

Genette defines "*order*" in his stages of narrative analysis as a comparison of the order of expression of events in the text to the order in which they occur in the story. "*Anachronism*" refers to the expression of events in the text that occurs earlier or later than their chronological sequence in the story, while "*continuity*" refers to the relationship between the time frame of events in the story and the amount of text allotted to it (Eagleton, 2011). The significance of time analysis stems from the fact that there is a relationship between the length of a narrative and its time span, which reflects the relative importance of occurrences. From this vantage point, it is necessary to state that futuristic and retrospective anachronism does not exist. However, from a "*continuity*



analysis" perspective, the film's narrative is not based on the war genre; it is dedicated to the events of the Bosnian war, and it is not based on the director's intention to portray the topic of rape in the war. Rather than that, Daniel and Ajla's romantic relationship encompasses a sizable portion of the narrative in which a Muslim woman is a sexual object.

Sequence Analysis in the film

According to Bermon's theoretical paradigm, a narrative's sequences contain three distinct states (Khorasani, 2004: 8). "*balanced state*" covers the period from the film's beginning through Ajla's return to spying, and the narrative is centered on the "*connection between Ajla and Daniel*." The situation of "*transition and the possibility of change*" occurs after Ajla re-enters the Serbian base, at which point the audience is aware of Ajla's goals and anticipates a shift at any moment. Additionally, several sub-narratives can add to this central narrative line. Indeed, sub-narratives are narratives that strengthen Daniel's resolve in his "*ultimate decision regarding Ajla*."

"*Actualization or non-actualization*" is the final state. The "*relationship between Daniel and Ajla*" must come to an end. It was thought that Ajla and Daniel would flee to NATO forces together and continue their romantic connection in another nation if Ajla's betrayal was not mentioned in the story or was never revealed. In this example, the Muslim woman went against all of her beliefs and followed Daniel's path of peace. Progress, on the other hand, leads to "*actualization*." The betrayal was uncovered, and Ajla was punished for his crimes, demonstrating that she has the "*blood*" of a Muslim flowing through her veins, according to the film. With this choice, the narrator advances the narrative in such a way that the Muslim woman is humiliated and defeated in either "*actualization*" or "*non-actualization*."

Frequency and repetition analysis in the film

According to frequency and repetition, there is a direct relation between the amount of times an event occurs in a narrative and its significance (Eagleton, 2011). The film's plot does not repeat a single event; however, semantic aspects are repeated. For instance, the general's historical accusations against Muslims' crimes are repeated numerous times. Reiterating the issue of "*Muslim and Turk blood*," Daniel refers to it as "*Turkish pig*."

While "*repeating the concept of rape*" is more closely related with Muslim women's humiliation and is therefore more akin to "*sexual betrayal*," it abruptly loses its importance and centrality in favor of the story of betrayal.

Analysis of dyadic interactions in a film narrative

The analysis of dyadic interactions is a critical component of narrative analysis because it enables us to discern the narrative's ideology and the power dynamics that govern it (Sojudi, 2005). The film's narrative is rich by significant interrelationships that determine its direction. The film narrative's most significant dyadic relationships are as follows:

- Betraying Muslim woman / Christian man in love
- Peace and joy before the war / Anxiety and sadness after the war
- Development and beauty before the war / Destruction and ugliness after the war
- Nightclub joy / Sadness caused by the explosion and deaths in the club
- Western rationality / Eastern sentimentality and love
- An experienced and Ethnic Father (General) / An inexperienced boy who believes in the world system (Daniel)
- Irresolute sister (Ajla) / Determined sister in revenge (Leila)
- Dedicated Soldier (Darko) / Criminal Soldier (Peter)
- Rape / Intentional Sex
- Ethnic radicalism of the Serbs / the world rationality system
- Muslim Religious radicalism / the world rationality system

The first duality, specifically, "*Betraying Muslim woman / Christian man in love*," served as the foundation for the film's narrative, and other dualities were built around it. The audience is constantly placed between the two by the narrator. According to the storyline, Muslim religious radicalism is involved in the war, while the other side is "*religious tolerance*," and Serbs will be forced to "*follow Muslim rules*" if the Bosnian government is given to Muslims. As a result, they don't have a choice except to fight. Only the ethnicity of Serbs is criticized. Serbs, on the other hand, are primarily Christians, and their religion receives less emphasis. The duality of "*ethnicity/religion*" comes into play here because Christianity, of course, is not responsible for the Serbs' crimes against Muslims. Daniel is a faithful and gentle man who is not caught up in ethnic nationalism or religious radicalism



and desires peace, with a dual focus on the betrayal of love. Ajla is practically in the service of religious radicalism in his opposition to him.

Discussion and conclusion

According to Stokes' approach to narrative analysis, the "*cause for paying attention to the text*" must be discovered first, followed by the analysis, and last, the "*balance component*" must be addressed. That is, what has changed before and after the story to validate or reject the initial hypothesis or reason for our interest in this case (Pirbodaghi, 2009: 66). In this light, an appropriate film for the study's topic has been chosen because it deals directly with the theme of "*Muslim women*." It is essential to realize the construction of gender as one of the facets of the representation of Islam and Muslims in Hollywood movies because It's a part of postcolonial studies. The plot of this film exemplifies how Hollywood cinema, in general, and liberal feminism in particular offer the narrative of "*Oriental Woman*," "*Third World Woman*," or "*Muslim Woman*." Julie, the main film narrator, has shown that she is interested in global women's issues, but she has never been able to break free from her source. In fact, she upholds Western and American values and views women's challenges through the prism of a liberal Western system. As a result, she links her story to other American values and, as a liberal feminist, she sees the Eastern Muslim sister as superior. Indeed, the Muslim woman becomes the object of American cinema's Orientalist totality while also being despised by Western females.

To the extent that she is subjected to sexual and gender stereotypes, is accused of betrayal against the world system, and is deemed deserving of death. Indeed, if this woman was previously disregarded by liberal feminists, she now faces Orientalist stereotypes. As a non-Western woman, Ajla bears prejudices about infidelity, an inability to appreciate love, and the myth of sexuality that does not resist rape. Julie appears to assist Ajla and the Muslim woman with her story; however, the story concludes with American ideology winning and Muslim women's oppression being forgotten. The pre-story space is devoted to Muslim women obtaining basic rights; however, this hypothesis is rejected, leaving the Muslim woman alone with the numerous allegations leveled against her due to her religious beliefs.

There is no Muslim character in the film who appreciates Westerners' deliverance, and only Daniel Christian, a Serb, comprehends this and joins the camp of American values. Julie believes that the Muslim woman has no choice but to join the camp; she must, however, first abandon his beliefs.

Another point is that Julie has deftly targeted Bosnian Muslims and women with her message. Bosnia and the Balkans have historically served as a doorway to Islam in Europe and, more broadly, the West. Bosnia has little significance for the West other than in relation to the East. Islam also operates differently in Bosnia, and the geographic separation of Muslims in this region from other Muslims has resulted in their religious beliefs, such as the hijab and religious rites, being displayed differently from those of other Muslims. Additionally, it is underlined from the outset that the region was peaceful before the rise of radical Muslim movements and that Muslims were the primary source of Serb ethnic radicalism.

From a postcolonial perspective, Julie's portrayal of the Muslim woman, as a liberal feminist, makes numerous arguments for the Muslim woman in comparison to her Western counterparts that are linked to trust in religious beliefs. From a postcolonial perspective, Julie's portrayal of the Muslim woman as a liberal feminist makes numerous arguments for the Muslim woman in comparison to her Western counterparts about religious trust. A Muslim woman with a religious orientation is incapable of receiving love. From another viewpoint, Julie portrays the woman with a "*masculine gaze*" and progresses her story through the disclosed sexual qualities of a Muslim woman, which make her more appealing to men than a Western woman is. The postcolonial perspective in the critique of liberal feminism addresses precisely this issue, criticizing the Eastern woman's "*hybridism*." Both her Western sister and her community humiliate the Eastern woman here. Thus, the manner in which Eastern and Muslim women seek their rights can be deemed distinct from the manner prescribed by the Western colonial view.

Compliance with ethical guidelines

This study was conducted in accordance with ethics for human research.

Funding: The current study received no funding from any institution or organization.

Authors' contribution: The corresponding author is in charge of conducting the entire content of the present study.



Conflict of interest: This research is not directly or indirectly in conflict with any person or organization.

References

- Ahmadi, B. (1999). *Text structure and interpretation*. Tehran: Markaz. [Text in Persian]
- Ameli Ranani, S. R., & Nosrat Kharazmi, Z. (2016). Global Gender Regime” and American Foreign Policy in MENA Case Study: Hillary Clinton’s Tenure at State Department. *Journal of Woman and Family Studies*, 4(1), 171-203. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22051/jwfs.2016.2351> [Link]
- Aston, E., & Savona, G. (2013). *Theatre as sign system: A semiotics of text and performance*. Routledge. [Link]
- Barthes, R. (1966). *Introduction to the structural analysis of the narrative*. Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies, University of Birmingham. [Link]
- Bennett, A., & Royle, N. (2016). *An introduction to literature, criticism, and theory: key critical concepts*. London; New York: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315652450> [Link]
- Bertens, J. W. (2013). *Literary theory: the basics*. London; New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203488836> [Link]
- Colliver Rice, C. (1976). *Persian Women & their ways: the experiences & impressions of a long sojourn amongst the women of the land of the Shah with an intimate description of their characteristics, customs & manner of living*. Teheran Imperial Office for Social Services.
- Eagleton, T. (2011). *Literary theory: an introduction*. Malden, Mass; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. [Link]
- Edgar, A., & Sedgwick, P. R. (2009). *Key concepts in cultural theory*. London; New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203981849> [Link]
- Ganji, M., Amir Mazaheri, A. M., & Labibi, M. (2019). *The social genealogy and manipulation of body among Iranian women*. *Journal of Woman and Family Studies*, 7(1), 205-245. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22051/jwfs.2019.13890.1358> [Link]
- Hall, S., & Gieben, B. (Eds.). (1991). *The Formations of modernity*. Polity Press. [Link]
- Hayward, S. (2018). *Key concepts in cinema studies*. London; New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315619729> [Link]
- Khorasani, M. (2004). Claude Bermond: an introduction to the poetics of structuralist narratives, *Narrative Literature*, 79, 8-10. [Text in Persian]
- Leela Gandhi. (1999). *Postcolonial theory: a critical introduction*. New York Columbia University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003116714> [Link]
- Makaryk, I. R. (2000). *Encyclopedia of contemporary literary theory: approaches, scholars, terms*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. [Link]
- Martin, W. (1987). *Recent theories of narrative*. Ithaca (Ny); London: Cornell University Press. [Link]
- Mehdizadeh, M. (2000). *Media Theories: Common Thoughts and Critical Views*. Tehran: Hamshahri. [Text in Persian]
- Morton, S. (2003). *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203108512> Abingdon: Routledge. [Link]

- Mulvey, L. (1989). *Visual pleasure and narrative cinema*. In Visual and other pleasures (pp. 14-26). Palgrave Macmillan, London. [[Link](#)]
- Naqibossadat, S. (2012). Methodology of content analysis and understanding of apocalyptic movies. *The Promised East*, 6(21), 111-140. [Text in Persian] [[Link](#)]
- Okhovat, A. (1992). *Grammar of the story*. Isfahan: Farda. [Text in Persian]
- Pirbodaghi, F. (2009). Qualitative content analysis and its application in the media, Tehran: Radio and Television Research Center. [Text in Persian]
- Rimmon-Kenan, S. (2003). *Narrative fiction: contemporary poetics* (2nd ed.). London New York Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203426111> [[Link](#)]
- Sardar, Z. (1999). *Orientalism*. Buckingham: Open University Press. [[Link](#)]
- Scholes, R. (1974). *Structuralism in literature: an introduction*. New Haven: Yale University Press. [[Link](#)]
- Selby, K., & Cowdery, R. (1995). *How to study television*. London: Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-12829-7> [[Link](#)]
- Sojudi, F. (2005). *Semiotics and Literature*. Tehran: Farhang Kavosh. [Text in Persian]
- Stam, R. (2017). *Film theory: An introduction*. John Wiley & Sons. [[Link](#)]
- Toolan, M. J. (2013). *Narrative: a critical linguistic introduction*. London; New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315011271> [[Link](#)]
- Young, R. J. C. (2020). *Postcolonialism a very short introduction*. United States: Oxford University Press (Nc. <https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780198856832.001.0001>) [[Link](#)]



© 2022 Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran. This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).