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Zionist Thought in Cinema and Television

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Abstract :

Since their inception, cinema and television have exhibited a vast plurality in their functions and applications, encompassing a wide range of phenomena, from realist and impressionist film schools to the technological and digital advancements that have profoundly influenced cinematographic imagery. These developments have relied on the intricate mechanisms of cinematic language, embedding form within content to convey deliberate concepts, thus establishing cinema and television as a significant artistic phenomenon. This phenomenon has occupied a vast space across multiple directions and artistic approaches, with distinct variations in aesthetic and dramatic treatment. Content creators have increasingly relied on cinema and television as expressive mediums laden with profound semiotic and aesthetic implications. In light of the above, the researcher seeks to establish the research problem: an inquiry into the modalities of Zionist thought in cinema and television.

Research Significance:

The significance of this research lies in its endeavor to unveil the aesthetic and semiotic dimensions through which the ideological foundations of Zionist thought are artistically constructed in cinema and television. This is achieved through the formal, narrative, and dramatic mechanisms employed within the cinematic language and its applications in television.

Research Objectives:

This study aims to:

- Uncover the origins and ideological framework of Zionism.
- Examine the artistic methodologies employed in shaping Zionist thought within cinema and television.

Research Scope:

- Thematic Scope: The study explores the representation of Zionist thought in cinema and television.
- Temporal Scope: The research focuses on the TV series *Fauda* (produced in 2015)⁽¹⁾.
- Spatial Scope: The study is confined to the Zionist entity.

Terminology Definition:



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- Thought (Linguistically):

“To reflect upon a matter, engaging the intellect and structuring known elements to deduce the unknown⁽²⁾

- Thought (Conceptually):

“A positive process through which the objective world is reflected in concepts, judgments, and theories. Thought manifests in human social and productive activities, offering a mediated reflection of reality and revealing its internal natural relationships⁽³⁾

Chapter Two: The Theoretical Framework

First Section: Zionist Thought – Origins and Development

First: The Emergence of Jewish Zionism

The Israelites lived in various regions across the Nile Valley and the Levant. Their designation as “Jews” traces back to Judah, son of Jacob, who belonged to the Israelite lineage. Before his death, Jacob instructed all his sons to obey and follow Judah’s leadership, as he was the fourth son of the prophet Jacob. However, not all his brothers pledged their loyalty to him; some even rebelled against his authority. Yet, when Judah ultimately assumed leadership over his siblings, those who accepted his rule came to be identified as Judah’s followers, which later evolved into the term Jews. When the Arabs adopted the word, they substituted the “th” (ث) with a “d”⁽⁴⁾ (د).

One of the most pivotal periods in Jewish history began when Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) decided to migrate from Ur due to famine and hardship. He sought refuge in the land of Canaan (Palestine), crossing the great Euphrates River, which led to his people being called Hebrews. The Book of Genesis, chapter fourteen, states: “Then a survivor came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew.” This designation extended to his descendants, as Abraham was their forefather, and thus, they were first known as Hebrews. Later, they came to be referred to as Israelites, named after Jacob, also called “Israel of God”⁽⁵⁾

Driven by the abundance of wheat and fertile lands, the Israelites migrated to Egypt, where they grew in number and influence. However, they remained isolated from the native Egyptians, who viewed them with suspicion and distrust. Consequently, the Israelites were excluded from agricultural endeavors and subjected to harsh servitude, forced into grueling labor. This oppression led them to incite strife and conspiracies, ultimately compelling Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) to lead them in an exodus back to Canaan (Palestine).

Moses, as their divinely appointed prophet, brought forth a divine religion, Judaism, with the Torah as its sacred scripture. This faith was originally founded on the principles of monotheism and



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devotion to God. However, during Moses' absence when he ascended to meet his Lord, the Israelites strayed from their beliefs, crafting and worshipping a golden calf.

The Holy Quran recounts this deviation:

“The People of the Scripture ask you to bring down for them a book from the heaven. But they asked of Moses even greater than that and said, ‘Show us Allah outright,’ so the thunderbolt struck them for their wrongdoing. Then they took the calf [for worship] after clear proofs had come to them, and We pardoned that, and We gave Moses a clear authority.” [Surah An-Nisa: 153]

This marked the earliest instance of apostasy among the Jews, as they began to distort and manipulate the divine commandments of the Torah. Their deviation provoked the anger of Prophet Moses, as further illustrated in the Quran:

“And decree for us in this world that which is good and [also] in the Hereafter; indeed, we have turned back to You.” [Allah] said, “My punishment – I afflict with it whom I will, but My mercy encompasses all things. So I will decree it [especially] for those who fear Me and give zakat and those who believe in Our verses.” [Surah Al-A'raf: 156]

This verse conveys God's decree that His punishment befalls those who turn away from faith, including Moses' own people who deviated from his teachings. Second: The Intellectual Promotion of Zionism and the Issuance of the Balfour Declaration

This movement aimed to establish political organizations to regulate their social, religious, cultural, intellectual, and economic lives independently of other societies. The rationale behind this was the perceived threat of their heritage and traditions being diluted or lost through assimilation. To prevent this, efforts were directed toward securing an independent homeland for the Jewish people in the Holy Land, with the backing of major colonial powers.

As one scholar notes, **“The primary source of Zionism, as a project, was a call for European Jews to reclaim Palestine through colonization and settlement under the auspices of one or more of the great Western European powers⁽⁶⁾*

During this period, various movements emerged with similar ideological aspirations, particularly those seeking proximity to sacred Jewish sites. Among these was the establishment of a Jewish student association in Ukraine, specifically among Eastern European Jews, which laid the groundwork for the formation of Jewish agricultural societies.

The Zionist movement strategically exploited instances of anti-Semitic violence to portray Jews as victims, garnering international sympathy, and thereby legitimizing their claim to a national



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homeland in Palestine. This campaign was deeply rooted in the belief in a Jewish national destiny—the establishment of a homeland in the Promised Land.

The Jewish philosopher Nathan Birnbaum, in 1890, introduced the term “Zionism” (Zionismus) in a political context, coining it in his German-language article titled “Self-Emancipation.” This concept soon became the ideological foundation of the movement.

The Role of Theodor Herzl

The Zionist movement became closely associated with the Austrian-Jewish journalist Theodor Herzl, regarded as the principal architect of political Zionism. Born in Budapest into a wealthy Jewish family, Herzl attended Jewish schools before enrolling in institutions that helped shape his fervent nationalist ideas and solidify the principles of the Zionist movement. Deeply immersed in Western culture, Herzl was fluent in German, English, Hungarian, and French, though he did not speak Hebrew.

Herzl dedicated himself to spreading Zionist ideology, publishing a German-language pamphlet in 1896, titled *The Jewish State* (*Der Judenstaat*), which was financially supported by affluent Jews.

The Role of Cinema in Zionist Propaganda

The researcher notes that cinema was deliberately employed as a propaganda tool to convey an idealized image of Palestine to Jews worldwide. Early silent films played a significant role in reinforcing the Zionist narrative.

One of the earliest cinematic productions promoting Zionism was *The Wandering Jew*, released in 1921, which depicted Jewish historical struggles. Many other films followed, portraying Palestine as the Promised Land.

Palestine was introduced to cinema as early as 1896, when Louis and Auguste Lumière filmed scenic footage there, akin to their work in Mexico, India, and Egypt. By the end of the 19th century, Thomas Edison also captured documentary scenes in Jerusalem. His 1902 film, *Dancing in Jerusalem*, paralleled the Lumière brothers’ *Jerusalem Train Station*, which itself echoed their iconic film *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station*⁽⁷⁾

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The Role of Cinema in Shaping a Zionist Narrative

The Holocaust, in particular, became a central element in Zionist historical consciousness, reinforcing the idea that Jews must secure a homeland to prevent future persecution.

As one scholar notes:

“Religious Zionism holds that the Zionist project must be a spiritual revival, and that the ultimate mission of Zionism is to revitalize Judaism itself⁽⁸⁾.”



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The Cinematic Representation of Zionist Ideology

These historical narratives, reinterpreted through a Zionist lens, shaped a philosophy of perpetual victimhood and retribution, reinforcing the belief that Jews are superior to other nations due to their historical suffering. This notion was deeply embedded in Zionist thought and was systematically promoted through various cultural, political, and media platforms.

Zionist movements effectively leveraged cinema as a medium to institutionalize their ideological framework. By blending historical myths with cinematic storytelling, they constructed a philosophical foundation that supported their nationalist objectives. Cinema, in this sense, became an instrument of advocacy, propagating the idea of a Jewish homeland as both a historical necessity and a moral imperative.

As one expert highlights:

“Cinema serves as one of the most powerful propaganda tools, as it is a cultural, social, and ideological medium capable of shaping public perception.”⁽⁹⁾

Zionism established its ideological framework by anchoring its ideas in fundamental elements designed to steer its cause and define its direction, relying on the amplification of its concepts through cinema. These cinematic endeavors were marked by artistic and aesthetic constructions that captivated the audience, crafting distinctive ideas with subtle methods of attention-grabbing, executed with an elegant, unpretentious approach. Things unfolded naturally, allowing the medium to achieve its intended purpose seamlessly.

Secondly: Foundations of Intellectual Deception

The strategy of philosophically and intellectually subordinating Zionist cinema to its meticulously set values was constructed within specific standards that aligned with the requirements and goals set forth for it as a tool for spreading ideas and orchestrating radical transformations and decisions. “The flexibility of the cinematic medium, through both sound and image, demands such a formulation. Cinema is inherently a form of thought, and contemporary film has the capacity to go anywhere and present anything. It seeks new formulations for concepts. When a film reaches us, as it begins, the cinematic mind is present, and the thought emerges that this is the intended meaning of the entire film. Thus, even the smallest formal gestures become significant and meaningful, rendering the film alive, purposeful, and goal-driven.”⁽¹⁰⁾

Thus, Zionist cinema exploited various media—whether through words, sound, or image—to execute these standards, as it possessed the creative ability to emulate various themes, targeting cultures, beliefs, opinions, and languages under a variety of guises. This left a psychological, emotional, and cognitive impact on the audience. At its core, it explored the essence of Jewish existence through philosophical concepts of cultural diversity within Judaism, transforming ideas to re-establish intellectual foundations. It strategically employed the arts, sciences, and literature to shape visions



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and attitudes in cinema and television productions, ensuring these mediums were harnessed to reinforce and solidify these concepts. They aimed to ignite the ideological flame of Zionism through deceptive claims that espoused freedom, justice, and identity, using them to subtly disseminate and amplify ideologies, with cinema serving as an essential tool in this endeavor.

Zionist thought embedded in the very fabric of Zionist cinema became a crucial pillar in the cinematic and television industry's pursuit. This intellectual drive sought to channel ideas in a way that deepened the ideological impact of the movement, inviting mental participation and encouraging viewers to engage emotionally and spiritually. This process aimed to cultivate harmony and spiritual purification, persuading the audience through both form and content, using aesthetic and expressive elements as catalysts for acceptance and the realization of the intended outcomes of these intellectual contents. "Cinema is replete with numerous performance styles employed by filmmakers, ranging from realism to impressionism, each reflecting the director's unique vision through an innovative approach that is evident throughout cinematic history, from silent films to modern-day productions."⁽¹¹⁾

Thus, Zionist intellectual and cinematic visions sought to convey messages that would ultimately establish a false credibility, using the aesthetic tools of cinematic language to serve as an essential element in the reception process. This was all aimed at cultivating belief in a new consciousness, persuading viewers of the intentionality behind the ideas conveyed in the filmic discourse, and fueling the conceptual transformations in the targeted demographics. These efforts stemmed from the emergence of ancient Zionism, reflecting societal, religious, and national dimensions in the creation of a fabricated history and the manipulation of rights based on growing anti-Arab sentiment and the justification for the occupation of Palestinian land.

This philosophy revolved around the establishment of a Zionist state extending from the Euphrates to the Nile, as manifested in their cultural and artistic visions.

The ideological product conveyed by these films worked to inspire specific impressions, influencing individuals' inclinations toward their content. The focus of the material was to solidify the cinematic product to achieve the desired results, thereby creating a significant impact on the audience and ensuring the success of their response. This approach also addressed the ethical challenges posed by the Zionist movement's unjust conflict with the Palestinians, masking its essence through the blending of future visions crafted within the Zionist framework. This, in turn, became an integral part of the intellectual system's foundation, leveraging cinema and television according to the resulting trends and ideas to reshape both individual and collective consciousness in a deceptive manner that served to impose Zionist ideologies, using the manipulation of cinematic language and direction to mislead and deceive the viewers.

"Today, the world suffers from conflicts, political and ideological shifts, military disputes, and various transformations, with people living in a state of rapid development, where thought is constantly shaped by an array of changing variables⁽¹²⁾.



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Third: The Role of Film Genre and Style in Serving Zionist Thought

Since its inception, Zionist cinema has focused on the intellectual treatment of religious texts, transforming them into cinematic narratives that rely on tension, excitement, and emotional engagement. These narratives were shaped in a unique style and specific frameworks designed to express Zionist ideology, stimulating human emotions and senses through compelling stories and artistic techniques. By utilizing a variety of cinematic styles, the aim was to seamlessly reach audiences, transcending temporal and spatial boundaries to systematically elicit empathy and persuade viewers according to the film's message.

Political, social, historical, and religious factors have significantly contributed to the establishment of Zionist cinema's global influence, enabling Jewish dominance in the global film and television industries. This influence facilitated the growth of Zionism as a central theme, tapping into various cultural and social realms to further its ideological agenda. The Zionists crafted a vision that resonated with human feelings, utilizing religious Jewish chants, songs, and spiritual hymns to evoke collective emotions. Through cinematic techniques, including dialogue, sound effects, and music, they addressed military strength, the determination of the Israeli soldier, and the glorification of the Israeli army as symbols of heroism and virtue, while presenting the soldier as an idealized figure embodying humanity and divine guidance⁽¹³⁾

Fourth: The Fabrication and Deception of Intellectual Truths in Zionist Cinema

Cinema plays a vital role in disseminating information and shaping public opinion, as it effectively conveys stories and events that deeply resonate with audiences. Zionist cinema has exploited this power to propagate its ideology, employing the moving image to manipulate various social, cultural, and intellectual groups worldwide. Cinema, as a powerful medium of communication, has been used to shape perceptions, guide public opinion, and subtly influence societal views, particularly through the portrayal of historical, ideological, and political conflicts, all in support of Zionist objectives.

Zionist cinema has successfully employed narrative techniques that evoke emotional and intellectual responses from viewers, reinforcing ideological shifts and social movements in line with Zionist interests. The manipulation of film as a medium, combining political and artistic elements, has created a significant tool for influencing collective thought and advancing Zionist objectives. By distorting historical facts and presenting a one-sided narrative, Zionist filmmakers seek to obfuscate the truth⁽¹⁴⁾, spreading misleading and deceptive information that advances their goals while creating divisions and tensions, particularly against Arabs and Palestinians.

This ideological manipulation is evident in the way Zionist filmmakers craft their narratives, tailoring them to evoke specific psychological, social, and emotional responses from their audiences. Through a strategic use of cinematic techniques, they



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aim to mislead, distort, and propagate falsehoods, presenting Zionist viewpoints as truths and drawing global attention to fabricated realities. As a result, such films can deeply impact viewers' understanding of complex geopolitical issues, reinforcing the Zionist narrative and obscuring the realities of the Palestinian struggle.

The researcher argues that these practices leave tangible results, directly influencing how viewers perceive and engage with the Zionist narrative. By controlling the production and dissemination of these films, Zionist filmmakers manipulate public opinion and promote ideological objectives in an increasingly interconnected world. Consequently, cinema becomes a powerful tool for distorting the truth and promoting a skewed version of history that serves the interests of Zionism.

The theoretical framework leads to the following indicators:

1. Zionism harnesses the full range of cinematic elements to ideologically shape its narratives, employing film and television production to convey its agenda.
2. Zionism utilizes various dramatic styles in film and television to embed its ideological content.
3. Zionist cinema and television productions aim to engage in a dialogue with global civilizations through cultural diversity, reinforcing the ideological and intellectual meanings of Zionism.

Research Methodology:

The researcher adopted a descriptive-analytical approach to study the selected films, analyzing how these cinematic works represent and promote Zionist ideology⁽¹⁵⁾. This methodology provides the tools necessary to examine the chosen samples, uncovering their role in advancing the ideological aims of Zionism.

Research Sample:

A purposive sample was selected, consisting of feature films and television dramas with distinctive narrative structures that lend themselves to in-depth study and analysis.

Analysis of the Sample: "Fauda" (Season 1)

Director: Asaf Bernstein

Story and Script: Lior Raz, Avi Issacharoff

Cast:

1. Hisham Suleiman as Abu Ahmed / Tawfiq Hamdan (Leader of the Resistance)
2. Lior Raz as Doron Kavillio (Commander of the Israeli Special Unit)
3. Shadi Marai as Sheikh (One of the Palestinian Leaders)
4. Letizia Ido as Shireen (Palestinian Doctor)



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5. Shadi Safadi as Ali Karmi (Palestinian Intelligence Officer)
6. Herit Shisha as Nitsana
7. Hatem Sharif as Walid Al-Abd (Assistant to Abu Ahmed)
8. Itzik Cohen as Moreno (Member of the Special Unit)

Production Manager: Maria Vilman

Music: Gilad Ben Amram

Cinematography: Netay Terenz, Moshe Mashali

Assistant Cinematographer: Jackie Rivah

Sound Engineer: Halif Hastings

Worldwide Distribution: ISD

Filming Location: Israel

Production Company: Israeli Production Company, Yes TV

Year of Production: 2015

Broadcast Network: Yes TV (Israeli TV Channel), Netflix

Episode Duration: 32 seconds, 41 minutes

Episode Summary

The series revolves around the Palestinian-Zionist conflict, portraying a struggle between the Zionist undercover intelligence unit and a Palestinian resistance faction. The first episode follows an intelligence operation by the undercover unit to apprehend the resistance leader, Abu Ahmed, who is believed to be dead. However, evidence and intelligence suggest that he has fabricated this narrative and continues to lead the faction.

The operation begins with the arrest of a Palestinian figure, Ali Karmi, inside a mosque. Officer Ayoub coerces him into revealing Abu Ahmed's whereabouts by leveraging the dire condition of his daughter, who suffers from kidney failure, and the exorbitant cost of her treatment. To lead the mission, an elite retired Zionist officer, Doron, is reinstated despite his family's strong objections to his return to such perilous operations.

Under pressure and fearing for his own life and his family's safety, Ali provides intelligence that the target will secretly attend his brother's wedding. Meanwhile, the team infiltrates the event disguised as confectionery workers assigned to serve the guests. Simultaneously, Abu Ahmed, donning the guise of an elderly man, attends the wedding discreetly to gift his brother money.

The ruse unravels when the original confectionery shop contacts the venue to apologize for a delay, raising suspicions. The hosts attempt to detain the disguised operatives,



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triggering a shootout. In the ensuing chaos, the groom is killed, along with a distinguished guest of notable social standing. As the team executes a tactical retreat, a pursuit ensues between them and Abu Ahmed, culminating in an exchange of fire that results in the death of one of Abu Ahmed's guards and the injury of Doron, the team leader, without successfully capturing the target.

Zionist propaganda meticulously manipulates semiotic layers and the entire sign system to ideologically shape its narratives through the cinematic language employed in Zionist film and television productions.

Inside the operations command room, Moreno's surveillance team monitors the unfolding events in real-time through screens, receiving live footage transmitted by hidden devices planted by the undercover operatives.

First: Findings

1. The central plot structure in Zionist cinematic and television productions strategically employs a narrative framework that embeds Zionist ideological thought. This primary plot branches into secondary subplots, weaving different characters and events to reinforce the overarching ideological message, as evident in the research samples.
2. Zionist ideological discourse in cinema and television consistently portrays Palestinians and Arabs as a perpetual and existential threat to Zionists and global peace, shaping public perception through dramatized narratives, as demonstrated in the research samples.
3. The Zionist ideological framework within visual media employs deception and distortion through dramatized political, social, and historical themes, manipulating reality to generate psychological influence and emotional sympathy from audiences worldwide, as observed in the research samples.

Second: Conclusions

1. Global Zionism has infiltrated global thought through ideological and intellectual manipulation via multimedia, utilizing drama and scripted narratives to promote its concepts.
2. Zionist ideological and artistic frameworks in media are systematically structured to influence both global and Zionist public opinion, fostering a collective mindset directed against Arabs.
3. Zionist ideological productions deliberately fuel political and social conflict, embedding narratives that frame Arabs through a lens of ideological, religious, and nationalist extremism.



Third: Recommendations

1. The researcher recommends raising awareness among students about the ideological exploitation of Zionist thought in cinematic and television productions, guiding them to critically assess and counter its influence.

Fourth: Suggestions

1. The researcher suggests conducting a specialized study focusing on the technical and expressive aspects of cinematic language in films and series that incorporate ideological and intellectual narratives.

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