

Orientalist Traces in the Brexit Referendum: A Semiotic Analysis on the Brexit Posters

Brexit Referandumundaki Oryantalist İzler: Brexit Afişleri Üzerine Göstergebilimsel Bir Çözümleme



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Abstract

Orientalism is a discourse that the West built on the East. In this discourse, the East is always pointed as another. Because the West is an ideal place that has progressed and developed with the modern period. East, which can't modernize, is another that always falls behind the West, needs the West to develop, has to follow the West, and often fails to do so, even has no potential to succeed. For this reason, the East is always a potential threat to the West and this threat should be constantly taken into account. It's possible to see the orientalist perspective of the West in a wide range from politics to economy, from sports to art. A current sample of the orientalist discourse constructed by the West has been seen in the United Kingdom during the Brexit process. In the process of withdrawal from the EU, the UK didn't include the messages directly related to the EU in some campaign materials and also indicated the EU as a threat through Turkey which it pointed as the other with an orientalist perspective. In these narratives, Turkey is positioned as a threat, having potential to join the EU and messages are given about the threat that UK will face in case of the ongoing membership to EU. On the other hand, the countries such as Syria and Iraq were implied as a threat and the links of these threats with Turkey were emphasized. This study reveals this situation with the semiotic analysis method for the posters in the open public spaces, the traditional media and social media during the Brexit process. In the study, 5 Brexit posters selected by the purposive sampling method were examined.

Keywords: Orientalism, the Other, Media, Brexit.

Öz

Oryantalizm Batı'nın Doğu üzerine kurduğu bir söylemdir. Bu söylemde Doğu her zaman bir öteki olarak işaret edilmektedir. Zira Batı modern dönemle birlikte ilerlemiş, gelişen ideal bir yerdir. Modernleşemeyen Doğu ise Batı'nın her zaman gerisinde kalan gelişmek için Batı'ya muhtaç olan Batı'yı takip etmek zorunda olan ve çoğu zaman da bunu başaramayan ve hatta başarıya potansiyeli de olmayan bir ötekidir. Bu sebeple Doğu, Batı için her zaman potansiyel bir tehdittir ve bu tehdit sürekli surette göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır. Batı'nın Oryantalist bakış açısını siyasetten ekonomiye, spordan sanata kadar çok geniş bir yelpaze içinde görmek mümkündür. Batının kurguladığı oryantalist söylemin güncel bir örneği de Brexit sürecinde İngiltere'de görülmüştür. İngiltere AB'den ayrılma sürecinde bazı kampanya materyallerinde doğrudan AB ile ilgili mesajlara yer vermemiş oryantalist bir bakış açısıyla bir öteki olarak işaret ettiği Türkiye üzerinden AB'yi bir tehdit unsuru olarak göstermiştir. Bu anlatılarda Türkiye AB'ye girme potansiyeli olan bir tehdit unsuru olarak konumlandırılmış, AB'de kaldığı sürece bu tehditle İngiltere'nin de karşı karşıya kalacağı yönünde mesajlar verilmiştir. Diğer yandan Suriye, Irak gibi ülkelerde bir tehdit unsuru olarak işaret edilmiş ve bu tehditlerin yine Türkiye ile olan bağlantılarına vurgu yapılmıştır. Bu çalışma söz konusu bu durumu Brexit sürecinde açık hava mecralarında, geleneksel medya ve sosyal medyada yer alan afişlere yönelik göstergebilimsel çözümleme yöntemi ile ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma kapsamında amaçlı örneklem yöntemi ile seçilen 5 Brexit afişi incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Oryantalizm, Öteki, Medya, Brexit.



Introduction

Orientalism is a discourse the West builds on the East. In this discourse, the East is always indicated as the other. The West is an ideal place that has progressed and developed with the modern period. The East, which is unable to modernize, is the other that always lags behind the West, needs to follow the West to develop but even fails to do that. For this reason, the East is always a potential threat to the West that needs to be watched constantly.

Orientalist discourse can be seen in many areas. Among these, political discourses clearly stand out. As a matter of fact, it is possible to say that orientalism is directly a political discourse from the new perspective conceptualized by Said (2017a). The East, in orientalism, carries an imaginary meaning rather than being a geographical region. The opposite and other image of the West is also an integral part of this material civilization. Therefore, orientalism should be studied as a discourse, because only in this way can one understand how Europe reviews and reproduces it. This will of Europe to review and reproduce prevents the product everyone who writes and researches on the East puts forth from being the ground for an innocent encounter where two different cultures and civilizations come together and try to get to know one another. This inevitably puts the West in a position of dominance and superiority at the foundation of Orientalist studies and the West's approach to the East. Thus, the East gains the identity of the 'other' as a result of this Orientalist approach of the West (Turna, 2002, p. 215). Therefore, each piece of information produced by the West concerning the East carries political rather than an objective character (Bulut, 2012, p. 2).

The mechanism of othering internalized in the Orientalist discourse is fundamentally based on the East-West distinction. Division of the World into two parts as the East and the West provides a basis for the establishment of the Western domination. Thus, while the West is establishing its power, it produces an 'imaginary east' that is shaped in its own fantasy world and will serve to consolidate its powers, and glorifies itself against it by attributing inferior characteristics to this image (Köse & Küçük, 2015, p. 118). In this way, the East is put in a position of the other, which contains all the negative qualities, lacks every positive attribute the West possesses, and whose means of obtaining these depend on the West and who, therefore, does not have the potential for self-realization. Thus, it is ensured that the East, which is fictionalized as the other, is perceived as a threat to the West. The otherizing Orientalist fiction, which portrays the East as a threat, seems to dominate all the discourses and actions of the West. When the West needs a leverage to keep its place and consolidate its position, it points to the West through an Orientalist discourse. It is possible to see examples of this in a wide range of areas. Britain's Brexit process is one of these examples. Politicians who are in favor of leaving the EU during the Brexit process have built another via the Orientalist discourse to steer the process in the direction they want. This study follows the traces of Orientalist discourses in the Brexit referendum process. In this context, pro-Brexit posters (in traditional media, social media and outdoors) used to influence voter preference were taken as examples and 5 posters selected using purposive sampling were analyzed using semiotic analysis.

Orientalism: An Imagination of the East

Orientalism, which is defined as the study of the East by the West, gained a different meaning with Edward Said's work titled 'Orientalism' published in 1978. Said approached Orientalism within the framework of a power relationship between East

and West and argued that it was shaped by political interests. “Said called this concept of interpreting history, which represents the congelation of differences within history, the confinement of relations labeled as non-Western into the category of ‘traditional society’, and the establishment of ‘Other’ as a ‘cultural object’ that must be monitored and modernized, and therefore aims to justify the cultural leadership and hegemony of the Western modernity over the rest of the world, Orientalism (as cited in Kocabay Şener, 2017, p. 3). From this perspective, Said regards the relationship between the West and the East as a power relation (Said, 2017, p. 15). This view of Said is also evidenced by the fact that he allocates a significant place to thinkers such as Gramsci and Foucault in his works. For example, following his statement that “Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient,” Said suggests that Foucault’s concept of discourse may be useful in understanding what Orientalism is here. Again, Said argues that unless Orientalism is analyzed as a discourse, it is impossible to understand the great systematic discipline that enabled European culture to manage and even produce the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively after the Enlightenment (Said, 2017a, p. 13). In this sense, he attributes special importance to Orientalism as an indicator of Euro-Atlantic power in the East, rather than a discourse that reflects the truth about the East, as argued on an academic basis.

On the other hand, the concept with which Said explains Orientalism through Gramsci is hegemony. According to him, “Gramsci has made the useful analytic distinction between civil and political society in which the former is made up of voluntary (or at least rational and noncoercive) affiliations like schools, families, and unions, the latter of state institutions (the army, the police, the central bureaucracy) whose role in the polity is direct domination.” Culture, of course, is to be found operating within civil society, where the influence of ideas, of institutions, and of other persons works not through domination but by what Gramsci calls consent. In any society not totalitarian, then, certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others.” Saying that Gramsci calls this form of cultural leadership hegemony, Said argues that this concept is necessary for any understanding of the cultural life in the industrialized West and states that what gives Orientalism permanence and strength is hegemony, or rather the results of the existing cultural hegemony (Said, 2017a, p. 16-17). In this respect, Edward Said approaches Orientalism as a discourse and focuses on the regimes of truth that govern the paradigms that produce discourses on Islam. Aiming to show how permanent and strong Orientalism is, Said points out to the hegemonic structure of Orientalism and considers Orientalism as a symbol of the intellectual and cultural dominance of the West over Islamic conceptions (as cited in Namaz, 2019, p. 179).

This perspective put forth by Said reveals the totalizing dimension of Orientalism. In that sense, a homogenization of many different societies and cultures under abstract cores such as “Islam” and “East”. This ‘other’ place called the ‘East’, in this sense, is an invention of the West and a product of the Orientalist discourse. Labeling various places that are quite distinct from each other as ‘Oriental’, the West establishes itself as the privileged and dominant pole of an implied opposition. This way, the West constructs its own identity by distinguishing it from a place it marks as the ‘other’ (Mutman, 1996, p. 30-31). These processes within Orientalism are considered as an indication that it is based on the

knowledge-discourse-power relationship (Kahraman, 2002, p. 154). In the most general sense of the word, Orientalism is defined as “the West’s images of the East or the Western collective imagination of the East; to perceive the East through the West’s cultural and ideological institutions, and a discourse adorned with words, images and doctrines produced by these institutions” (Uluç, 2009, p. 141). In this respect, Orientalism can be considered as a framework that constructs the East. The East is in a position where it is treated as an object on which the West exercises its will. It is this willful attitude of Orientalism that objectifies the East.

Media and Orientalism: The Otherization of the East

The Orientalist perspective, which is based on the East-West distinction, is one of the important manifestations of othering, because, as mentioned before, Orientalism maintains its existence through othering. Both Orientalism and all other otherizations are based on constructing their own national identity against the different by belittling them (Uluç, 2009, p. 124; Satır & Özer, 2018).

The concept of the ‘other’ is functional in drawing the boundaries of the environment to which one belongs. Whenever one considers what the “other” means, the reference point is always ourselves. Characteristics one owns are accepted as the norm by oneself, and all those who do not fit these characteristics or own different ones are defined as the “other”. When considering its simple lexical meaning, “other” appears as a word used by different parties to describe each other. However, when the cultural or social use of the concept of other is considered, it is seen that it is mostly used by the dominant to define what is different from themselves (as cited in Posos Devrani, 2017, p. 929).

In the orientalist discourse, the addressee of the belittling is the East. With the modern period, the West has started to see itself as the only advanced civilization. The East, on the other hand, is an ‘other’ that is backward in every respect, has not completed its self-development and shows no potential to do so. As Keyman (1996, p. 76) argues, the other here is defined as what it is not, rather than what it is, and as regarded as a cultural object that illustrates the absence of everything the “modern self” has. In these negative construction processes, which tend to marginalize the East through an Orientalist perspective, the West attempts to position the East in a negative place as it differs from itself. These positionings are mostly carried out through media today (Uluç, 2009, p. 124). By presenting marginalizing and discriminating positionings through professionally constructed unpleasant plots, the media plants prejudices in individuals against the other individuals and accelerates the formation of a cognitively antagonistic unity among those who are against the other (Gölcü & Dağlı, 2017, p. 17). From another perspective, the media plays a vital role in the representation of cultural domination and unequal social relations. Through these representations, the audience is invited in multiple ways to construct divisive perceptions such as our people and outsiders; us and them; fellow citizens and foreigners; normal people and perverts; friends and foes; Westerners and the rest (Cottle, 2000, p. 2). In this way, the media uses the formula of ‘us and others’ to indicate who is inside and who is outside in national communities and creates a social map that defines the boundaries of the society. This social map is based on the strict distinction between “our” and “their” stories. As a story maker the media enables the formation of schemes in the minds of the people by depicting certain representative images of “others”.

Considering the role of the media in the production of the discourse that facilitates the West's domination over the East and in the realization of hegemonic construction, the next logical stage that follows classical Orientalism, which was founded on a crude criticism of Islam, and modern Orientalism, with which the West aimed to dominate the East through scientific competencies, is postmodern Orientalism, which can be defined as the expression of a mentality that is not compatible with scientific or universal rules of logic. At this stage, for example, Islam, which belongs to the East, is not a phenomenon that calls for investigation. What needs to be done now is isolation and accusation. It is positioned as the other and is fought as the enemy. This type of Orientalism practiced through the media can also be defined as mediatic Orientalism since it is carried out through visual means. Thus, an "other" is created. Since this is carried out as a strategy, it targets all Muslims and not marginalized groups. For example, while an announcer on a TV channel is reporting a suicide squad in the middle East, Muslims praying in rows and women wearing headscarves in daily life are brought to the screen. What is meant by this is to associate all Muslims with terrorist acts. This way, Islam is positioned as the "other" or the "other" against "us", which is at the core of Orientalism, via the media (Aydın, 2013, p. 325-326).

These positionings regarding Islam reduce the term Islam to a partly fictional, partly ideological label, and partly a minimized representation of the content of a religion called Islam, as Said argues (2017b, p. 52). Indeed, since the moment it caught the attentions of Europeans and Americans, news about Islam began to appear frequently in the media, and through these reports, a picture of Islam was drawn, its characteristics were enumerated, and Islam experts appeared on TV to misguide the public about Islam. These reports gave the audience a sense of understanding Islam without even a clue that most of the reports were based on unobjective sources. This is why the word Islam has often caused not only blatant misconceptions, but also an excuse for sharp ethnocentrism, cultural and even racial hatred, a deep-seated rambling animosity. According to Said, all of this was part of a so-called fair, balanced and responsible journalism about Islam (2017, p. 52-53).

As in this example, the East is constantly depicted as either the victim or the oppressor in the Western media. For the East to be a topic in the Western media, there must be a civil war, social conflict, political or economic crisis, or a natural disaster. Otherwise, how an ordinary day is spent in Eastern societies, the positive aspects of their cultural colors, their efforts towards the welfare and happiness in the world, etc. are not shown in the media (Kocabay Şener, 2017, p. 2). Thus, a perception of other towards the East is created in Western people, who constantly come across negative aspects of the East in the media, and a sense of distinction is built with the help of this perception.

Consequently, the 'other' is established as an integral part of Europe's material civilization and culture on the basis of epistemological and ontological distinction between East and West. Thus, while the west presents itself as a modern, progressive, developmentalist, democratic and individualistic society, it attributes the opposites of these qualities to the East, which it has positioned as different from itself, such as traditional, fanatic, underdeveloped, collectivist and authoritarian. Thus, the East, which is different, is positioned as the other of the West, and is produced by the West (Keyman, 2002, p. 21). The practical reflection of these negative productions of meaning are contempt, ridicule and anger in the Western world towards the East (Satır & Özer, 2018, p. 761-764).

Orientalist Traces in the Brexit Referendum Process

Brexit, which has been a controversial subject in the United Kingdom (UK) and European Union (EU), is a process that began with the UK's entry into the EU in 1973, and ended with its split from it on 31 January 2020 (Yıldız, 2021, p. 70). The United Kingdom held a referendum on 23 June 2016 on the continuation of EU membership. A similar referendum had taken place before in 1975 when the disagreements within the Labor Party, which was in power at the time, on whether to stay in the Communities or not, prompted Prime Minister Harold Wilson to take the issue to a referendum, and the result was in favor of remaining in the Communities with 67% of the votes. Thus, the UK remained an EU member until 31 January 2020 (Topaloğlu, 2018, p. 348). However, the UK abstained from committing to several important integration steps throughout its membership, and preferred to stay out of the scope of important policies such as Euro and Schengen visa system. The EU sought solutions to prevent the UK's exit from EU, and an agreement was signed between the UK and the EU in February 2016, when the last referendum took place. Despite these attempts, the referendum held on 23 June 2016 resulted in negative results with 51.9% of the votes in favor of leaving and 48.1% in favor of remaining in the EU (Onursal Başgöl, 2021, p. 188; Uberoi, 2016). The Brexit referendum campaigns carried out in 2016 were based on two main themes. The first theme was sovereignty, and the second was immigration. The campaign depicted the EU as an undemocratic structure that upset the will of the British people, and promised to "take back control". In the immigration-themed second campaign, freedom of movement was depicted as a threat of the identity of the country, along with Britain's public services and social welfare systems (Ker-Lindsay, 2018, p. 2). Conservative parties, which were in favor of leaving and led by Boris Johnson, made promises around these two themes that crossed the line of racism from time to time, such as better control over borders, decrease in the immigrant population and better chances of solving the problem of unemployment with Brexit. Turkey unexpectedly came up in the issue of immigration, when in an advertisement video published by UKIP, it was claimed that Turkey was to become a member of the EU by 2020 and that 15 million people would immigrate to EU countries within the first 10 years of its membership. Turkey's potential EU membership and its possible effects were also reflected on posters during the campaign, and unrealistic claims such as terrorist and criminal organizations passing from Turkey to England were projected to the public opinion, along with anti-Islamism. Such statements made a big splash in the media, and the issue of immigration were associated with Turkey much more frequently than Poland or Romania, which are among the EU countries that immigrate to the UK (Gürsoy, 2019, p. 24). This marginalizing outlook of the campaigns by the pro-separatist conservative parties during the referendum process were also discussed in the press. For instance, fear-mongering regarding Turkey was interpreted as the last tactic of the separatist Brexit campaign in a CNN article. According to separatist campaigners, it made sense to focus on Turkey's possible accession to the European Union. Because this was a policy that the British government had long discussed and its realization was a threat. According to the article, high birth rates, high crime rates and gun ownership in Turkey, and the fact that Turkish criminals could not be prevented from entering the UK due to the EU's free movement laws were discussed by the pro-separatist press in a way that incited the fear toward Turkey (Black, 2016).

The Guardian also addressed the focus on Turkey as a threat in the separation campaigns and how the Brexit group created bias with the claim that Turkey's EU membership would put the British at greater risk of crime. In the article, it was mentioned that before the

Turkey-England football match in Manchester, a government official made a statement about Turkey's imminent acceptance to the EU and the threat this poses to national security and public services, and that the crime and gun ownership rates in Turkey were presented as a proof to these claims (Boffey & Helm, 2016)

In Financial Times, the separatist campaigns were covered with the headline "The Brexiters' ugly campaign to vilify Turks" and the ugliness of the campaign was underlined. The reference to the birth rates in Turkey was also mentioned in the article, addressing the inclusion of statistics concerning high birth rates in Turkey and warnings that the British National Health Service would be overwhelmed by Turkish mothers-to-be in the campaigns. The article also mentioned the high crime rates in Turkey and how maps illustrating that Ankara's accession will expand the borders of Europe to Syria, a war zone, were also used in this process. The article in question was one of the harshest criticisms of the anti-Turkey campaigns in the Brexit process. A cartoon in which Boris Johnson is portraying Turkey as an aggressive Ottoman was also included within the article. The cartoon in question summarizes the whole process (see Figure 1.) (Stephens, 2016)



Figure 1. 'Vote Leave'.

Source: Stephens, 2016.

As can be seen above, the separatist campaigns during the Brexit process were quite obviously based on an otherizing language. Here, it is seen that Turkey is particularly pointed out as an 'other' that threatens England on the matters of national security and immigration. Although Turkey was at the center of these campaigns as the other, other others were also referred directly or indirectly through Turkey. The statements that Turkey's accession to the EU will open the gates to Syria and the people on the immigration routes in the posters examined in this study are examples of these.

Methodology

Objective and Importance of the Study

There are many examples that reveal the orientalist perspective of the West in the process of constructing the other. The campaigns carried out during the Brexit process

are one of these examples, which are clearly based on the construction of the other. In this process, some of the campaigns centered on Turkey, and British people were attempted to be persuaded through Orientalist discourses by constructing an other through Turkey. In that sense, the posters used within the framework of the campaigns were striking. This study aims to do a reading of the Orientalist perspective through these posters. The study is important in terms of addressing how Orientalist discourses are practiced in political discourse in the context of Brexit, which is one of the important political events in recent history.

Method and Sample of the Study

Non-numeric data such as words, sentences, photographs and symbols require qualitative research strategies and data collection techniques. In the study, qualitative design was used to examine the posters and graphics used in the Brexit process. Qualitative research is mostly based on interpretative and critical social science principles (Neuman, 2020, p. 294-295). The analysis in the research was done using semiotics method included in the qualitative design. Semiotics is one of the main methodological approaches applied to different texts of written, visual or verbal nature. This approach, which is effectively used in many disciplines and fields of study such as literature, sociology, architecture, medicine, anthropology, theology, communication and media studies, was based on the views of American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce and Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (Çam, 2015, p. 287).

At the center of the domain of interest of semiotics is sign. Sign, in the most general terms, is defined as any form, object, phenomenon, etc. that represents something other than itself and can replace the thing it represents. Semiotics is the study of these signs and the way they work. In other words, semiotics is the study of signs or the discipline that examines signs (Fiske, 2003, p. 62; Rifat, 2009, p. 11). The main representatives of the field of semiotics are Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Algirdas Julien Greimas, Julia Kristeva, and Christian Metz. When it comes to media and communication studies, analyses of Barthes and Eco stand out (Çam, 2015, p. 287).

Barthes paved the way for 'visual semiotics'. Barthes's article 'The Rhetoric of the Image', in which he analyzed the advertisement of 'Panzani', a pasta brand in 1964, is considered to be one of the fundamental texts of visual semiotics. This method, which gained theoretical importance with Barthes, has been used frequently in many fields such as advertising, journalism and cinema to date (as cited in Şimşek-İşleyen, 2015, p. 488).

According to Barthes, sign is used to denote the element born out of the combination between a signified and a signifier. In this sense, the sign is composed of a signifier and a signified. The plane of signifiers constitutes the plane of expression, while the plane of the signified constitutes the plane of content. The order of signification covers these two planes and is equal to the connection between these two planes. Barthes assumes that after this stage, this order becomes an element of a second order that will contain it. Here, the first order forms the denotation plane, and the second order, which contains the first order, constitutes the connotation plane (Barthes, 1979, p. IX-31-87). Denotation refers to the obvious meaning of the sign, known by everyone. This involves taking terms (including images, sounds, objects, and other forms of communication) in their literal sense as opposed to connotation, which involves looking into multiple meanings a term carries or is attributed to. Therefore, denotation is related to the real meaning of a sign, while connotation refers to the cultural meaning attached to a term, image, figure or

text. As such, connotation describes the interaction that occurs when users meet face their emotions or excitement and cultural values. This is the moment when meanings shift towards subjectivity, or at least intersubjectivity: at this moment, interpretation is affected by the object and the sign as much as it is affected by the interpreter (Fiske, 2003, p. 116, Berger, 2014, p. 92-93). The visuals discussed in this study is analyzed based on Barthes's denotation and connotation dimensions.

A purposeful sample was selected for the research, and a total of 5 posters used in the Brexit process were evaluated. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling where cases are judged as typical of some category of cases of interest to the researcher. They are not selected randomly. Thus a study of leaders of the conservation movement might, in the absence of a clearly defined sampling frame or population, select some typical leaders from a number of typical conservation groups. While not ensuring representative-ness, such a method of selection can provide useful information (De Vaus, 2002, p. 90).

Although purposive sampling resembles convenience sampling, the most important distinction between the two is that the individuals and the objects chosen for sampling are selected from individuals and objects that can give the most appropriate response to the researcher's purposes. The criterion in selection is fitness for purpose, as well as convenience (Aziz, 2020, p. 52).

Analysis and Findings



Figure 2. 'Turkey (population 76 million) is joining the EU'.

Source: <https://politicaladvertising.co.uk/>

Social unrest brought by the Arab Spring in the Middle East accelerated the migration from the region, prompting Europe to perceive this wave of migration as a threat. Consequently, Europe primarily wanted to protect its borders. Turkey played an important role at this point. Its border with Europe carried it to an even more critical point. As a member of the European Union, Britain used these political developments, which marked their place in the social memory, as an argument to leave the EU.

On the denotation level, the poster tells that Turkey will enter the European Union and that the way for passport-free passages will be paved. On the connotation level, on the other hand, the use of red color on the poster indicates danger. On a red background,

there is a passport shaped door and footprints that lead to it. Depiction of the passport as an open door indicates loss of control, and the dirty image created with the footprints points out to the “undesirable other”. What is meant here is that the unwanted comes closer to our doorstep step by step, and this meaning is reinforced with the expression “Turkey (population 76 million) is joining the EU” on the poster. The font of size of the term Turkey and the emphasis on Turkey’s population ensures that Turkey is perceived as a great potential danger and an invader. With the phrase “Vote leave, take back control” on the poster, it is emphasized that the only way to avoid this invasion, which is fictionalized as a threat, is to leave the EU. “Because if we remain in the EU, Turkey will enter the EU with its 76 million population and this population will pose a threat to us.” In this respect, the Orientalist perspective based on the ‘other’ is blatant on this poster. The emphasized 76 million population consists of people who are unwanted by England. This population is not of a quality that can contribute to England and will only drag it down. The dirty footprints tarnishing the floors is an important indicator of the emphasis on the other.

Table 1. Semiotic analysis of figure 2

| Sign | Poster | |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Signifier | Dirty footprints on red background, leading to an open, passport-shaped door – “Turkey (population 76 million) is joining the EU” The text that says “Vote leave, take back control” | |
| Signified | Denotation | Staying in the EU means opening the doors to Turkey. |
| | Connotation | If you do not vote yes for Brexit, a country like Turkey with a 76 million population who will be a member of the EU will easily enter England, and that poses a threat to us. |



Figure 3. ‘Breaking Point’.

Source: Bold, 2019.

Again, migration is used as the main theme in this poster titled Breaking Point. However, this time there is a real image on the poster, which shows a dense crowd, comprised mostly of men, heading towards a place. On the poster, there is a text that says “Breaking Point” in red large fonts and another text in smaller fonts just below it. At the bottom of the image is the statement that says “We must break free of the EU and take back control of our borders.” The text “The EU has failed us all” right below this statement emphasizes

that Europe is weak in this regard and has failed the stop the flow of immigrants that has reached Europe's doorstep, and therefore is a disappointment. Therefore, "If we remain in the EU, all of these elements of threat will also become a threat to us. Europe is now at a critical point in protecting our borders, and at this point, it is only a matter of time before we face the 'other' when the 'other' reaches our borders. Leaving the EU will save us from the risks (bad-other) here and enable us to regain control of our borders." This meaning is reinforced with the statement "We must break free of the EU and take back control of our borders."

Table 2. Semiotic analysis of figure 3

| Sign | Poster | |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Signifier | People on a migration route – Texts that say "Breaking Point" - "The EU has failed us all" - "We must break free of the EU and take back control of our borders" - "Leave the European Union" - Nature – Symbol of Approval | |
| Signified | Denotation | The EU is face to face with an intense wave of migration |
| | Connotation | The EU is inadequate in battling immigration. This failure of the EU leaves England in the face of an immigration problem as well. This oncoming migration wave is not qualified enough to contribute to England and poses a threat to it. |



Figure 4. 'The EU is letting in more and more countries.'

Source: <http://www.voteleavetakecontrol.org/>

Europe's potential for expansion is illustrated in Figure 4. The statements "The EU is letting in more and more countries" and "The EU will continue to grow" emphasizes Europe's increasing growth and inclusion of more and more countries. The statement "The EU started as 9 countries – it's now 28" written in smaller fonts support this claim. In addition to this, the statement "Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria have joined since 2007" is meant to increase the credibility, followed by a list of countries with their population ratios under the phrase "the next countries set to join are". These countries are listed as Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey, respectively. Among them, Turkey has the largest population. Accompanying these statements in the image is a map that

includes England, Europe, Turkey, Syria and Iraq. Turkey, Syria, Iraq and other countries that will enter Europe are shown in red and orange on the map. Europe is shown in gray and more vaguely, and England is shown in blue. The depiction of Turkey, Iraq, Syria and other countries ready to enter the EU in red and orange tones in the image in question indicates a potential danger. Countries in these colors are dangerous and unsafe. England, on the other hand, is shown in blue, which is intended to convey the meaning that unlike the others, England is a safe and peaceful country. The arrow on the map implies an inclination. On the connotation level, the UK, which is a safe country, will face potential dangers if it remains in the EU. While pointing out to the potential danger, there is a construction of the other through the countries depicted in red. Red color of these countries imply that they are dangerous and threatening. England’s place on the map, on the other hand, is blue. Here, too, it is implied that England stands apart from other countries, that they are different from others, and the color chosen to illustrate this difference indicates it is better than the others. As was conceived from the beginning, the implication towards the risk of these countries entering England as long as it remains in the EU is completed with the arrow sign. The fact that the arrow points from the otherized countries in red and orange towards England indicates that potential risks and threats will turn towards England so long as they remain in the EU. Again, in the lower right corner of the image, a ballot box icon and the word “vote leave” are displayed, conveying the message that “if you do not want to face these threats, use your vote to leave.”

Table 3. Semiotic analysis of figure 4

| Sign | Poster-Graphic | |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Signifier | A map in the colors red, blue and gray, the statements “The EU is letting in more and more countries”-“The EU will continue to grow” “The EU started as 9 countries – it’s now 28” - “the next countries set to join are” “vote leave” - country names – numbers – arrow sign – human graphics | |
| Signified | Denotation | Staying in the EU means letting in immigrants. |
| | Connotation | The EU, which started with 9 countries, is growing. Most of the countries that joined the EU later are economically weak countries. Those who wait in line to get in, including Turkey, are also economically weak. The EU will continue to grow this way and this poses a threat for the future of England. |



Figure 5. ‘Britain’s new border is with Syria and Iraq.’
 Source: <https://www.europenowjournal.org>

When Figure 5 is examined, it is seen that there is a narration through a map again. The map includes Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Europe and England. Turkey, Syria, Iraq are shown in red and orange colors, whereas European countries are gray and indistinct, and England is blue again. While Turkey's name is written on the map allocated to it, Syria and Iraq are indicated by the text "Britain's new border is with Syria and Iraq" placed horizontally on the lower part of the image. There is no such indication for the UK and the other European countries. The question, "What does the EU 'tourist deal' mean?" is placed on the upper right corner of the image. Again, there are two arrows from Turkey to England with human symbols them. There is a motto that says "Vote Leave, take back control" at the bottom of the image. On the denotation level, it is meant that Syria, Iraq and Turkey can easily pass over to England with the EU tourist deal. On the connotation level, depicting Turkey, Syria and Iraq in red implies a potential for danger. In the text "Britain's new border is with Syria and Iraq" at the bottom, the words "Syria" and "Iraq" are written in red and the meaning of potential danger is reconstructed here. In order to uncover these meanings, a questioning was initiated with the phrase "What does the EU 'tourist deal' mean?", and the statement "Britain's new border is with Syria and Iraq" answers this question. This time, Syria and Iraq are used as the main elements of threat, and Turkey is depicted as a transit point for this threat. Finally, with the slogan "Vote Leave, take back control", it is implied that these threats will be directly faced if the voting is not in favor of leaving.

Table 4. Semiotic analysis of figure 5

| Sign | Poster-Graphic | |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Signifier | A map in the colors blue, gray, red, orange – the statements "What does the EU tourist deal" mean? - "Britain's new border is with Syria and Iraq" "Vote Leave, take back control" - arrow sign – human graphics | |
| Signified | Denotation | The EU tourist deal means that everyone can easily enter the EU. With this deal, England's borders will connect with Turkey, Syria and Iraq. |
| | Connotation | The EU makes deals that are not in favor of us. The tourist deal is one of these. With this deal, Turkey and its neighboring countries such as Syria and Iraq will easily be able to reach England through the EU. Because Turkey is unable to control its borders against trespassers from Syria and Iraq. These countries are unwanted countries that are potentially threatening. Staying in the EU will leave England face to face with this potential threat. This poses a threat to England's borders. We have to leave the EU if we want to regain control of our borders. |

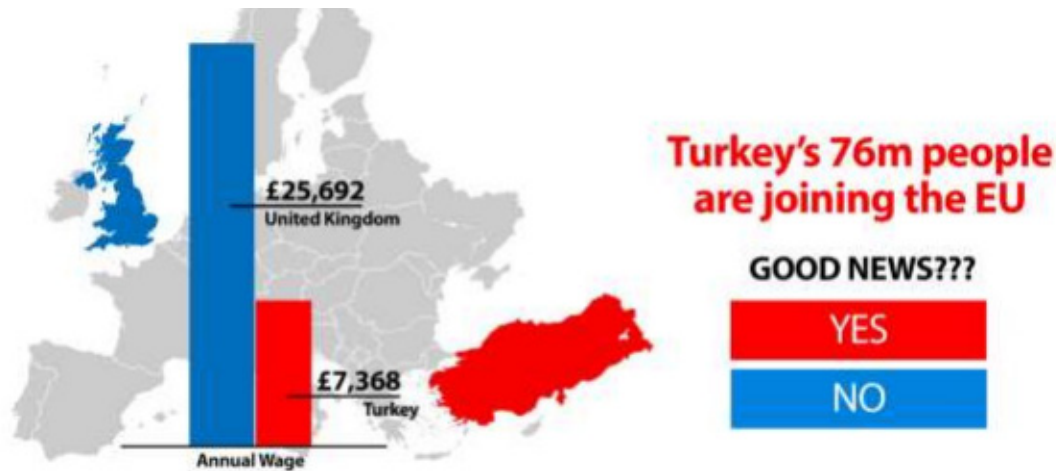


Figure 6. 'Turkey's 76m people are joining the EU.'

Source: Casalicchio, 2018

The visual map consists of a graphic showing the annual incomes, a statement that says “Turkey’s 76m people are joining the EU”, the phrase “Good News???” questioning this statement, and the words “yes” and “no” as options for answering. When the image is examined on the connotation level, it is understood that the option “yes” is the wrong answer for the question “Turkey’s 76m people are joining the EU – Good News?” The implication that it is the wrong choice of answer is reinforced with the annual income graphic. The fact that the per capita income level of Turkey is lower than England’s is clearly shown in the graphics. What is implied here is that Turkey is a country with a very low per capita income and a country with a high level of welfare like England does not deserve to be in the same place as such a country. If you do not want to be in such a position, the solution is to leave the EU.

Table 5. *Semiotic analysis of figure 6*

| Sign | Poster-Graphics | |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Signifier | A map and a graphic in the colors blue, red, gray – the statements “Turkey’s 76m people are joining the EU” – “Good News” – “Yes” – “No” - numbers | |
| Signified | Denotation | Turkey’s annual income is far below England’s. |
| | Connotation | A country like Turkey with low annual income will join the EU. A country with such a dense population and low economic level will negatively affect the socio-economic profile of the EU. If we stay in the EU, England will also have to face this situation and be subjected to an economic invasion. |

Conclusion

Orientalist discourse is a construction of other. With this discourse, the West positions itself as the ideal against an ‘other’ that it imagines as undesirable. This way, the West draws the boundaries of its own national identity and shows its people who remains inside and who remains outside of this identity. Those who remain within the boundaries are planted as in the minds as ‘us’, while those outside of them as are coded as the ‘other’.

In the modern age, the public’s dependence on the media as a source of information and news is a known fact. Those in power, taking advantage of this dependence, use the media effectively to construct their own discourses, and to direct the public and shape the minds of the individuals within the frameworks of these discourses. In that sense, the media has an important function in the process of construction of these discourses in the West. Orientalist discourses are both constructed and circulated through the media. Thus, the other, which the Orientalist discourse points out to, carves a place for itself in the minds through the media.

In the study, this phenomenon is discussed in the context of Brexit posters. Those who carried out separatist campaigns during the Brexit process reflected their perspective on posters and constructed the East as the other. This construct is blatantly visible in all of the posters examined. The main narrative on the posters is that England is a safe and wealthy country, and the countries in the east, Turkey in particular, needs to be seen as a potential danger for England.

When the indicators on the posters are examined, dirty footprints entering the UK, male immigrants at the border pointing to potential danger, the map of Turkey, Syria and Iraq marked as danger in red and orange, arrow signs showing immigration from these countries towards the UK, graphics where Turkey’s population density and annual income is compared with England’s stand out. These signifiers point to an Other on the level of connotation. According to the connotation constructed on the posters, “England

is a safe country that has ensured its own welfare. As long as it stays in the EU, this welfare is under threat, because Europe is unable to control immigration. In addition, a country such as Turkey, with a large population, low income level, and borders with other countries where war and chaos reigns, is on the brink of entering the EU. If a choice is not made to leave the EU soon, these low-income, socially chaotic countries will invade the UK." Thus, the 'other' built on the posters has been turned into a threat and leaving the EU has been shown as the way to evade this threat.

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Brexit Referandumundaki Oryantalist İzler: Brexit Afişleri Üzerine Göstergibilimsel Bir Çözümleme

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Oryantalizm Batı'nın Doğu üzerine kurduğu bir söylemdir. Bu söylemde Doğu her zaman bir öteki olarak işaret edilmektedir. Zira Batı modern dönemle birlikte ilerlemiş, gelişen ideal bir yerdir. Modernleşemeyen Doğu ise Batı'nın her zaman gerisinde kalan gelişmek için Batı'ya muhtaç olan Batı'yı takip etmek zorunda olan ve çoğu zaman da bunu başaramayan ve hatta başarma potansiyeli de olmayan bir ötekidir. Bu sebeple Doğu, Batı için her zaman potansiyel bir tehdittir ve bu tehdit sürekli surette göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır.

Oryantalizmde Doğu, coğrafi bir bölgeden çok imgesel bir anlam taşır. Batı'nın karşıt ve öteki imgesi, aynı zamanda da maddi uygarlığının tamamlayıcı bir parçasıdır. Oryantalizm bu yüzden bir söylem olarak incelenmelidir. Ancak bu şekilde Avrupa'nın onu nasıl ele alıp yeniden ürettiği anlaşılabilir. Batı'nın bu yeniden ele alıp üretme iradesi Doğu üzerine yazan, araştırma yapan herkesin ortaya koyduğu üretimi iki farklı kültür ve medeniyetin bir araya gelip birbirlerini tanımaya anlamaya çalıştıkları masum bir karşılaşmanın zemini olmaktan çıkarmaktadır. Bu durumda Oryantalist araştırmaların ve Batı'nın Doğu'ya yaklaşımının temelini, kaçınılmaz olarak Batı'nın lehine bir egemenlik ve üstünlük konumu oturtur. Böylece Batı'nın bu Oryantalist yaklaşımı ile Doğu'ya bir 'öteki' kimliği verilmiş olur (Turna, 2002, s. 215). Dolayısıyla Batı'nın Doğu hakkında ürettiği her bilgi nesnel değil siyasal bir nitelik taşımış olur (Bulut, 2012, s. 2).

Oryantalist bakış açısı üzerinden Doğu'yu ötekileştirmeye yönelik negatif inşaa süreçlerinde Batı kendinden farklı olan Doğu'yu olumsuz bir yerde konumlandırma çabası içindedir. Söz konusu konumlandırmalar bugün en çok medya dolayımıyla gerçekleşmektedir (Uluç, 2009, s. 124). Medya, kendisi üzerinden oluşturulan ötekileştiren ve ayrıştıran konumlandırmaları profesyonelce kurgulanmış olumsuz olay örgüleriyle birlikte sunarak, bireylerde ötekiye karşı önyargılar geliştirmekte ve ötekine karşı olanlar arasında bilişsel düzeyde karşıt bir birlikteliğin de oluşmasını hızlandırmaktadır (Gölcü ve Dağlı, 2017, s. 17). Bir başka açıdan medya kültürel egemenlik ve eşitsiz toplumsal ilişkilerin temsilinde hayati bir rol oynar. Bu temsiller aracılığıyla izler kitle çeşitli şekillerde bizden olanlar ve bizden olmayanlar, bizler ve onlar, içeridekiler ve dışarıdakiler, yurttaşlar ve yabancılar, normaller ve sapkınlar, dostlar ve düşmanlar, batılılar ve geri kalanlar gibi ayrıştırmacı algıların inşaa edilmesine davet edilirler (Cottle, 2000, s. 2).

Batının öteki inşası sürecinde oryantalist bakışını ortaya koyan birçok örnek bulunmaktadır. Brexit sürecinde yürütülen kampanyalar da açıkça bir öteki inşası üzerine kurulmuş olan bu örneklerden birisidir. Bu süreçte Türkiye'nin de merkeze alındığı kampanyalar yürütülmüş ve Türkiye üzerinden bir öteki inşası yapılarak oryantalist söylemlerle İngiliz halkı ikna edilmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu anlamda kampanyalar çerçevesinde kullanılan afişler dikkat çekicidir. Çalışmada Batı'nın oryantalist kurgusu bu afişler üzerinden okunmaktadır. Bu kapsamda araştırma için amaçlı örneklem yöntemiyle seçilmiş olan Brexit sürecinde açık hava, geleneksel medya ve sosyal medya mecralarında kullanılan toplam 5 afiş göstergibilimsel yöntemle çözümlenmiştir.

Araştırmada elde edilen bulgulara bakıldığında Brexit afişlerinde açık bir şekilde Oryantalist söylemin kurgulandığı ve ötekinin etkin bir şekilde inşa edildiği tespit edilmiştir. Afişlerde İngiltere'nin güvenli ve refah içinde olan bir ülke olduğu Türkiye başta olmak üzere İngiltere dışında kalan doğudaki diğer ülkelerin ise İngiltere için potansiyel tehlike olarak görülmesi gerektiği temel anlatı olarak kurgulanmıştır.

Afişteki göstergeler incelendiğinde İngiltere'ye giriş yapan kirli ayak izleri, potansiyel tehlikeye işaret eden sınıra dayanmış erkek göçmenler, kırmızı ve turuncu renklerle tehlike olarak işaret edilmiş Türkiye, Suriye ve Irak haritaları, bu ülkelerden İngiltere'ye göçü gösteren ok işaretleri, Türkiye'nin nüfus yoğunluğu ve kişi başı yıllık gelirinin İngiltere ile karşılaştırıldığı grafikler bu anlatıyı ortaya koymak için kullanılan gösterenler olarak ön plana çıkmaktadır.

Afişlerde ulusal güvenlik ve göç vurgusu üzerinden İngiltere'yi tehdit edecek bir öteki olarak özellikle Türkiye'nin işaret edildiği gözlenmiştir. İncelenen afişlerin hemen hemen tümünde bu durum görülmektedir. Türkiye'nin sahip olduğu yoğun nüfus oranı, gelir düzeyinin İngiltere'ye göre düşük olduğunu gösteren grafikler, daha da belirgin olarak Türkiye'nin nüfus oranı ile İngiltere'ye yönelmiş olan kirli ayak izleri açık bir şekilde ötekileştirici bir dil üzerine kurulan Oryantalist bakış açısını ortaya koymaktadır. Türkiye'nin nüfusuna yapılan vurgu Türkiye'nin potansiyel büyük bir tehlike ve bir istilacı olarak algılanmasını sağlamaktadır. Afişlerde yer alan "Vote leave, take back control" ifadesi ile tehdit olarak kurgulanan bu istilanın çıkış yolunun AB'den ayrılmak olduğu vurgulanmıştır. Zira AB'de kalırsa Türkiye 76 milyonluk nüfusu ile AB'ye girecek ve İngiltere için bir tehdit oluşturacaktır. Nitekim vurgulanan 76 milyonluk nüfus İngiltere için istenmeyen insanlardan oluşmaktadır. Bu nüfus İngiltere'ye katkı sağlayabilecek nitelikte bir nüfus değildir ve İngiltere'nin seviyesini düşürecektir. Afişte yer alan ayak izlerinin zemini kirletiyor görüntüsü bu anlamı inşa eden önemli bir gösterendir.

Diğer taraftan bu kampanyalarda Türkiye bir öteki olarak her ne kadar merkeze alınsa da doğrudan ya da dolaylı olarak Türkiye üzerinden başka ötekilere de göndermede bulunulmuştur. Türkiye'nin AB'ye girmesinin Irak ve Suriye'ye de kapıları açacağı yönündeki anlatımlar göç yolunda olan insanlar bunların birer örneğidir. Afişte inşa edilen yan anlamlara bakıldığında Irak ve Suriye istenmeyen birer ötekidir. Eğer AB'de kalırsa Türkiye'de AB'ye girecek ve Türkiye'ye sınırı olan Irak ve Suriye'de böylelikle Avrupa'ya ulaşacaklardır. Tüm bu insanlar potansiyel tehlike taşıyan insanlardır. Bu büyük bir tehdittir ve bu tehdidi bertaraf etmenin yolu AB'den ayrılmaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Oryantalizm, Öteki, Medya, Brexit.

Bu makale **intihal tespit yazılımlarıyla** taranmıştır. İntihal tespit edilmemiştir.

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In this study, the rules stated in the "**Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive**" were followed.

Araştırma tek bir yazar tarafından yürütülmüştür.

The research was conducted by a single author.

Çalışma kapsamında herhangi bir kurum veya kişi ile **çakar çatışması** bulunmamaktadır.

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