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Hollywood's Vilification of Arabs and Muslims

*An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for
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Dedication

First of all, I would like to thank my precious parents “Moussa” and “Yasmina”, the source of tenderness, help and supports. Also, I’m pleased to dedicate the fruit of my efforts to the members of our family “Afaf, Nassima, Abdo, Ridha, Toufik and Ilham”, without forgetting to mention my dear friends everyone by his name, especially D.Dounia, and Ch.Houda.

Boura.Dz

Dedications

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Abstract

This research work is about the representation of Arabs and Muslims in Hollywood, through the vast majority of American cinematic production Arabs seem to be vilified in the sense that they are portrayed as savaged barbaric uncivilized Bedouins. This research work centers on *American sniper* (2014), *The Dictator* (2012), *Lost series* (2004-2010), and *The Visitor* (2007). In order to dig deep into this topic, this work is divided into two chapters. In chapter one light will be shed on the history of Hollywood misrepresentation of the Arabs and Muslims. In chapter two an analysis of the aforementioned films and series will be provided under the light of postcolonial theories in an attempt to see how Arabs are vilified, epitomized and represented

Table of contents

Dedications.....	I
Acknowledgements.....	III
Abstract.....	IV
General introduction.....	1
Chapter One: ‘Hollywood Othering’, Between Actual Representation and Vilification	
1.1 Introduction.....	6
1.2 Orientalism and the Othering of Arabs by the West.....	7
1.3 Vilification and the Creation of the Enemy in Action.....	9
1.4 Manipulating the Eyes: Seeing through Hollywood Cameras.....	14
1.5 Conclusion.....	22
Chapter Two: Implicit and explicit Representations.	
2.1 Introduction.....	25
2.2 The Non-civilized Arabs in <i>The Dictator</i> (2012).....	25
2.3 The Savage Arabs in <i>American Sniper</i> (2014).....	29
2.4 Arabs and the Killing nature in <i>Lost</i> (2004-2010).....	33
2.5 Arab Immigrants in <i>The Visitor</i> (2007).....	37
2.6 Conclusion.....	41
General Conclusion.....	43
Bibliography.....	46
Appandices.....	51

General Introduction

General Introduction

When it comes to the greatest achievements in the modernized world, we can mark Hollywood as a splendid and legendary feat that emanated from a dream, and then, from assertive exertions of wealthy people who created an entire culture for the American people; this culture was overspread far and wide so that it reached almost the whole globe. Hollywood actually, is one of the greatest film industries in the world, sited in the United States of America, Los Angeles.

It is undeniable that Hollywood has presented itself as a unipolar and incomparable force for many years in the field of filmmaking, releasing dozens of movies which had a big hit in the Box Office. Early Hollywood filmmakers seized the opportunity to enrich their presented movies to the world through reflecting American people's lives along with depicting their variably elaborate issues.

However, the idea of enriching Hollywood movies spread out of the American borders. Since the eastern world was enigmatic and mysterious to many Americans who were too much keen to be knowledgeable about this confusing world, Hollywood filmmakers displayed as a resort for those who wanted eagerly to uncover the mystery and enigma that lie behind the Oriental world, so they produced a considerable number of illustrative movies in which they depicted Arabs and Muslims in distinctive ways. This type of depiction prepared the ground for Hollywood filmmakers to take advantage of oriental characteristics for their benefits.

The portrayals of Arabs and Muslims in Hollywood illustrative movies were to a far extent distorted, and the fact about them was obliterated. Arabs and Muslims portrayed in Hollywood movies were given extravagantly negative image; they were depicted as non-civilized people who refused to escort modernization, even more, they were portrayed as

savages who were only thrilled by their lust which made them sex-thirsty, and even, from time to time, depicted as killers whom the killing takes roots in their natures.

In fact, this distortion of Easterners' images foreshadows what is so called Orientalism, which displays as a major theme in Hollywood movies. Actually, we can define Orientalism as a rationalist idea based on the self-serving history, by which the west constructs the east as extremely different and imperial, and therefore they are in need for rescue. Hence, our work is concerned with this issue as a case study, through which we are going to shed light on the representation of Arabs and Muslims in Hollywood films. The case study actually, to be analyzed, demands the post-colonial theory; the theory that aims to put an analytical sight on the Occident's wrong perceptions about the Orient.

While proceeding this research, what have been mainly observed is that actually, the representation of Arabs and Muslims in Hollywood movies is not a recent fieldwork, but rather it is deeply rooted in the western history; since westerners for a long time, had been attempting to account for their colonial desires through presenting the Orientals as boorish and churlish people. Thus, it has been undeniably noticeable that the Hollywood representation of Arabs and Muslims was mainly restricted to extravagant propagandas that influentially shaped the Occidental perceptions about the Orient. Every subject, whatever its objective may be, does not stem from nothing, nor does it come out of the blue, but it is the product or rather the synthesis of different criteria that instigate its various points and blend them into one single channel.

This research sheds light on the way Arabs and Muslims are represented. Questions like: What is the general representation of Arabs and Muslims in Western Media? What are the roots of such an image in the westerners' minds? What is the authenticity of the Islam

coverage in the western media? And many other questions are going to be dealt with under this study.

It seems that Hollywood productions represent Arabs as a bad race; it vilifies them. Apparently American film productions see Arabs as savages and barbarians. Yet, there may be examples of Hollywood films or series that represent the Arabs as cool, outgoing and good people.

This work is mainly divided into two chapters, the first chapter as a theoretical part of this extended essay, is actually devoted to discuss the way that Hollywood was able to make its own vision about the Easterners through shaping an Othering perception by which it created a falsified portrayal of the Orient. This vision actually gained a wide formula among the audiences who simply absorbed the misrepresented image of Arabs and Muslims.

On the other hand, the second chapter is going to provide an enforcing analysis of four samples that will confirm the distorted image that was given consistently to the viewer about Arabs and Muslims. The chapter as well is going to let us know to what extent Hollywood contributes in the verification of the inhabitant of the Arab land.

Chapter One

‘Hollywood Othering’,
Between Actual
Representation and Vilification

contents

Chapter One: 'Hollywood Othering' ... Between Actual Representation and Vilification

1.1 Introduction.....	11
1.2 Orientalism and the Othering of Arabs by the West.....	12
1.3 Vilification and the Creation of the Enemy in Action.....	14
1.4 Manipulating the Eyes: Seeing through Hollywood Cameras.....	18
1.5 Conclusion.....	26

Nowadays, Hollywood's motion pictures reach nearly everyone. Cinematic illusions are created, nurtured, and distributed world-wide, reaching viewers in more than 100 countries, from Iceland to Thailand. Arab images have an effect not only on international audiences, but on international movie makers as well.

Jack. G. Shaheen

1.1 Introduction

Arabs and Muslims have always been the subject of stereotypical and caricatural portrayals in Western fiction, media, and movie industries. The images of Arabs and Muslims in the cinema and more precisely in the most prominent movie industry in the world, Hollywood, have always been inexplicably negative. Hollywood has been portraying Arabs and the Muslim world according to some inherited and/or fabricated images from old travels and expeditions' accounts. Most of those accounts were often one-dimensional, subjective, and highly inspired by the White Man's burden theory. Europeans and Westerners had to justify their colonial and imperial settlements and expeditions with the noble acts of civilizing savages and the pacification of warring tribes. The majority of imperial and travel accounts asserted that people residing in the Arab world—largely believed to be the Middle East—are backward, savages, severely insensitive, and primitive.

1.2 Orientalism and the Othering of Arabs by the West

Arabs, as part of the Eastern world, have been and are continually othered by the West. In fact, the continuous process of vilification and negative portrayals has created some kind of general opinion and understanding of Arabs and Islam both in the United States and in the rest of the world. According to some sweeping generalizations, an Arab should be someone coming from the Middle East. An Arab should necessarily be a Muslim. An Arab should be either a rich sheikh with a beard and a long robe or a Bedouin roaming the deserts with his camels and flocks of sheep. An Arab should be a terrorist driven by the heavenly promise of angelic women in the afterlife and who coldheartedly kills innocent people, mainly Americans and Europeans, in the name of Islam. An Arab should also be among a group of angry men violently rioting in the streets. An Arab should be a woman in burka, completely covered in order not to sexually arouse men, often suspicious and dangerous. An Arab woman is also believed to be a maiden; a highly protected female with no will other than that of her male protectors. An Arab woman should also be a belly dancer/prostitute—often provocative and fallen. An Arab child, therefore, must grow up to fit into one of the aforementioned categories.

The Western representation of Muslims and Arabs is not a recent fabrication but it had been operational and deep-rooted in the West conceptualization ever since the first contacts with Arabs and Muslims. Down to the middle Ages, especially during the Crusade Wars and along the Arabs expansion in Europe until the very days of the Third Millennium, the West promoted almost the same stereotypes for Arabs and Muslims. Whether the contact took place in the foregone centuries or happened recently, the West preserves a persisting conceptualization of the Arabs and Muslims as alien “Others” or rather “Enemies” –both the means of communication and ascribing terminologies have

known some changes. Edward Said once noted that the West promotes a deep-rooted hatred for Islam.

The term Islam as it is used today seems to mean one simple thing, but in fact is part fiction, part ideological label, part minimal designation of a religion called Islam. Today Islam is peculiarly traumatic news in the West. During the past few years, especially since events in Iran caught European and American attention so strongly, the media have therefore covered Islam. (qtd in Ridouani 2011)

Moreover, Said argues that the westerners portrayal of wahtever has a realation with Islam and Muslims is a misleading representation that is not necessarily true;

They have portrayed it, characterized it, analyzed it, given instant courses on it, and consequently they have made it known. But this coverage is misleadingly full, and a great deal in this energetic coverage is based on far from objective material. In many instances Islam has licensed not only patent inaccuracy, but also expressions of unrestrained ethnocentrism, cultural, and even racial hatred, deep yet paradoxically free-floating hostility. (Ibid 2011)

Hollywood promotes anti-Arab and anti-Muslim propaganda, by creating a false association between evil and Arabs and Muslims, regardless of the context of the plot, or by portraying them as the ultimate bad guys in all contexts and providing justification for

illegal, immoral and inhumane practices against them. There is a long history of this, even in apparently innocent films.

This incitement against Arabs and Muslims could have disastrous outcomes. Feelings of hate and animosity towards Arabs are translated into actions in many places around the world, not only on a political level but also socially and physically. Whether cinema reflects life or vice versa, the powerful effect it has on us is undeniable. It is pertinent to ponder the words of Malcolm X in this respect: "If you are not careful, newspapers [media] will have you hating the oppressed and loving the oppressors." (Mansour, 2015) The evidence for the truth of his words can be found without too much effort. Hollywood has a lot to answer for.

The world, borders, ideologies, and images have certainly changed since the periods of expeditions through colonial settlements to the period of the great wars and through to the modern day realities. The world nowadays is different and with the new technological advances and the massive communicative services, old stereotypes must have changed a bit. For instance, the image of savage and stupid Arabs is more or less no longer that valid. The stereotypes have changed somewhat; the belly dancer and the Bedouin no longer invade people's TV screens, however, the images of the burka, the terrorist, and Arabs as a threat have taken the lead and mere stereotyping¹ has grown into islamophobia. The vilification of Arabs, Islam, and Muslims is more apparent than ever.

1.3 Vilification and the Creation of the Enemy in Action

¹-Stereotype: A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing. (Oxford Dictionary 2016)

- Edward Said defines a stereotype as " an already pronounced evaluative judgment...an implicit programme of action..."(p 207)

Since the beginning of the Hollywood Enterprise, Arabs have been receiving a certain kind of treatment that is marked by political, cultural, and intellectual prejudices. In the early “Hollywoodian” projects the aim was to show Arabs, generally, and Middle Eastern people, specifically, as savages and as a group of people who lack any kind of intellectual and/or cultural substance. In his *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, Jack G. Shaheen documents the different injustices towards Arabs in most of the Hollywood movies, he shows how othering operates in distorting the real images of men, women and children, and debunks the “cinema’s systematic, pervasive, and unapologetic degradation and dehumanization of a people”(1). Shaheen reveals the existence of more than 900 films that invariably present a very problematic depiction of Arabs. Several of these films are as old as cinema, such as George Méliès’s *The Palace of Arabian Nights* (1905), which fosters a clichéd image of the Arab land where dancing maidens try to cheer up the bored Arab sovereign. Shaheen’s main concern is the scarcity of likeable Arab characters in Hollywood cinema in general.

Think about it. When was the last time you saw a movie depicting an Arab or an American of Arab heritage as a regular guy? Perhaps a man who works ten hours a day, comes home to a loving wife and family, plays soccer with his kids, and prays with family members at his respective mosque or church. He’s the kind of guy you’d like to have as your next door neighbor, because—well, maybe because he’s bit like you. (Shaheen 2003)

In *The Mummy* (1999), one of the films reviewed by Shaheen, a group of American archeologists and Egyptologists comes to Egypt to decipher sacred Egyptian books. The setting is undeniably that of a desert full of camels, quicksand, and of course, lustful and

greedy dumb Arabs who are definitely lacking in manners and whose way of conduct is unbearably uncivilized. In addition to the typical and stereotypical setting, the movie portrays the American archeologists as the only people with the required cognitive capacities to read and decipher, correctly, the ancient Egyptian manuscripts and inscriptions. (Shaheen, 2003)

Since its early beginnings, cinema has become a fashionable and effective tool of entertainment. Cinema, however, not only provides multifarious information but it also contributes in reshaping values, and even worse, developing, distorting, and remolding beliefs. The movies direct and orient one's feelings and thoughts and dictate to one who one "may abhor", who "may sympathize" with, who "may trust", and who "may have misgivings about". If the viewer is accustomed to see repetitively persistent and recurrent images about whatever subject, his/her judgments, decisions, and reactions will take place out of conviction because the images will be mythologized. Shaheen quotes President John Fitzgerald Kennedy who contends that: "The great enemy of truth is very often not the lie, deliberate, contrived and dishonest, but the myth, persistent, persuasive and realistic." Western movies mythologize the identity of Arabs through confining their lives in some everlasting clichés that are recognized by the Westerns viewer. "They live in mythical kingdoms of endless desert dotted with oil wells, tents, run-down mosques, palaces, goats, and camels."(Ridouani,2011)

Point of No Return (1993) *Cloak and Dagger* (1984) , *Puppet Master II* (1990), *American Samurai* (1992), *Reds* (1981), and *Power* (1986), to name but a few, are movies where producers forcefully interleave stereotypical dialogues that abusively smear the Arab identity and their ethos , though these films have nothing to do with them at all. Among all Arabs, the Libyans are allotted the portion of the lion; they are targeted as such

because in part they are Arabs and partly they are pro-Reds. *Back to the Future* (1985), *Broadcast News* (1987), and *Patriot Games* (1992) are movies where Libyans are shown committing assassination in “cold blood”, manipulating other terrorists and most extravagant stage-managing to attack USA.

Also, *The Wind and the Lion* (1975); *Under Siege* (1986); *Wanted: dead or alive* (1987); *True Lies* (1994); *Homeland* (2011-2013); *World War Z* (2013); *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (2014); and *American Sniper* (2014), are all examples of films and TV programs which contribute, directly or indirectly, to the constant vilification of Arabs and Muslims in the mainstream media. Some, such as *True Lies* and, most recently, *American Sniper* have done so openly by presenting uncivilized, violent and merciless Arab characters, which end up being killed as a part of the "happy" ending. Others have done it in a more subtle way, like *World War Z* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, for example. (Mansour,2015)

Arabs or orientals are considered to be the westerners very opposite. Whatever the westerner might be, the oriental must be their negative counterpart. An endless process of othering and binary oppositions took over; from the simple differences Edward Said mentioned in his seminal book *Orientalism*—“the oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, "different"; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, "normal."—to larger binarities and an ongoing “system of representations” that forces such images into Western consciousness. (188), he adds;

So far as the United States seems to be concerned, it is only a slight overstatement to say that Muslims and Arabs are essentially seen as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-

Moslem life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have instead is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military aggression.(Said 1998)

Orientalism is also considered as a created body of theory and practice in which a system of knowledge about the orient was, invested, created, and validated. Images and ideas about the Orient have been, in one way or another, filtered into the Western consciousness until they became some kind of conventional knowledge and recurrent generalizations. Edward Said gives the example of Gustav Flaubert's encounter with KuchukHanem—an Egyptian courtesan—and how that individual, personal, and 'singular' contact produced and influenced one of the most poignant and the most powerful stereotypes and prototypes of the oriental woman who comes forward as a very vain creature that is submissive, controllable, weak, unfeeling—does not really display any kind of strong reaction—and a woman who never speaks for herself.

Hollywood adapts, validates, and creates such crude representations of the Islamic world. That has been its primary concern and its sole perspective regarding the Arab other. Such dehumanization used to be merely cultural and biased. In fact, such injustices have always existed both in Hollywood and in other film industries around the world especially by the French and the British. Modern and present day representations, however, are driven by greater motifs and are chiefly political. Following the 9/11 attacks, the demonization of Islam and Arabs has gone wild. The images the media propagated and continues to spread are full of both implicit and explicit messages to trigger hate and anger against the Muslim world and to justify the new burden the West has to carry: the war against terrorism.

Consequently the Arab and Islamic world becomes prone to every kind of military aggression because it is widely believed to be the source of terror in the world. Every military intervention in Arab and Muslim territories is blessed and endorsed by the people's public opinion which is both lucidly and subtly shaped by Hollywood and the media.

1.4 Manipulating the Eyes: Seeing through Hollywood Cameras

Hector Rodriguez, in his "Ideology and Film Culture", compares one-sided ideologies and assertions such as "women are less rational than men" which are partly constituted by contexts of discrimination and social practices to the act of watching only a single scene from a given movie. Watching the ending, solely, would certainly enable one to follow the dialogue and perhaps what the characters are doing, but the movie would not make sense and the action would not be understood in the same manner it would have been when watching the entire movie. (264) For Rodriguez, ideologies main characteristic is often being transformed into truth-claims; this feature, however, does not make them truth-claims.

In the same article, Rodriguez invokes the ideas of Noel Carroll and Ronald de Sosa concerning the political implications of the cinema and the way they employ "paradigm scenarios that are embodied in the stories people create, disseminate, and consume." The power of these scenarios lies in the way they are linked to sets of emotions. Different paradigms in connection to ways of feeling shape the viewers' emotional attitudes. Watching a little Muslim kid trying to throw a grenade at a group of American soldiers would certainly create the belief that little Arab and/or Muslim children are raised to be terrorist; feelings of hatred and fear would penetrate the hearts of the viewer mainly when the child is shot—by an American sniper who is totally forgiven for such a defensive

act—only to be replaced by a veiled woman who must be his mother. Therefore, the biggest play movie directors focus on is the emotion triggers. They shape the viewers' emotional responses to different scenes and ingrain the desired ideologies in the stealthiest of fashions; it all goes without saying.

Marx and Engels contend that ideologies are false ideas whose deficiencies are "a product of truth-distorting social forces. Noel Carroll supports this very view that ideologies are false beliefs and argues that they uphold some kind of social domination. Most of the time ideologies are related to the creation of erroneous beliefs and assertions. Statements like "All Muslims are terrorists," and "all black men want to rape white women" and many other generalizations become "factual claims" and a "propositional content" that describe a state of affairs as being true. The validity of such assertions can often "be checked by appealing to inductively acquired evidence, or by challenging the logical consistency of their premises."(Rodriguez, 260)

According to Carroll, the cinema is always ruled by some kind of political implications. It is very important to realize that ideologies do not refer exclusively to beliefs, but also to ways of feeling, acting, and seeing. (Rodriguez,267). Laura Mulvey contends that the cinema "poses questions on the way the unconscious structures ways of seeing" (805-06) and that no matter how self-conscious Hollywood manages to be, it always falls within the restrictions of its formal *mise-en-scène* that reflect the dominant ideological paradigms of the cinema.

At first glance, the cinema would seem to be remote from the undercover world of the surreptitious observation of an unknowing and unwilling victim. What is seen on the screen is so manifestly shown. But the mass of mainstream film, and the

conventions within which it has consciously evolved, portray a hermetically sealed world which unwinds magically, indifferent to the presence of the audience, producing for them a sense of separation and playing on their voyeuristic fantasy(Mulvey806)

In the same way the cinema creates visual pleasure and manipulates ways of seeing, it creates the enemy and controls ways of feeling. The audience is presented with images, ideas, and feelings that structures and creates different emotions and beliefs surreptitiously. The audience is always left with the feeling of being in charge of their own conscious and unconscious mental processes.

According to Stuart Hall, identity² is seldom or almost never thought of as an already accomplished fact but rather as a 'production' "which is always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation." Representation and/or practices of representation implicate a position of enunciation from which writing, speech and images emanate. (222)Richard Dyer, in his book, *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations*, explains being, identity and human relations in terms of seeing: "how we are seen determines how we are treated, how we treat others is based on how we see them. How we see them comes from representation."(1)

Media representations are ideologically informed; their interpretations are usually done in different ways and according to various beliefs and perspectives. However, and especially when it comes to movie production, interpretations are most often limited within the given illustrations, images, the mises-en-scene, the scripts, and the narratives. John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* deals with the different cultural representations and mainly with

² Social identities reflect the way individuals and groups internalise established social categories within their societies, such as their cultural (or ethnic) identities, gender identities, class identities, and so on. (Zevallos, 2011)

the notions of 'voyeurism' and the 'gaze' analyzing the differences between the ways men and women are perceived and looked at in a work of art. Women appear while men act and men look while women watch themselves being looked at. According to Berger, "the ideal spectator is always assumed to be male and the images of the women are designed to flatter him."

Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak. But there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. (07)

In fact—and as far as Hollywood is concerned and whenever it comes to representations of the Arab and Muslim world—seeing is always before words. The images we see in movies speak louder than any words spoken. The ideal spectator in this case is by all means an American citizen—regardless of sex or gender—and in if some concessions are made could encompass European audience, the represented objects being others, enemies.

Every time we look at a photograph, we are aware, however slightly, of the photographer selecting that sight from an infinity of other possible sights. This is true even in the most casual family snapshot. The photographer's way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject. The painter's way of seeing is

reconstituted by the marks he makes on the canvas or paper. Yet, although every image embodies a way of seeing, our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own way of seeing. (Berger10)

Laura Mulvey equally dealt with the idea of seeing and the gaze—the male gaze—and how movie contents are viewed through the male eyes. This concept can be applied to various Hollywood movie contents on Arabs and Muslims which are portrayed and viewed through some individualized and biased eyes and therefore make the Arabs and Muslims the objects of a representation process of avid stereotyping and an explicit and implicit Othering and implantation of hatred and reproach towards these peoples. We see the world of the represented people through the director's eyes.

Edward Said's concept of Orientalism was an important touchstone to postcolonial studies as well as representation theories. He described the stereotypical discourse about the East as constructed by the West. This discourse, rather than realistically portraying Eastern "others", constructs them based upon Western anxieties and preoccupations. Said sharply critiques the Western image of the Oriental as "irrational, depraved (fallen), child-like, different", which has allowed the West to define itself as "rational, virtuous, mature, normal." The essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority. This very binary relationship can be seen to exist in imperialist thinking, thus 'Othering' is the process by which such binary divisions were created and perpetuated. The term 'Othering' is coined by GayatriChakaravortySpivak. It is "the process by which the empire can define itself against those it colonizes, excludes, and marginalize." It is "the business of creating the enemy in order that the empire might define itself by its geographical and racial others."(qtd in Ashcroft,173)

Locales, regions, geographical sectors as "Orient" and "Occident" are man-made. Therefore as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West. The two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other. (Said22)

In fact Hollywood representations operate within the same parameters of Othering and Orientalism. Arabs and Muslims are portrayed as exotic and savage inhabitants of marginal places in contrast to the civilized and enlightened Americans.

In his seminal article, "Hollywood's Muslim World", Jack, G. Shaheen, presents an overview and analysis of the manner in which the purveyors of popular culture project Muslim Arabs, the way Arab people have always received the roughest and most discriminating stereotypes, and the impact such portrayals have on individuals. According to Shaheen, Muslim Arabs have always been the subject of numberless disenchanting images and lurid stereotypes which are curtailed in lucid ways. Shaheen contends that Arabs are insidiously depicted as "alien, violent strangers, intent upon battling non-believers throughout the world" which are nothing than exaggerated and erroneous characterizations that "reflect the bias of Western reporters and image-makers than they do the realities of Muslim people in the modern world".(Shaheen, 23)

In his inquiry on the source of such depictions, Shaheen has been offered an explanation on the rationale of stereotyping by Director of Program Practices for CBS.TV in New York City, James Bareg, which states the following:

The Arab stereotype is attractive to a number of people. It is an easy thing to do. It is the thing that is going to be most readily

accepted by a large number of the audience. It is the same thing as throwing in sex and violence when an episode is slow. (Shaheen, 23)

That could be one of the motives behind the vilification of Arabs, but such stereotyping could not be simply linked to some mood-changing movies tricks and strategies. The underlying ideology goes beyond the limits of some attractive movie scenes; it impacts the people portrayed in more than one way as it spreads a falsifying portrayal and degrading representation of their culture, religion, nation, and identity.

The movie industry is said to be shaped by “local, state, national, and international political pressures, and negotiations.”(Brownell) Film and propaganda construct this kind of political ideology that impacts national identities and shapes political priorities. The so-called “screen politics” impact cultural” values as it becomes a dangerous weaponry by promoting war and political interventions in places of crisis. The silver screen is used in spreading political ideology and legitimizing military aggressions. Hollywood manipulates the audience through several tricks and strategies among which is the irresistible charm of celebrities with which a huge number of people identify. The celebrity-driven publicity is, according to Studio System Era, a very powerful means that shapes the strategies of political communication. By employing actors and actresses who are famous and loved on the international level in movies that justify the US military interference in the Middle East, brings about a more or less positive reaction on the part of the audience that trusts their favorite actors and actresses and would unconsciously side with them no matter what.

Gilles Deleuze compares cinema to philosophy in the way they both create concepts. Deleuze contends that film creates its own fluid movement instead of merely representing something. Deleuze’s books on film theory—*Cinema1: The Movement-Image*

and *Cinema2: Time Image*—propose a brand new theory on film as they foreground some essential aspects to the understanding of film philosophy. To understand film, it is pertinent to understand that “film unfolds in time, and is comprised of ever-differentiating planes of movement.” (Herzog 1) Deleuze draws on the ideas of Bergson who tends to describe the phenomenon of film as a “series of snapshots of reality.”

The camera isolates fragments of reality, erasing the nuances of transformation occurring between frames. In order to achieve movement, the film must be unwound through the projector, thus restoring the illusion of continuous motion. But the motion we perceive is not the unique movement inherent to the object filmed. The camera/projector apparatus extracts from reality an "impersonal movement," a movement which can be generalized and regulated at a precise duration, a calculable frame rate. "Such is the contrivance of the cinematograph," Bergson writes, "[a]nd such is also that of our knowledge." (7)

It is through these delicate movements in image and in time that cinema gets its huge percentage of verisimilitude³ and credibility which lead the audience to suspend all sorts of potential disbelief. Throughout the film sequence and the indefinite duration of the willing suspension of disbelief, many concepts, aspects, and ideologies get transferred and ingrained into the viewer's consciousness. Deleuze argues, however, that cinema and “natural perception” cannot be located within the same continuum. It is true to a great extent that film mechanisms make movie scenes come forward as an illusion of reality and/or real perception, but the continuous reanimation of the image corrects such illusions.

³ The appearance of being true or real (oxford dictionary, 20016)

“Cinema does not give us an image to which movement is added, it immediately gives us a movement-image. It does give us a section, but a section which is mobile, not an immobile section + abstract movement.”(qtd in Herzog 7)

1.5 Conclusion

The power of Hollywood lays in the way it links the cinematic process with the perceptual thought which generates an endless arrangement of meanings and emotions. The media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and narratives. Over the years, it has become an undeniable force that interferes within all aspect of life, culture, education, society, language, economy and, especially, politics. Visual media such as movies and TV shows are probably the most popular forms as they encompass a wide and diverse audience. Films target the hearts and minds of viewers, who tend to sympathize with characters and get caught up in the emotional abyss of the material they are presented with. The effect doesn't end when the credits roll, as people internalize the sights and sounds they have witnessed. Some studies have shown that this not only affects viewers' perceptions but also their behaviors and attitudes.

Chapter Two

Implicit and Explicit
Representations.

contents

Chapter Two: Implicit and Explicit Representations.

2.1 Introduction.....	30
2.2 The Non-civilized Arabs in <i>the Dictator</i> (2012).....	30
2.3 The Savage Arabs in <i>American Sniper</i> (2014).....	34
2.4 Arabs and the Killing nature in <i>Lost</i> (2004-2010).....	38
2.5 Arab Immigrants in <i>the Visitor</i> (2007).....	42
2.6 Conclusion.....	46

2.1 Introduction

The second chapter is concerned with the examination of some scenes within Hollywood-produced movies and a TV hit series. Starting with *The Dictator* (2012) wherein a parody of Muammar El Qaddafi and Saddam Hussein are portrayed as a comic icon providing cheap laughter, passing by the savage image of Arabs in *American Sniper* (2014) to Sayid's character in ABC series *Lost* (2004-2010) who is presented as a ruthless torturer and a natural cold-hearted killer. However, the movie *The Visitor* (2007) did some justice to Arabs and Muslims by depicting them as loving and caring people, but still could not fit to the profile of a true westerner.

2.2 The Non-civilized Arabs in *The Dictator* (2012)

The Dictator, released in May, 2012 by Larry Charles, with Sacha Cohen in the role of the dictator of the fictional Republic of Wadiya, is a film which is full of scenes and events; full of jokes and which will stick in westerners' minds from the first scene to the last one; it highlights the life of a famous character in the world, and gives that bad image of this person as a 'genocidal' monster—even for the Arabs. *The Dictator* is another Hollywood production which is full of political issues that are presented in a comic way. It presents the life of the president (Dictator) of Libya Muammar El Gaddafi and that of Iraq Saddam Hussein. According to Sherwin Adam in an interview to *The Independent* (2012), this film is one of a series of movies that are still stereotyping Arabs to the Western world; the scenes used in Hollywood movies try to portray the Arabs as ignorant, brutal, sex thirsty, and murderers. They also filmed them as evil humans that threaten the security and world peace.

At the beginning of this film, they try to give the location of a place in the middle-east, exactly in North Africa named Wadiya. In fact, it is a fake place, which was purposefully fabricated. In this place, they try to develop nuclear weapons, which are forbidden according to United Nations laws, but the president confirms to continue working on enriching the nuclear programme; his aim is just to destroy Israel as he plans to visit America in order to convince world community that there is nothing about that topic and he is just developing the nuclear programme for peaceful purposes which will only be used for medical research and clean energy (00:04:20).

In his visit to one of the biggest cities in the world, the president is followed by his women bodyguards in the way of Muammar El Gaddafi, and he is on a camel. A camel in New York City is totally abnormal; it is just a kind of a subtle message sent to the audience to catch their attention. It shows that this person does not care about where he is: he is in a civilized country but still on a camel. The objective behind this scene is to show that he is uncivilized (00:16:53). This movie also tries to give an image about the Arabs and how they are suffering in their life from their rulers and from the dictatorship and compare that with the image of the democracy and freedom in America.

Larry Charles, the film maker, gives the audience the symbol of this fictional republic; it is two swords intersecting and a star with a crescent. The star with a crescent directly attracts the attention of the audience since this country follows Islam as a religion, and the other symbol is the two swords which mean "Al jihad"¹. The language also looks like Arabic but overturned. This person with his iconic and strange beard is trying to get everything even when he participates in the Olympic Games and gets all the gold

¹ - In Arabic, the word Jihad is a noun meaning the act of "Striving, applying oneself, struggling, persevering". Is an Islamic term referring to the religious duty of Muslim to maintain the religion. Abu El Fadle, Khaled (January 23, 2007). *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*. Harper one. P 221. ISBN 978-0061189036.

medals. This shows the greed of this character. He also changes a lot of words in Wadiyan English dictionary, for instance “positive and negative” were changed to the word Aladdin.

This name, Aladdin, is an Arabic heritage name that brings the receivers to a fictional character that became famous and known in old Arabic tales. The employment of this name in this film is just for intentional purposes in order to circulate characteristics of the director on the Arabic person who still brings in his consciousness about the traditional and classical Arabic heritage, which is not commensurate with the regenerative revolution, evolution, modernity and globalization brought by the West. This appears in their way of dressing; those Arabic traditional clothes and their long beards as compared to the elegant image of the civilized American person as it is shown in this production. The hidden message behind all these signs is filming the retardation of the Arab and his barbarity as well as his Saharan origins.

It is noticed that the general framework of Wadiya is built in an isolated desert environment, and we can see that most movies which present Sahara aimed to break the image of Arabs, like in *Arabs* (1915), unlike Gotham's and New York's high building.

In addition, the director seems to emphasize a preconceived idea, as long as it is promoted by Hollywood filmmakers, which is the hostility and hatred of Arabs to Jews. This appears when the camera moves to a scene when Aladdin is enjoying killing and chopping heads of Jewish in an electronic game. Another scene tries to clarify that the Jews are peaceful people in a video game too when he opens the door and says “Shalom” which means peace or “Salam” (00:15:08). The scene does not end there; he has a weapon in his hand and starts shooting the Jews. Charles reveals the idea that the Jewish are peaceful people, unlike Arabs who are murderers and terrorists.

That former view seems clear at the end of the film when the director chooses the end with an ideological message. The film ends with the consent of the dictator to democracy, but it is not the real democracy. The democracy that he was concerned with was just descriptions of a girl with whom he fell in love. We can see that when the real Aladdin speaks in front of the United Nation; when he criticizes the politics and the ambitious policy pursued by the capitalist countries, which seek to share the oil wealth of Wadiya, he suggests real democracy as he said when he was providing some descriptions of the democracy and his eyes were focusing on his lover describing her. Who is this girl that the dictator fell in love with? She was an American girl named Zoey. At the end the audience will discover that she is a Jewish girl, as she tells him in their wedding party, and this instantly makes Aladdin angry, but he returns and hugs her again with a smile (1:28:46).

Through this final scene, the messages of the filmmaker are to show that the ideal model proportional with democracy is an American model, represented in Zoey's character, that the Jewish are peaceful people, and that the Arabs are barbarians and uncivilised.

Despite the distortion of Hollywood of the image of Islam and Arabs in the world, Arabs, nevertheless, hold a part of the responsibility. They are very late in the course and challenges of scientific knowledge; they are delinquent in the marketing of their civilization. They also lack civility when it comes to responding. Yet, what makes it worse is the terrorist movement which distorts their religion and traditions. All these help Hollywood to call them terrorists, and make out wrong identities through these movies.

2.2 The Savage Arabs in *American Sniper* (2014)

American Sniper (2014) is a War film and an adaptation of the autobiography of the most Lethal Sniper in U.S. Military History (The book talks about the experience of Chris Kyle and what he did for the United States of America), it was directed by Clint Eastwood and featuring Bradley Cooper as Kyle and released by Warner Bros.

This movie was released in the United States on December 25, 2014, titled *American Sniper*. Chris Kyle was a skilled shooter since his tender age, and then when he was an adult he wanted to be a cowboy but something happened and he joined the SEALs, a place where he could express his real talent. They called him to do his duty in Iraq war and that was his first tour.

We are in another new decade, in another time, but unfortunately Hollywood is still portraying Arabs and Muslims in the same picture; it is still giving bad images of them and vilifying them. Film producers still present them as non-human, bandits or as savages, heartless and money mad-cultural other, among other many derogatory terms (Shaheen, 9). In fact, they are trying to answer some questions like: Who are Arabs? Who are Muslims? They surely have answers for every single question, but their answers are a manipulation of the truth about these people, and these distorted images are represented in film after film from the earlier times to present day.

American Sniper is dangerous propaganda that sanitizes a mass killer & rewrites the Iraq war. While the glorification of American psycho sniper Chris Kyle on the big screen is atrocious, the movie's rewriting of the US destruction of Iraq

and racist portrayal of Arabs is worse and far more dangerous(Khalek 2015).

The movie starts with ‘Adhan’ in the midst of a war scene.This is something that is seen in all of the movies which present Arabs and Muslims. The movie starts in the first scene with a woman wearing a black “Hayek” or burka, one of the old stereotypes but in a 2014 movie.A little boy was with the woman dressed in black burka; the boy was trying to destroy some members from the American military.They are both shot by the sniper and the way the scene is delivered to the audience makes it totally fine to shoot the woman and the child and completely legitimate.This raises the question of whose life matters most.Arabs in the movie are portrayed as completely uncivilized; men, women and children are very limited within the ruins in which they live and most of them are suspected to have in one way or another some kind of relationship with terrorists (The example of the man who invited them for dinner and who had a pit full of arms under the carpet).

We can see that even in cartoon movies for instance *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, the thieves are wearing black.White and black colour of dress appears in every single Clint’s movies, so attention turns directly to who is the bad and who is the good one. In this case that effect is often literal, with the hero, the sniper Chris Kyle's opposite Mustafa who is permanently dressed in black.

Even in commerce, the film producer gave a bad image when a friend of Chris told him he got a ring from an Iraqi market and Chris was surprised because he bought it from there not from Zale², and he asked him maybe the diamond of the ring was not an original (*American Sniper 2014*). It is clearly stated that whatever is Arabian made is suspicious,

²Zale : Diamond store in Texas U.S

and that Arabs are frauds who sell unauthentic goods. In other words, if the viewer wanted to buy something from the Arab Land he might want to reconsider that.

Another scene which presents the savagery of Arabs even against other Arabs, when an old man in the film spoke with some members from U.S military and told them about a butcher's name, after that Zarquaoui's friends come to that old man and they took his son and they asked his father if he spoke with them, under pressure and putting a hand drill on the head of the little boy then he killed him in front of everyone's eyes without mercy, after that they killed the father (*American Sniper 2014*).

Safety, security, freedom and family caring appear in this production of Estwood when Chris's brother said "I'm going home", which means that there is no security in Iraq, and Chris says "Dad's proud of you", and a lot of scenes highlighting family life. Otherwise, we cannot notice in all of that and do not appear in the Arabs side, no one scene showing the audiences that even they can take care of their family too, they can stay in one table and watch news or take their family to stadium and watch a football match, the director of this movie wanted to underline that Arabs are savages, and he clarified his ideas more from scene to another.

The movie director successfully fulfilled his ideas, he made this movie just to distinguish between Arabs and the other world, and to give a bad image about the Muslims and their religion Islam when his hero said: "Look, I don't know what the Quran looks like." (00:34:34). He was successful when everyone read comments of people on Twitter, some of them said that they want to kill some Arabs, others said "Nice to see a movie where the Arabs are portrayed for who they really are....." (Twitter) Film makers today unfortunately try to link the faith of Islam religion with holy war and acts of terror, but Islam comes rather as a treatment.

A Comparison can be made between two main characters in this movie. The movie is entitled *American Sniper* who is Chris Kyle, the hero; however, there is another sniper, the Arab Mustafa who is the antihero. The American sniper is represented as someone who is clean and representable. He is a cowboy who had a rough childhood as an excuse for his violent acts. The Arab sniper, on the other hand, is a terrorist, someone who is totally uncivilized and who comes from dirty suburbs. The American sniper is shown as someone who is able to love and care for others and treat them well; his violent acts are only driven by his big love for his country and the horrible news he sees on TV. The Arab sniper, however, has no background story; we don't know anything about him except his coldhearted executions and bloody actions which lead the audience to imagine that his wife, sister, and mother might be veiled women carrying grenades beneath their burkas.

Chris Kyle who kills one hundred and sixty people, including children and women—those killed are represented as “savage and despicable evil” that deserved shooting—is considered as a war hero and an idol. The ending shows a real footage of Kyle's funeral procession and Americans standing in line mourning his death.

Some critics draw negative points of view. For instance, Matt Taibbi said that the movie turned the complicated moral questions and butchery of the Iraq war into a black and white fairy tale, without presenting the historical context (*January, 2015*). John Wight writing for Russia Today argued stated that *American Sniper* depicted the people of Iraq as a dehumanized mass of savages, which the white man was in the process of civilizing (*January, 2015*). Also Alex von Tunzelmann asserted that the film presented a simplified as usual black and white portrayal of the Iraq war (*January, 2015*). Then David Masciotra in his opinion criticized the movie and he said that it focuses on physical rather than moral courage as the ultimate manly virtue (*February, 2015*).

The movie is based on a real-life Navy Seal during the war on Iraq. It made more than \$200 million at the box office, and been nominated for six Academy Awards, including best picture and best actor. It was praised by many personalities including America's First Lady, Michelle Obama who considered the movie as a "complex and emotional depiction of the experiences of Iraq war veterans" (The White House, office of the First Lady, 2015). Many critics nevertheless regarded it as a film for "whitewashing the war, glorifying violence and inciting anti-Muslim sentiment".

2.3 Arabs and the Killing Nature in *Lost* (2004-2010)

Lost (2004-2010), an ABC series through 6 seasons –117 episodes, tells the story of the survivors of the flight 815 crash in what seemed at first as deserted Tropical Island. The survivors find themselves forced to work together in order to survive the mysteries of this Island. *Lost* co-creator, Damon Lindelof, answers the question about what was *Lost* about:

This show is about people who are metaphorically lost in their lives, who get on an airplane, and crash on an island, and become physically lost on the planet Earth. And once they are able to metaphorically find themselves in their lives again, they will be able to physically find themselves in the world again. When you look at the entire show, that's what it will look like. That's what it's always been about. (Lindelof)

Throughout its six seasons, the series consisted on eight main characters that are portrayed frequently through the show hand in hand with other secondary characters. The protagonist Jack Shepherd played by Mathew Fox; James "Sawyer" Ford a con man played

by Josh Holloway; Evangeline Lilly played the fugitive Kate Austin; Jorge Garcia portrayed the cursed lottery winner Hugo “Hurley” Reyes; the man of faith John Locke played by Terry Quinn; Naveen Andrews portrayed a former Iraqi Republican Guard communication officer; and the Korean couple Jin and Sun Kwon was portrayed by Daniel Dae Kim and Yunjin Kim respectably.

In his first appearance, SayidJarrah was shown as one of 815 passengers asking Charlie to help him make a signal fire (The Pilot, Part One). The next day he was accused by Sawyer of being a terrorist and that he was on the plane travelling as the US marshal prisoner; Sayid fought with Sawyer because he accused him of crashing the plane and when Jack pulled Sawyer away he told Sayid “the shoe fits buddy”. For Sawyer, the typical American citizen, Sayid is the perfect epitome of a terrorist. He is brown with curly long hair and speaks a foreign language; he was simply an Arab so why not a terrorist, for Sawyer. Nevertheless, Sayid played a crucial role and contributed in the survival of the group; as mentioned above he made a signal fire and kept feeding it hoping somebody sees it, and thanks to his military background with the Republican Guard he fixed the plane’s transceiver and led an expedition to a higher ground to receive a signal.

Sayid first revealed who he truly was in the ninth episode (Confidence Man), when he suspected that Sawyer was hoarding Shannon’s asthma medicine. He asked Jack to give him ten minutes with Sawyer so he could interrogate him, saying that as a part of his military training he learned how to make enemies communicate. So after all, Sayid proved Sawyer right; he jumped on him while he was napping, dragged him into the middle of the jungle, tortured him badly and almost got him killed. He later learned Sawyer was innocent and he banished himself away from the beach searching for redemption. (Confidence Man)

In his first centric episode (Solitary), more was revealed about Sayid's character. After what he did to Sawyer, Sayid took off and left the beach because he could no longer stay as he stated to Kate by the end of the episode “ what I did today, what I almost did, I swore never to do again. If I can’t keep that promise, I have no right to be here.” (Confidence Man)

Through a series of flashbacks, light is shed on his time with the Republican guard. Sayid was a cold hearted torturer; he knew the truth about his suspect, but he didn’t stop beating him since he was looking for a confession “I assure you we already know the truth, but I want you to admit it” (Solitary). He even got promoted and reassigned to intelligence division due to his capacities as described by his commander officer.

In one of his missions, Sayid had to extract information from a woman called Nadia about a bomb put by one of the Shiite's insurgent group. Sayid knew Nadia from his youth and had feelings for her - they were separated later on until they met in that mission. Yet, Sayid did what he had to and tortured Nadia for information. He even begged her to point at one of the two suspects pictures. However, Nadia did not cooperate, thus, Omar the commander officer ordered her death telling Sayid that he had to do it.

Sayid, eventually, instead of killing Nadia, helps her escape and kills two guards besides his commander officer then he shoots himself and gives her the gun begging her to run. She asks him to escape with her but he refused because they would kill his family for his desertion. The viewer sees Sayid at the opening scene holding a photo of a woman written on the back of it in Arabic, and it is only later that the viewer realizes that she was Sayid's love—his beloved whom he tortured and made, literary, suffer without sympathy. If it were for any other American action hero he would abandon his position, run away

with his love, and kill anyone who comes on his way, but this is Sayid the faithful loyal Iraqi soldier who cannot just do that.

All along the six seasons of the ABC hit show *Lost*, Sayid has been vital for the surviving of his friends on the Island as well as off it. Yet, his character was still capable of brutal things no one else could do.

Benjamin Linus, named Ben, made his appearance in the last episodes of the second season and forward. His intelligence helped him along to be unnoticeably deceiving and manipulating. In the fourth season, since he knew that Sayid was a well-trained soldier and adapted to environmental wars, he dragged him to one of his manipulating traps. In the flash forwards, Sayid was compelled to murder people on a list Ben gave him; convinced that they were behind the murdering of Nadia, his intimate love, he killed every single one of them coldheartedly. After Sayid accomplished his mission, Ben just turned his back on him saying that they were done killing. Benjamin Linus, of all the other Characters, persuaded Sayid to kill for him because simply put killing and torturing were in Sayid's nature "every choice you've ever made in your life whether it was to murder or to torture it hasn't really been a choice at all, has it? It's in your nature. It's what you are. You're a killer, Sayid." (Ben Linus, "He's Our You")

Moreover, in the sixth season's flash sideways, Sayid was pushed by his brother to kill for him in order to solve his problems with people he owes money to; "you were an interrogator for the Republican guard. I know what kind of man you are" (Omer Jarrah, Sundown). Sayid has always been weak when it came to his beloved Nadia, so his brother, who married Nadia after he pushed her towards him because he thought he did not deserve

her, asked him to do it for Nadia and the kids so they would be safe. Yet, that did not stop him from describing him as a man who can do anything.

Michael Dawson, another character from *Lost*, shot two of his innocent friends; Sawyer killed an innocent man in Australia one night before he takes off on Oceanic 815; Kate Austen blew her mother's house while her step dad is sleeping inside; John Locke persuaded Sawyer to kill his own father; Ben Linus killed his own daughter with his wrong decisions, yet, none of them was described as being a natural killer or someone who was born to kill. It has always been justified for them to kill; Michael Killed Anna Lucia and Libby because he had to do that to save his kidnapped child; Sawyer killed that man avenging his parents death; Kate had to kill her step father because she could not tolerate his way of treating her mother; and Locke killed his father because he was the reason behind his miserable life. So, it is all justified except for Sayid the Arab guy who even if he killed for the sake of avenging his beloved Nadia's death he is still a natural born murderer and a gifted torturer.

2.4 Arab Immigrants in *The Visitor*(2007)

The visitor (2008) starring: Richard Jenkins, as Walter Vlae, HaazSleiman in the role of the Syrian Tarek Khalil with DanaiGuirira as his beloved Senegalese girlfriend, and Hiam Abbas portrayin Mona Khalil; Tarek's mother. Written and directed by Tom McCarthy

The film tells the story of the widowed university professor Walter Vale who lives a lonely boring life in Connecticut. He teaches only one class at the local college and despite not having the necessary talent Walter still takes classes in piano to feel connected with his deceased pianist wife.

On a business trip to attend a conference about global policy and development in New York University, where Walter was going to give a lecture about a paper on which he is co-author. When he arrives to his apartment in New York he finds Tarek Khalil, a Syrian djembe player, and his girlfriend Zaineb, the Senegalese ethnic jewelry designer, living there. He asks them to leave at first then he sympathizes with the couple, and invites them to stay with him until they find a place where to settle. Although Zaineb was annoyed by the idea of living at Walter's, Tarek, however, was cool about it. Moreover, he draws Walter into his life through their shared love of music, he starts teaching him how to drum. Their relationship grew genuinely in no time, and Tarek's vivid spirit reawakens life in Walter's heart. Nonetheless, a misunderstanding on the subway leads to Tarek's arrest and it comes out that Tarek and Zaineb are illegal immigrants, which leads to Tarek's detention in Queens's centre of illegal immigrants.

Walter did not give up hope on his friend; he hired an immigration lawyer for him and took care of his mother, Mona, who came to New York from Michigan unexpectedly because she has not heard from her son in days. Eventually, Tarek was deported and sent back to Syria; Mona leaves the US back to Syria in order to take care of her son; and Walter, through his experience, re-enters life and finds reasons to feel it exciting and worth living again.

After many Hollywoodian productions that dehumanize the Arabs and those of Middle Eastern and African origins, here is a film that shows the Arab man as a cool, vivid and enjoyable character.

Tarek was portrayed in *The Visitor* as a good looking, trustworthy, and a loving young man; a talented drummer who loves and cherishes his mother, his girlfriend and his

friends. Tarek, moreover, is not that lustful wealthy Arab guy who is chasing after the hot blonde American girl. Though she is a Senegalese, and a “very black woman” as described by Mona (01:03:23), Tarek is madly in love with Zaineab, and has eyes only for her. Nevertheless, he has some flaws especially being late on his dates by an hour, which he describes to Walter: “all Arabs are late by an hour, it’s genetic we can’t help it.”(01:43:40). He also drinks alcohol occasionally which makes him a bad Muslim; whereas Zaineab refused Walter’s wine saying that she does not drink, Tarek accepted the offer happily stating that Zaineab is a good Muslim while he is a bad one (00:20:58).

The Muslim woman was epitomised in *The Visitor* by two main characters. First, Zaineab, the kind and extraordinarily beautiful Senegalese, she is an unprecedented Muslim woman on the silver screen; a non-Arab Muslim who works and makes amazing jewelry. Tom McCarthy, the film director, sent a hidden message through Zaineab’s character from which the viewer understands that a Muslim is not necessarily an Arab. In other words, Islam is a religion not a race.

Moreover, by making her Tarek’s lover, the director made it clear that Muslim people see the beauty as well in the darkest place which is not the case in the majority of Hollywood productions that depict Arabs and Muslims as wealthy lustful sheikhs, as explained by Edward Said “the perverted sheikh can often be seen snarling at the captured western hero and blonde girl...[and saying] ‘My men are going to kill you, but they like to amuse themselves before.’” (Orientalism, 125). Moreover, Islam never separates people because of their skin color or race as it is maintained by the Prophet, peace be upon him, said “there is no virtue of an Arab over a foreigner nor a foreigner over an Arab, and neither white skin over a black skin nor a black skin over a white skin, except by righteousness” (musnad Ahmad 22978).

Second, Mona, Tarek's Mother is a beautiful mid age Syrian immigrant. She is a kind, loving and passionate. Though not much is revealed about her character, it is clear that Mona was portrayed as a good Arab-Muslim woman. It is revealed later that her journalist husband died following a lengthy political-motivated imprisonment in Syria, which led her to leave the country seeking a better life for her and her beloved son Tarek.

The Visitor portrayed a new kind of Muslims and Arabs: Tarek, Zaineb, and Mona are charismatic persons gathered by fate, separated by circumstances. Tarek and Zaineb are simple nice young couple, and Mona is a mother whose main concern is the well being of her son. The producers wanted to say that not all Arabs and Muslims are necessarily bad people or terrorists; they can love, smile, laugh, and be good citizens. However, they are not good enough for the USA. Actually, all immigrants are not welcome to the States since all those who were in detention with Tarek were deported. The film could have ended in a more happy way; the immigration lawyer would have succeeded his defense, Tarek reunites with his family, and Walter and Mona's relationship develops to a love story for two broken hearted who found their mates.

Here representations and stereotypes are no longer followed, the director breaks the norms in his characterization yet there is no acceptance by the American society. Lovely Arabs are welcome only for a short period, then everyone needs to go back to his home country; immigrants - and here Arabs in particular - are good, but not good enough to live in the USA.

2.5 Conclusion

It must be said that the above mentioned samples are a very small example of what the real situation is. For more than a century, Arabs and Muslims have been stereotyped and bad represented through Hollywood lenses, and through this diminishing repetition the viewer develop a prejudice about the Middle Easterners and North Africans; barbaric uncivilized creatures. Hence, invading Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, or Syria is justified for the westerner since they are bringing the light of civilization to the darkest region.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The vilification of Islam and Muslims has always been one of Hollywood's major productions. Recent movies are no different. The vilification is always there, though it is claimed that what is interpreted as a stereotyping is nothing but a mere innocent portraying. However, the representation of Muslims and Arab Muslims is as stereotypical and islamophobic as ever and its powerful effects on shaping the public opinion about the Orientals are undeniable.

This study argues that Hollywood is not intending to end its undeclared war on the Arabs, nor to cease diminishing and stereotyping them. It has become a tradition for the industry to release major productions that portray Arabs, in one way or another, as savage barbaric non civilized people. Moreover, Hollywood's perception of the Arab land does not seem to change; it has always been presented as an extremely hot Saharan region inhabited by disgusting Bedouins. Even when portraying Dubai in *Mission impossible: Ghost protocol* (2012), the producers made sure to add an unnecessary sand storm scene to remind the viewer that no matter how fancy, stylish, glorious and developed Dubai is, it is still an Arab land and it shall forever remain a third world city which cannot compete with the high standards of other great cities as New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles.

Actually Arabs and Muslims are portrayed as exotic and savage inhabitants of marginal places in contrast to the civilized and enlightened Americans. This insidious depiction is like throwing a nude scene whenever the show is running slow; it is the easiest effective way of raising the viewers' number and insuring more revenue. Simply put, there is no protesting against the misrepresentation of Arabs and Muslims and it seems accepted by the vast majority of the viewers. This not only affects viewers' perceptions but also their behaviors and attitudes. Such portrayals justify all the killing and massacres against the

Muslims taking place in the Middle East, Burma, Chechnya, and Afghanistan or any place on earth, which calls for a serious protest against such action. It is high time the Arabs did something about this, allegedly true, common stereotyping; developing a strong Arabic cinema that gives a true depiction of what the Arabs really are. They should develop a cultural awareness about who they really are, are they what Hollywood claims? Or they are something else the globe needs to see?

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Appendices

AMERICAN SNIPER

THE MOST LETHAL SNIPER IN U.S. HISTORY





LOST

the Visitor

Connection is everything.



The Dictator

Sacha Baron Cohen

