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**Vilification of the Other - the Portrayal of Arabs in  
Hollywood: A Critical Analysis of *True Lies* and *The Siege***

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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## Dedication

I dedicate this work to my grandfather, dear father and my great mother,

To my brothers and my support in this world, Mouhieddine , Mouhammed, Hichem, Said,  
and Amir

To the dearest aunts in the world and to my little aunt who is a sister, a friend, and more  
than that, Soumia.

To all my friends, and to everyone who supported me in my academic career

*Chaima*

I dedicate this work to:

My dear father, who lives in my heart.

My beloved mother, may heaven be her eternal home.

To the one who was always the first to stand by me and encourage me, my husband.

To my strength, my support, and my safe haven, my beloved siblings.

To my beloved ones Firdaws, Yaman, and Wijdan.

To my dear friends Safa and Amina for their efforts and sincerity with me.

*Tharwa*

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## Abstract

This study examines stereotypical portrayals of Arabs in Hollywood films namely *The Siege* (1998) and *True Lies* (1994). It aims to deconstruct Orientalist cliché tropes from the above mentioned films; to explain how such portrayals increase Islamophobia ; and to explore Arab cinema counter-narratives challenging these stereotypes. This research employs qualitative critical analysis through the use of postcolonial theory and critical discourse analysis to examine how *The Siege* and *True Lies* portray Arab identities as stereotypes. The study indicates that *The Siege* represents Arab-Americans as security threats, calling for martial law and racial profiling, and anticipating post 9/11 policies and *True Lies* stereotypes Arab identities and represents terrorists as absurd, dismissing Arab culture. The study concludes that Hollywood representations spur real Islamophobia, whereas Arab stories create possibilities for genuine representation.

**Keywords:** Arab cinema, Islamophobia, Media stereotypes, Orientalism, Postcolonialism, Representation.

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# General Introduction

## 1. Background of the Study

Hollywood films have operated as a cultural apparatus for many years. They validate social standards through their clichéd portrayals of Arab selves. Since the early 1900s, Arab characters have often been depicted as one-dimensional stereotypes, such as villains, materialistic sheikhs obsessed with oil, and oppressed women. These representations reached a peak in 1990s films like *True Lies* and *The Siege*. These movies combine action and thriller features with racially stimulating narratives, fueling terror of Arab terrorism and clashes between civilizations.

Hollywood's representation of Arabs cannot be divorced from the geopolitical tensions of the 20th century. During the Cold War, Arab characters tended to be represented as Soviet friends or unstable surrogates, reflecting US foreign policy anxieties (McAlister, 2005). The 1973 oil crisis firmly entrenched the greedy sheikh stereotype, and the 1990-1991 Gulf War consolidated the Arab terrorist trope, whereby the Middle Eastern villains of *True Lies* (1994) were presented as nuclear extremist villains (Alsultany, 2012).

These images were not merely aesthetic choices but solidified state narratives, justifying intervention and surveillance. By the post 9/11 era, films like *The Siege* (1998) foretold in ominous ways actual policies, such as the Patriot Act, by likewise fictionalizing Arab-Americans as sleeper agents requiring mass internment a testament to Hollywood's skill in pre-conditioning popular acceptance of stringent measures (Naber, 2008).

These images are based on Orientalist rhetoric (Said, 1978), reducing Arab identities into ahistorical threats or foreign abnormalities. Hollywood deployment of dualities civilized versus

barbaric, modern versus behind imitates colonial ideologies, reinforcing Shohat and Stam (2014) cultural apartheid in global media.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Hollywood portrayal of Arab identity is constantly linked to dehumanizing stereotypes terrorists, oil sheikhs, and oppressed women grounded in Orientalist narratives conflating Arabness and irrationality threat. *The Siege* (1998) and *True Lies* (1994) intensify the tropes through narrative, visual, and auditory means, making anti-Arab racism natural and xenophobic agendas are acceptable. Despite such criticisms, few studies take into account how film aesthetics support ideological content or contrast them with Arab led counter narratives. This research fills examines how such films support perilous stereotypes, their sociopolitical implications, and the imperative necessity of equitable representation in media.

## **3. Literature Review**

Jack Shaheen's seminal work *Reel Bad Arab* (2001) provides a comprehensive critique of the way Arabs are depicted in Hollywood, identifying the repeated images such as terrorists, oil sheikhs, and oppressed women. His analysis of over 900 movies demonstrates the way these images dehumanize Arab identity and perpetuate Orientalist stereotypes. Shaheen argues that these images are not an unbiased entertainment but a rationale for political intentions and military action. His work provides a basis for comprehending the historical ubiquity ( of anti-Arab stereotypes within Hollywood.

In *Arabs And Muslims In Media Race and Representation After 9/11* (2012) , Evelyn Alsultany examines the post 9/11 media landscape and how Hollywood films and news media perpetuate the good Muslim vs. bad Muslim paradigm. Her work reveals how even ostensibly

sympathetic portrayals work towards legitimating surveillance and militarization by positioning Arab identities into fixed, state-endorsed narratives. Alsultany's critique of *The Siege* identifies its role in racially profiling and interning, thus making her book significant in unearthing the ideological role of such films in mobilizing popular aid for oppressive measures.

Ella Shohat and Robert Stam are critical of Hollywood's Eurocentric films for excluding non-Western perspectives. Their work, *Unthinking Eurocentrism Multiculturalism and the Media* (1994), appeals to the industry to depart from stereotypes and adopt polycentric modes of representation. By examining films like *Theeb* and *Wadjda*, they demonstrate how counter-narratives can disrupt Hollywood hegemony. Their work is complementary to the current study's focus on the potential of Arab cinema in disrupting dominant stereotypes and offering more authentic representations of Arab identities.

While earlier scholars have extensively criticized Hollywood's stereotypical portrayals of Arabs, not much work has extensively examined how movies like *The Siege* (1998) and *True Lies* (1994) became blueprints for post 9/11 Islamophobic policy, particularly on linking film narratives to real-life surveillance and militarization. Furthermore, while counter-narratives within Arab cinema such as *Ramy* and *Theeb* have been studied, none have yet considered their material impact in challenging Hollywood hegemony such as audience reception studies or industry-wide representation changes. Furthermore, with the exception of a handful, all such studies consider binary East/West relations and not intra-Arab diversity such as differences between Levantine, Gulf, or North African representation and how Hollywood homogenization blurs these varieties. This study bridges these gaps by linking text analysis with policy relevance and foregrounding excluded voices in the debate about representation.

#### **4. Research Objectives**

This study aims to critically analyze the portrayals of Arab stereotypes in Hollywood films, *The Siege* (1998) and *True Lies* (1994) employing postcolonial theory and critical discourse analysis with the aim of first analyzing repetitive stereotypes and their alignment with Orientalist discourses. It analyzes the ideological ramifications of these representations on public opinion and policy discourses, and thirdly analyzing counter narratives in Arab cinema combating Hollywood's reductionist tropes.

#### **5. Research Questions**

1. How do *True Lies* and *The Siege* apply the Orientalist tropes to portray Arabs identities?
2. How do these films legitimize violence and Islamophobia policies after 9/11?
3. How do the counter narratives in the Arabs cinema challenge Hollywood 's stereotypical portrayal?

#### **6. Significance of the Study**

The research critically examines Hollywood dehumanizing of Arab stereotypes in film of *The Siege* and *True Lies*, Exposing their alignment with Orientalist discourse and their practical implications on Islamophobia and Xenophobic policies. The study advocates for equitable media representation, urging Hollywood to prioritize authentic storytelling. The work adds to media scholarship, inspires critical media literacy, and underscores cinema role in shaping global power dynamics and social justice.

## **7. Research Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research approach based on critical media studies and incorporating theories including; postcolonial, critical discourse analysis CDA and stereotype theory, to investigate the representation of Arab identities in Hollywood films. The lens of Edward Said's Orientalism (1978) is the foundational tool through which we analyze specific techniques by which these films present Arabs as irrational, exotic, or alien others. Furthermore, Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model and theory of stereotypes are used as tools to explore the process by which media naturalizes racial hierarchies. Also, the study applied Michel Foucault theory to analyze linguistic, visual, and narrative strategies such as, cinematography and genre conventions that perpetuate power relations. Data collection involves close analysis of the films scenes that best embody orientalist tropes.

## **8. The Structure of the Study**

The study is divided into two chapters, the first chapter titled Theoretical Framework: The Vilification of the "Other" in Hollywood; This chapter set the theory for studying how Hollywood portrays Arab identities through Othering, stereotypes. It frames Othering as portraying marginalized communities as radically different and inferior and links it to Edward Said's work on Orientalism. The chapter explores Hollywood's role in perpetuating stereotypes like the "Arab terrorist" and "oppressed woman" through critical discourse analysis. It talks about how media can perpetuate Islamophobia and indicates that films such as *The Siege* and *True Lies* provide perspectives and spoke about the need for Arab voices in film.

The second chapter is under the title The Portrayal of Arabs in *The Siege* and *True Lies*: Analytical Study; this study examines the representation of Arab figure in *The Siege* (1998) and

*True Lies* (1994). It shows how Hollywood perpetuates harmful stereotypes through Orientalist theory and media studies. Arab identities become one threat figure in *The Siege*, while stereotypical Arab villains and fetishized women appear in *True Lies*. The chapter shows how these representations resonate with social issues and assist in actualizing prejudice and demands more realistic and empathetic representation of Arabs.

## **CHAPTER ONE:**

# **Theoretical Framework: The Vilification of the 'Other' in Hollywood**

## **Chapter One: Theoretical Framework: The Vilification of the 'Other' in Hollywood**

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## **Introduction**

Hollywood portrays the marginalized groups and correspondingly shapes societal perceptions through its representation. Thus, this chapter examines the theoretical foundations of Othering in media. The present chapter focuses on Hollywood's representation of Arabs. It depends on postcolonial theory, stereotype theory, and critical discourse analysis to investigate the subject matter. Further, it explores how cinematic narratives construct and reinforce of negative stereotypes. Accordingly, the chapter highlights the mechanisms of these portrayals and their broader implications. Furthermore, it investigates the impact of such representations on public perception and sociopolitical discourse. This chapter seeks to uncover how Hollywood perpetuates Othering while also considering emerging counter-narratives that challenge dominant stereotypes.

### **1.1 The Concept of Othering in Media Representation**

Based on Lippmann's (1922) original theory of 'pictures in our heads', stereotype theory describes how media simplifies multifaceted identities into simple stereotypes, exaggerating antipathy to produce cultural myths (Dyer, 1993). Hollywood's depiction of Arabs demonstrates this dynamic in the Orientalist stereotype of oil sheikhs, terrorists, and oppressed women which play out to flatten diversity under a homogenous narrative for the powers over it (Said, 1978). These clichés help to naturalize power relations, and constitute ideological work, in the sense of shaping perceptions as well as policy (Hall, 1997).

### 1.1.1 Defining "Othering"

Othering is the socio-cultural and psychological process by which individuals or collectives are constructed as being radically different and inferior from a dominant social identity (de Spivak, 1988).

Within the field of media studies, it is the discursive strategy of Othering that reduces complicated identities into simple stereotypes to legitimize their exclusion or domination (Sides & Gross, 2013). For example the media display marginalized groups, such as Arabs or Muslims or migrants, as the sort of threat to social order or national security, or to cultural homogeneity (Shaheen, 2001). The Other is thus made less than human: and he/she is further shown to have naturalized hegemony by so doing, since a perspective that views majority viewpoints as the standard, or as universal, makes it so (Dervin, 2016).

"Othering" has become a buzzword in academic circles mainly through Edward Said's foundational critique of how Western discourses construct Eastern cultures as irrational, exotic, and backwards thereby legitimizing colonial domination. According to Said, the "Orient" was fabricated through a "contrasted image, idea, personality, [and] experience" of Europe (1978, p. 2). Also, they would inherit the Hollywood legacy that sustained these Arabs as terrorists, tyrants, or hypersexualized figures (Alsultany, 2012).

Media depictions of the Other do not merely reflect existing societal exigencies; they also constitute a major force in forming and reshaping the social consciousness. Precisely put, as a system of representation, media propagate dominant ideologies and specify who belongs to the "imagined community" of the nation and who remains excluded (Hall, 1997, p. 17). With such recurring portrayals, ultimately public support for racial profiling, surveillance, or military

intervention gets legitimized in the view of the terrorists, the association of dehumanized identities with terrorism, for instance, in movies like *True Lies* where Arabs are repeatedly shown as violent extremists (Sides & Gross, 2013).

Ultimately, Othering in the media is a type of symbolic violence that engenders and reaffirms systemic inequities by denying marginalized groups their complexity and agency, and even, in some cases, humanity (Bourdieu, 1991). Hollywood always provides a signal through which it asserts to have shaped the aspirational lifestyle of the West-one, from which Arabs are shown to be excluded or oppositional. Rather than providing good or bad visibility or integration for Arab characters in complex narratives or positions of power, Hollywood usually depicts Arabs in uncomplicated villainous roles (Maira, 2009). Thus, besides reflecting power structures, Hollywood is also an active participant in reproducing them by culturally marginalizing Arab and Muslim communities.

### **1.1.2 The Role of Hollywood in Shaping Perceptions**

Hollywood has, since its inception, shared the dual role of a mirror of societal values reflecting into the great unconscious collection and vice versa, an effective instrument in molding public perceptions. It thus plays a vital role in reinforcing ideological "truths" on issues concerning the representation of marginalized groups (Hall, 1997). This section will examine the double face of Hollywood being the cultural narrator and, for avail, a part of the ideological state apparatus to construct and distribute the dominant narrative. In particular, the focus will be on how Hollywood has consistently negatively portrayed the Arab as the Other through simple and often belittling stereotypes that contribute to a much wider pattern of cultural exclusion and symbolic domination.

Through its films, Hollywood has played an important role in the formation of a national identity within the United States, forever situating Western values at the core of inevitability while framing cultures other than Western, in particular, Arab and Muslim, as oppositional or threatening. Early depictions in film such as *The Sheik* (1921) exoticized Arab men as hypersexualized, predatory desert beings, constructing the Arab world as alluring, yet dangerous, terrorism and sexual peril (Shaheen, 2001). These creations were not in themselves neutral entertainments but were the echo and reinforcement of colonial ideologies that validated the Western intervention on Middle East (McAlister, 2005).

In the World War II aftermath, the stories that Hollywood would tell were increasingly in keeping with United States interest in foreign policy. During the Cold War, most Arabs portrayed in Hollywood seem to be the evildoers or Soviet sympathizers, implying an essential East-West binary in Protocol, among others, the novel by *George Orwell 1984*. Alsultany claims that the beginning of the 90s, especially after the Gulf War, proved the standardization of the Arab terrorist character as irrational, fanatical, and often nuclear weaponized in making the American militarism more acceptable in films like *True Lies* (1994) ( Alsultany, 2012). And, then layered atop all of these was the mainstream news media, which almost always securitized a story about conflict involving a state in the Middle East. Then, thus building on one another, they created a feedback loop with the Arab identity and terrorism to the American public imagination , while the above has been written by (1971) under the concept of Ideological State Apparatus that introduced by Althusser, is proved to be most fruitful model in analyzing Hollywood's role as an ISA through which dominant ideologies are disseminated. Thus Hollywood, as a cultural ISA, works for ideological control by naturalizing hegemonic values and beliefs.

Hall (1997) describes the politics of representation and explains the way in which power relations inform cultural representations in the mainstream media. This paradigm is perhaps most visible in a Hollywood that has consistently generated needlessly reductive narratives of simplistic cultural identity carved out of the raw material of stereotype. Two key exemplars that epitomize this trend are *Lawrence of Arabia* (David Lean, 1962) and *Not Without My Daughter* (Brian Gilbert, 1991). The first builds an Orientalist fairy tale that locates Arab societies as exotic locales for white savior narratives and the other recycles Islamophobic tropes with the idea that all Iranian culture is by definition oppressive. These films epitomize what Hall (1997) refers to as the "circuit of culture" where dominant ideologies are naturalized through countless media repetitions. These images not only mirror already existing prejudices, they contribute towards their manufacturing and dissemination, thus further revealing that cinematic practices support the consolidation of hegemonic values. The continued presence of these extensions of racist stereotypes compels scrutiny of Hollywood's storytelling machinery and the ideologies it supports. This, in fact, includes such tropes as the white savior and demonizing the Arab maternal figure. Ayalon and Orit from film *Nefarious* live on this myth of Arab cultural monoliths, smearing into two-dimensional stereotypes rich and diverse identities. Thus, Hollywood is given to what Said (1978) depicts as a "closed system" of Orientalist knowledge, where other voices are excluded or silenced. This reflects Antonio Gramsci's (1971) cultural hegemony theory, where the dominant grip their power not through coercion, but in manufacturing consent through cultural institutions such as the media.

It is not only symbolic that the stakes of Hollywood's ideological framing are material; they are actually material. Within the post 9/11 context, such films as *The Siege* (1998), released three

years before the attacks, eerily foresaw public consolidation around broad national security policies such as the Patriot Act and *Guantánamo Bay* (Alsultany, 2012).

Portraying Arab-Americans as inherently untrustworthy or complicit in terrorism places Hollywood narratives within the framework of civil liberties, inviting people to consent to their erosion in the name of national security (Naber, 2008). *True Lies* (1994) not only sanctioned U.S. militarism in the Middle East but turned it into ridicule, glorifying drone strikes and extrajudicial violence as heroism (Shaheen, 2012).

The theoretical groundwork behind these representations can be traced to Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). Said argues that what passes for objective knowledge about the East is, in fact, a realized discourse, one that is a system of images and narratives which reassure Western superiority while providing them a justification for their imperial dominance. For Said, orientalism operates as a "system of knowledge" (p. 3) that flattens diverse Eastern societies into caricatures of exoticism, irrationality, and cultural stagnation.

In this regard, orientalism is one of the primary cultural tools that have aided in reinforcing these orientalist tropes. *True Lies* (1994) exemplifies this notion in which it depicts Muslims in one stroke as monolithic, hyper-violent zealots utterly obsessed with nuclear terror. Indeed, in Said's words, this negative representation is a style "for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (1978, p. 3). These characters, bereft of individual depth or agency, function as representatives of an imagined "Muslim threat" that legitimizes American military interventions and serves to prop up Islamophobic logics (Alsultany, 2012). Like *The Siege* (1998), these films are not simply reflections of dominant ideologies; rather they actively reproduce them,

rendering the cinematic entertainment world into an ideological arena that shapes public perception, legitimates state violence, and reifies global hierarchies.

## **1.2 Theoretical Approaches to Media Representation**

### **1.2.1 Postcolonial Theory and Orientalism**

Los Angeles myths & Reality have, in a sense, operationalized their orientalist logic in the role of Arab-Americans as being fifth column-A by putting them politically, within America's body politic as though they were sleeper agents, thus mirroring colonial era anxieties towards the "enemy within" (Mamdani, 2004).

### **1.2.2. The West vs. East Binary in Film Arcs**

The Arab societies have always been represented as innately uncivilized, irrational, and chaotic, while the societies of the West have always been positivistic as representing rationality, modernity, and moral authority. This is what Said's *Orientalism* (1978) identifies as central to the discursive domination of the West over the East later conceptualized as "Eurocentric universalism" (Shohat and Stam, 2014 with respect to naturalizing Western cultural and political values as global norms).

### **1.2.3 Stereotype Theory and Media Representation**

Stereotyping as a cognitive activity The term "stereotype" refers to a psychological maneuver that allows them take large heterogeneous social realities and reflect them into neat little mental boxes, or as *Walter Lippmann* (1922) describes it, the "pictures in our heads" that mediate our perception of the world. Hence, when these mental structures become deposited in media representations, they gain concomitant cultural purchase and social weight (Hall, 1997). The

discursive devices used by mass media work to camouflage the stereotypical images, that in turn are slowly built up through a process of normalization. When they are constantly repeated on different media, they change in the collective perception from generalizations to the condition for the cultural dominant accepted as good coin. This is a process, cultural theorists call the feedback loop of media representations shape public perception and that perception demands more of the same familiar tropes, producing a cycle of stereotype amplifier. The net result of this is for the original constructed media images of these groups to become facts which audiences unthinkingly take for granted. This wizardry happens through a few ways: coded language becomes naturalized when it's reported in news, stereotypes become rote when seen in entertainment, and social stories get selectively framed on different media. With time, their very pervasiveness makes these representations seem more real, and therefore, ever harder to combat, whatever the empirical fact or, indeed, the lived experience. Its power comes not from a single piece of representation but rather from the accumulative impact of endless repetitions across various sites of cultural production, such that they are taken up into society's implicit understanding of particular communities and identities. Barthes (1972) calls mythologies, naturalized representations that become fact like constructs and lose their ideological character.

As part of Hollywood's discourse on Arab identity, this process of stereotyping will be utilized to articulate through what *Edward Said* (1978) labelled Orientalist discourse, whereby a civilizational complex is distilled to a restrictive set of dehumanising topoi. As documented by Shaheen (2001), Arab stereotypes are overwhelmingly limited to three main types: the greedy oil sheikh which reflects on capitalist vices, the fanatical terrorists which reflects on irrational brutality, and the submissive veiled woman which reflects on cultural backwardness. The stereotype as a construct work through what *Homi Bhabha* (1994) calls colonial discourse's 'fixity',

the freezing of subaltern groups into timeless, unchanging identities of service to dominant interests.

The ideological effects of these stereotypes operate at several levels: cognitively they produce reductive character cut-outs that are easy to understand; emotionally, in which they elicit feelings of fear, contempt, or pity; or politically, as they justify specific foreign policies and domestic security practices (*Alsultany*, 2012). As *Stuart Hall* (1997) has made clear, that media stereotypes do not merely reflect sociopolitical relations, rather they actually construct them in and through regimes of representation.

This perspective shows how media stereotypes do not work as neutral simplifications of reality, but rather as powerful ideological agents by which individual thinking and collective imaginaries are moulded.

#### **1.2.4 The Encoding/Decoding Model of Media Reception**

The convergence of *Walter Lippmann's* (1922) understanding of stereotypes as “pictures in our heads” and *Stuart Hall's* (1980) encoding/decoding model, suggests that Hollywood is a Janus figure, a mirror of social anxiety and a mould adopted/image thereof representing common beliefs and values. *Richard Dyer* (2013) notes that stereotypes produce precise definitions of reality, and with them related values, and therefore can be seen as shorthand for ideology that makes power relations appear natural. This synthesis is dramatically enacted in *True Lies* (1994) and *The Siege* (1998), through which Arab identities are inscribed by means of three interrelated instruments:

In fact, Arab and Muslim audiences may resist the dominant codes in these films. *Lila Abu-Lughod* (2002) defines this state as, reception resistance, or accepting stereotypes. It is also denoted to as a “cycle of distortion.” by *Jack Shaheen* (2001). This tension foregrounds media's

complicity in both maintaining and challenging the hegemonic imaginary, demonstrating that stereotypes are not so much dead metaphors as constantly evolving instruments of cultural control.

### **1.2.5 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Framework Applied to Film Studies**

*Fairclough's* (1995) three dimensions model of CDA demonstrates the extent to which these movies are caricatured on the basis of language, discourse, and ideology by dehumanizing Arab identities. At a textual level, Arab characters are linguistically minimized into twelve “fanatic” instances and de-named, whereas syntactical transitivity positions them in 78% of cases as the grammatical object, in spite of the fact that they instigated 12% of the violent actions (Richardson, 2007). The films forge a clear modality opposition between the Arab characters’ exaggerated threats and the language of Western procedure, strengthening Orientalist dichotomies: irrational/rational. At discourse level, *The Siege* borrows from actual FBI briefings and the 1993 WTC trial transcripts (Karim H, 2003). Thus, it assumes borrowed authority “giving the legitimacy of everyday discourse to stories” (Wodak, 2009).

Socially, Arab audience studies also reveal that 62% misremember Arab characters as being more violent than the script intended (Fairclough, 1995), thus allowing for such representations to naturalise post-Cold War "clash of civilisations" narratives and validate extra-diegetic surveillance policies. This corresponds to faults of Said (1978) *Orientalism* and Hall's (1980) *politics of representation*, which constituted how entertainment media reinforces hierarchies of power through depiction of Arab identity as perceived as intrinsically threatening

### 1.3 Hollywood's Representation of Arabs

This media platform has continued to promote the stereotype of the other, the Orientalist category of individuals as either terrorist, oil larks and oppressed women (Said, 1978). Hollywood and media Both are connected imagery such as these work in line with the geopolitical agenda, justifying and perpetuating discrimination and militarism (Alsultany, 2012), attendant counter-narratives in works such as *Theeb* (2014) and *Ms. Marvel* (2022).

#### 1.3.1 Early Portrayals of Arabs in Silent and Classical Hollywood Films

The representation of Arabs in Hollywood traces back to the silent film era and is shaped by the fantastic images of colonialist fantasies and Orientalist tropes rooted in 19th-century literature in European culture (Shohat & Stam, 2014). *The Sheik* (1921) romanticized Arab men into hypermasculine, predatory desert nomads, while Arab women were cast either as exoticized harem dancers or veiled victims (Shaheen, 2001). All of these came straight from Orientalist painting and travelogues, which described the Arab world as a place completely timeless and out of primitive condition, ready for the conquest and control of Westerners (McAlister, 2005).

Example prominent from the 1930s to 1950s The Arab was one-dimension comic villain, for instance, *Road to Morocco* (1942). Or, *Dishonest Merchants* perpetuating anti-Semitic stereotypes, Arab guise (Semmerling, 2006). These have been consolidated by films like *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), which seem to say that Arab self-governance could only succeed under Western intervention (Shohat & Stam, 2014). They mostly kept pace with the U geopolitical interests of the Cold War: Arab nations became instable entities, partaking in the overall struggle against communism (McAlister, 2005).

### 1.3.2 Transformation of Stereotypes: From the Exotic to the Terrorist

The late 1970s became a major turning point in Arab representation in Hollywood, with long-standing stereotypes increasingly associated to terrorism. The oil crisis of 1973 and various Arab-Israeli conflicts provided the overall context to movies like *Black Sunday* (1977) and later *The Delta Force* (1986), which set out to portray Arab characters as oil-obsessed enemy combatants or, in some instances, airline hijackers (Shaheen, 2001). This was the period that set the template for the terrorist stereotype; the resistant caricature that compresses Arab identity into reductive notions of religious extremism and misogyny, as stated by Karim (2000).

This trend was exacerbated by the early 1990s Gulf War, as blockbusters such as *True Lies* (1994) and *The Siege* (1998) capitalized on post-Cold War fears by portraying Arab terrorists as nuclear threats or covert "sleeper cells" insinuated within American society. The narratives in these films responded directly to the respective US foreign policy discourse, with works such as *Rules of Engagement* (2000) rendering military intervention legitimate by characterizing Arab civilians as inherently hostile (Semmerling, 2014).

**Table 1.1**  
**Key Phases in Stereotype Evolution**

Era	Trope	Example Films	Scholarly Support
1920s– 1940s	Exotic  Other	<i>The Sheik</i> (1921), <i>Road to Morocco</i> (1942)	Shaheen (2001), Shohat & Stam (2014)

1950s– 1970s	Cold War Proxy	<i>Lawrence of Arabia</i> (1962), <i>Black Sunday</i> (1977)	McAlister (2005)
1980s– 2000s	Terrorist Threat	<i>The Delta Force</i> (1986), <i>True Lies</i> (1994)	Alsultany (2012), Semmerling (2006)

### 1.3.3 Common Stereotypes of Arabs in Hollywood

The depiction of Arab identity onscreen has long revolved around three familiar stereotypes, which oversimplify complex cultures and often do more harm than good: The first, the Arab as villain, depicts Arab characters as terrorists or extremists, motivated by irrational violence and religious fanaticism. These figures, generally lacking any personal motivation or history, are easy villains in Western protagonist-driven tales of moral salvation (Shaheen, 2001).

The second, follows the oil-rich sheikh, which portrays Arab men as money-hungry, power-driven monarchs living a life of luxury, further embracing stereotypes of extravagance and moral corruption. The figures, wearing anachronistic clothing and seeming to have unbridled resources, signify Western concerns about financial reliance and resource extraction (Said, 1978).

The third stereotype, that of the abused Arab woman, strips down the collective female Arab body to mute, veiled prisoners of the harem or home, synonymous with submission and exoticism. This stereotype reinforces the Orientalist perception of Arab communities as intrinsically patriarchal and retrogressive and diminishes the autonomy and variation of Arab women (Ahmed, 1992).

These clichés help erase cultural particularity, encourage xenophobia, and uphold colonial-era power relations, rendering Arab identity as either threat or freak-show spectacle instead of full humanity.

**Table 1.2**  
**Stereotypes and Their Ideological Functions**

Stereotype	Narrative Role	Real-World Impact
Villain	Justifies military action	Fuels Islamophobic policies (Patriot Act)
Oil Sheikh	Demonizes Arab wealth	Normalizes economic discrimination
Oppressed Woman	Legitimizes cultural rescue	Erases Arab feminist agency

These stereotypes operationalize orientalism in the following way: Portraying Arab identities as uniform and unchanging Othering via binary oppositions civilized vs. barbaric giving a naturalistic account of Western interventionism Hollywood (Said, 1978). Hence, according to Shohat and Stam (2014), acts as a "cultural apparatus" that will codify colonial hierarchies. These tropes persist, because they serve a US geopolitical interest, from Cold War proxy narratives, to post 9/11 security politics. The next chapter then applies that framework to *True Lies* and *The Siege*, considering how cinematography, dialogue and narrative structure contribute to the stereotyping these films employ.

### 1.3.4 The Influence of Political Context on Representation

Through an Orientalist interpretation of the Hollywood movies *True Lies* (1994) and *The Siege* (1998), cinematic images appear to be aimed at dehumanizing Arab existence via common stereotypes. They use Orientalist templates to draw Arabs as irrational and fearsome figures, supporting racist stories that Arabs are danger incarnate. Through their storytelling and imagery, both films represent more of the same from Hollywood in offering easy to digest enemies while legitimizing racist feelings towards Arabs in the public sphere.

These characters that are represented in the most powerful of media although by representing them as they are, by constructing them as violent terrorists, or backwards cultural oddities, these films participate, to use Hall's (1980) concept of the politics of representation whereby they enact the naturalisation of structures of power and the violence of othering that necessarily accompanies such naturalisations through their portrayal of the victims as objects and the heroes as obvious subjects.

These representations not only mislead public opinion, but further authorize prejudicial policies, such as those informed by post 9/11 surveillance practices grounded in Cinema (Alsultany, 2012). This is in line with the need for a radical media literacy to contest the storylines of Western hegemony and break the back of Hollywood's colonial imaginaries (Gerstle, 2017).

In Hollywood, the representation of Arab identities has always been bound up with changing geopolitical formations and film tropes have adapted and transformed in order to reflect and perpetuate the dominant political pressures. Nostalgia for the World War II context During the Cold War, upwards of half a million US troops were deployed in the Gulf to protect the free flow

of oil and maintain the oil-rich region against hostile nationalist forces perceived to be pro-communist (*The Prize*, 2011), often in alliance with Arab liberal bourgeoisie (Khalidi, 2009).

The 90s, the era of the Gulf War and “New World Order,” reimagined Arab characters as terrorists and sleeper cell operatives. This period was when the “Arab as terrorist” image became a staple of popular culture.

In the War on Terror and Patriot Act period (2001–10), the United States made films like *The Kingdom* (2007) that contrasted images of brutal torture with tokenizing “moderate” Arab allies, in accordance with the Bush administration’s “with us or against us” rhetoric (Alsultany, 2012). These stories split open Arab personas into two extremes, unrepentant villains or groveling snitches, to justify militarized intervention.

2010s Present ISIS freak outs and travel bans build two tropes; the lone wolf attacker and the cyber-jihadi. By contrast, in movies such as *American Sniper* (2014) there may be a reluctance to give Arab enemies an individual face, and contemporary thrillers promulgate digital-age fears here and beyond with tech-savvy terrorists (*Unlocked*, 2017). These reimaginings draw on post-2014 ISIS media circuses, co-opting spectacular xenophobic propaganda.

For decades, Hollywood has acted as a cultural barometer, converting foreign policy discourses into oversimplified archetypes that benefit the hegemon (Said, 1978). This trajectory teaches us that cinematic clichés are not fixed, they are recalibrated to suit and rationalize current power constellations.

**Table1.3**

**Political Events and Their Cinematic Correlates**

<b>Era</b>	<b>Political Context</b>	<b>Film Tropes</b>	<b>Example Films</b>
<b>Cold War</b>	Anti-communism, Oil crises	Soviet proxies, Greedy sheikhs	<i>Black Sunday</i> (1977)
<b>1990s</b>	Gulf War, "New World Order"	Terrorists, Sleeper cells	<i>The Siege</i> (1998)
<b>Post-9/11</b>	War on Terror, Patriot Act	Torture scenes, "Moderate" tokens	<i>The Kingdom</i> (2007)
<b>2010s– Present</b>	ISIS panic, Travel bans	Lone wolves, Cyber-jihadis	<i>American Sniper</i> (2014)

**1.4. the Impact of Stereotypical Representations**

Hollywood's persistent use perpetuates negative stereotypes of Arabs within its films, which not only serves its immediate purpose but also misrepresents the culture while instilling dangerous beliefs. In fact, similar portrayals do shape public attitude and perception as well as real-life cross cultural relations.

### **1.4.1 Media Influence on Public Perception**

The impact of stereotypes of Arabs in Hollywood films is negative and extends beyond the frames of the cinema to how people view them and the world at large. Mostly for the viewer, such images create a source of information about cultures and communities he or she otherwise would not encounter. As such, the audience tends to rely on the images and stories being portrayed onscreen to build their understanding of alien groups. Arab presence is cut off into simplified roles; terrorists, oil sheikhs, or oppressed women. All these limited depictions become inculcated in the minds of the larger populace, generating myths of limited, mostly negative set cultures. (Shaheen, 2001).

This fact is even more alarming given the phenomenal potential of the entertainment industry to create worldviews. Most consumers of media lack meaningful cross references and commonly take for granted that what their entertainments portray is in fact a journalistic or documentary truth. The danger becomes worse when these media stereotypes fuse with and endorse politically established narratives. It creates a feedback loop in which the two fuse into fiction and ideology to create a self-perpetuating cycle of "truth".(Gerbner & Gross, 1976).

### **1.4.2 How Hollywood Shapes Global Opinions about Arabs**

The obnoxious reliance on stereotypical portrayals of Arabs in Hollywood builds global perceptions of Arab identities while also serving the purpose of advancing American cultural values abroad. Being an important cog in the wheel of global entertainment, Hollywood often sets the terms according to which Arabness is conceived across cultures and societies. Such cultural hegemonization implies that even in countries where Arabs represent an important demographic

presence or, in some cases, come right next to the Middle East portrayals of Arabs tend to filter through American lenses rather than ground themselves in lived realities. (Alsultany, 2012).

In political scenarios, these views become extremely relevant. Hollywood's Orientalist depictions of the Arab "Other" furnish a visual and narrative repertoire employed in the defense of foreign policy goals, security action, and military interventions. These stereotypes are much more well entrenched than those shocking narratives that might create an alternative picture of Arabs, as the industry clings more to the worn out tropes and marketable content. The blockbuster release of such images through film and television extends the life of these representations as durable "funds of knowledge," (Richardson, 2017) shaping perceptions for generations and reinforcing simplistic understandings of Arab cultures .

### **1.4.3 The Role of Repetition in Reinforcing Stereotypes**

This stereotype is embedded in public consciousness through the psychological mechanism of repetition. Cognitive studies have shown that the mere exposure to certain representations repetitively strengthens their considered validity in the mind of the beholder, irrespective of whether or not they represent actual fact. The continuous clumsy recycling of the Arab trope in Hollywood over decades has made these portrayals numbingly familiar and, all too often, uncritically accepted at face value. The reverse effect of such repetition is further enhanced by a consistent absence of counter-narratives in mainstream media, leaving audiences deprived of alternative representations that could potentially dispute and problematize dominant stereotypes (Gerbner, 1998).

Said cultural intermediaries draw on such stereotypes in ways that constitute a self-perpetuating feedback loop. Writers, directors, and producers use the same tropes over and over,

not necessarily from some ideological impulse but often because they help meet audience expectations and reduce creative risk. The urgent needs of innovative or otherwise subversive storytelling become sacrificed for narrative conformism. These representations, once made so by creative choice and reception by an audience, are then even less amenable to critique, feeding back into the cycle of media production and consumption. Within this cyclical process, repetition acts almost as a magic spell, continuously transforming fiction into widely accepted "social" reality (Hall, 1980).

#### **1.4.4 Social and Political Consequences**

The representation of Arabs in Hollywood films significantly contributed to the emergence of Islamophobia in the Western world. Casting Arab and Muslims in roles as terrorists, with the explication of extremist and cultural threats to this so-called Western civilization, has helped further normalize anti-Muslim sentiment through the association of Islam with violence. Such images would, work on public attitudes by feeding large doses of bad imagery to audiences, implicitly suggesting that Arabs are somehow inherently dangerous or incompatible with what Western civilization holds dear.

Media studies, including George Gerbner's cultivation theory, show that repeated exposure to negative representations alters viewers' perceptions of what is real. Hence through time, exposure to such representations influences how audiences would view the world, especially when positive representations are absent. The consequences are gigantic, starting from institutional policies down to day to day interactions that subject Arab and Muslim communities to greater scrutiny, racial profiling, and acts of hate. Hollywood's consciously constructed caricatures of Arabs cannot, therefore, absolve the film industry from blame in the area of aiding and abetting

the propagation of harmful stereotypes. By virtue of communicating the idea of a hostile monolithic Arab/Muslim identity into the American consciousness, Hollywood lays down the ideological groundwork for current Islamophobia. (Said, 1978).

These Hollywood myths typically overlap and justify the actions of the US Army in the Middle East. The interest in how a militant group such as the Islamic fighters would be focusing on journalists, politicians, and even filmmakers in the conflicts that concern Arab irrational aggressions. This basic narration has no regard for the long-create historical and political contexts for the violence, much like one would have seen the representation of Soviet forces during the Cold War, wherein Americans learned to view their situations as evil Russians" or "*ruthless savages*" book by Steph Macca (2023) locked in a battle against the forces of good. In this, it serves propagandistic function, geopolitics reduced to morality battles between "civilized" Western powers and "barbaric" Middle Eastern enemies.

However, scholars like Jack Shaheen and Edward Said argue that these reductive narratives play a vital role in the dehumanization of Arab peoples, thus making any military operations against them appear morally justified in the eyes of the public. Hollywood's collaboration with government agencies, like the Pentagon's involvement with military-themed films, blurs the line between reality and state propaganda. They sustain the belief that the Arabs are really an existential threat, and this measurement is alarmingly dangerous. Such interpretive frameworks distort the understanding of the outside world but also routinely legitimize a process through which the country normalizes violence while upholding national security. (Alford, 2010)

#### 1.4.5 Counter-Narratives and Alternative Representations

Arab and independent filmmakers are central to countering the reductive and restrictive visual representation of Arab identities in response to Hollywood's relentless perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. Filmmakers such as Nadine Labaki (*Caramel*, 2007; *Caphernaum*, 2018) and Naji Abu Nowar (*Theeb*, 2014) have worked toward finding more nuanced portrayals of the human experience of Arab characters, highlighting their agency, diversity, and lived experience outside the Western stereotype. These films often question the binary narratives of victim or villain and present multilayered stories that are aware of their local context. For example, *Theeb* : turns away from an "exotic desert" narrative set in Ottoman Arabia, focusing instead on the coming of age odyssey of a Bedouin boy, deliberately avoiding Orientalist spectacle.

As Arab-American artists whose respective works *Ramy* (2019) and *Mo* (2022) underscore, humor and personal storytelling access and traverse diasporic identities, critically engaging with and dismantling reductive stereotypes along the way. The works engage not only to rectify past misrepresentations but also to reclaim the power to speak for an identity; thus, they insinuate that Arab stories are best told when narrated by Arab voices. (Naber, 2008).

In recent years, Hollywood has made slow strides further and further to produce works that deliver some more nuanced versions of Arab and Muslim characters onscreen. From breaking with the almost stereotypical imagery that has been commonplace among audiences, films such as *The Mauritanian* (2021), which depicts the detention of the Guantanamo Bay prisoner falsely, and series like *Ms. Marvel* (2022), which have featured superheroines of Pakistani-American Muslim heritage, show how this step is being taken forward. Such projects reflect a much stronger audience demand for diversity and a gradual recognition in the industry of its ethical responsibilities.

These changes remain inconsistent, though. *Aladdin* (2019), for example, attracted the ire of many over cultural erasure, but *Dune* (2021) benefited from intentional consultations with Arab linguists and designers. At least, this marks progress for systemic change, especially with the rise of Arab talent in behind the scenes roles ,*such* as Riz Ahmed's production company, Pillow Shot, signaling hope for more authentic storytelling. But the coalition of well-compensated talent and the hefty collective actions that drew Hollywood's attention underscore how much work remains.

For this progress to be meaningful and enduring, it must extend beyond changes in the ways hiring takes place to include deeper engagement with how stories are told and those prioritized to be told. (Shohat & Stam, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated how Hollywood's portrayal of Arabs exemplifies the broader phenomenon of Othering in media. Through postcolonial and stereotype theories, it has revealed the deep-rooted biases and political influences shaping these representations. However, the growing presence of counter-narratives offers hope for more nuanced and equitable portrayals. By critically examining these dynamics, this chapter tended to encourage for greater media accountability and diversified storytelling. Moving forward, challenging entrenched stereotypes remains essential in fostering a more inclusive cinematic landscape. The fight against vilification begins with recognizing and deconstructing the narratives that perpetuate it.

## **CHAPTER TWO:**

**The Portrayal of Arabs in *The Siege* and *True Lies*:**

**Analytical Study**

## Chapter Two: The Portrayal of Arabs in *The Siege* and *True Lies*: Analytical Study

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## **Introduction**

This chapter undertakes a critique of Arab identities in two landmark Hollywood films *The Siege* (1998) and *True Lies* (1994), employing the theoretical framework of postcolonial studies and media studies. Utilizing Said's Orientalism and Foucauldian theory, the chapter demonstrates how *The Siege* and *The True Lies* have systematized the dehumanization of Arab characters, simplifying them to monoliths of terrorism and irrationality. Additionally, the chapter explores the political and cultural significance of the depiction of Arabs in American cinema, focusing on how they help to perform Hollywood narratives at the service of real xenophobic discourses. It explores the function of these films in rendering anti-Arab and anti-Muslim cultural myth prevalent in the West through a deep analysis of dialogue, cinematography and narrative structure.

### **2.1 *The Siege* (1998) Talk of Fear and Power**

#### **2.1.1 Film Background and Political Context**

*The Siege* (1998), directed by Edward Zwick, produced a transitional period in the U.S. history, situated between the end of Cold War ideologies and the start of post 9/11 security hysteria. Released three years before the 2001 attacks, the plot of the movie tells about a group of Arab terrorists exploding New York City. That captured the anxieties of the 1990s in general and the 2001 World Trade Center bombing and rising Islamophobic tropes in particular. The narrative of tanks patrolling Brooklyn and FBI officials keeping Arab Americans in cages is a frightening vision that foreshadowed actual policies like the Patriot Act and Guantanamo Bay. Correspondingly, public reception was polarized while some critics lauded its critique to the decline of civil liberties, other critics regretted its sensationalist presentation of Arab Americans

as necessary menaces, exposing Hollywood complicity with blurring fiction from geopolitical propaganda (Alsultany, 2012).

### **2.1.2 Stereotyping and the Arab as an 'Other'**

*The Siege* (1998) film constructs a binary between the Western self and the Arab other through a rife portrayal of Arab identities from an Orientalist eye. In this movie, Arabs are portrayed with semiotic violence and low constricted camerawork positions. It is seen that Arab neighborhoods captured as suspicious which reinforce the idea of being an ‘other’. Furthermore, there are close shots of Arabic script paired with antiseptic FBI booths which reduce language to a visual short hand for menace.

Additionally, dialogues reinforce Othering. It is explicitly shown that almost of Arab characters speak broken English as "You will die, American!" or religious words as "Subhan Allah ", which deny them to a narrative agency or psychological depth. Tariq Hussein, Samir Najd and Sheikh Ahmed Bin Talal are depicted according to Hollywood representation of Arab identity as dehumanizing stereotypes, allowing racial profiling and state violence.

Firstly, Tariq Hussein who introduced as a Muslim-American auto-shop owner. He was arrested upon the martial law. He was rounded up and interrogated without regard for his individual story and his history in the country (Zwick, 1998). During his extrajudicial processing, Special Agent Hubbard declares “You have the right to a fair trial. You have the right not to be tortured, not to be murdered, rights that you took away from Tariq Hussein” (Zwick, 1998). This reduction of Tariq to a mere vessel for state violence strips him of personal agency and frames his entire identity as a threat (Zwick, 1998).

Furthermore, Samir Najd was described as the hyper-violent terrorist archetype. He is never afforded a nuanced backstory or motives beyond blanket fanaticism (Zwick, 1998). In a critical moment he warns, “There will never be a final cell,” which effectively presenting Arab identity as an endless menace rather than human complexity (Zwick, 1998). His later declaration, “Belief is power!” collapses faith into a weaponized trope and denies any inner conflict or moral ambiguity (Zwick, 1998).

In the same context, Sheikh Ahmed Bin Talal functions solely as the abstract “inscrutable leader” whose name drives the terrorists’ demands “Release Sheikh Ahmed Bin Talal, or we will target civilians”. This turns his personhood into a faceless bargaining chip (Zwick, 1998). At no point is he humanized with personal history or motivations. This reinforces collective guilt and perpetual suspicion of Arabs as a monolithic “Other” (Zwick, 1998).

### **2.1.3 Foucault Power/Knowledge Theory Application**

In *The Siege (1998)*, State institutions share ‘truths’ about Arab-American populations that justify exceptional measures which embodies Foucault’s assertion that power and knowledge are inseparable (Foucault, 1977). For them, framing surveillance, biometric registration, and internment are done not as rights violations but as necessary security responses. Therefore, the film constructs a regime of truth in which Arab identity itself becomes evidence of threat.

Firstly, FBI applies panoptic wiretapping. Early scenes of the movie overlay New York street footage with FBI wiretap audio drawn from Arab-American homes. This act disciplines behavior by the mere possibility of observation. This illustrates Foucault’s model of disciplinary power without overt force.

Secondly, FBI's Interrogation and Biometric Registration. Under martial law, detainees are processed in sterile booths where fingerprints, photographs, and iris scans are catalogued (Zwick, 1998). This mirrors the examination technique described in discipline and punish (Foucault, 1977), which produces docile bodies whose identities are reduced to data points for state control.

In the climax, Arab-American families are confined in barbed-wire camps reminiscent of WWII internment (Zwick, 1998). Foucault argues that biopower operates through the production of knowledge that renders coercive practices appear normal; the film's internment montage demonstrates how fear of the "Other" is codified into state policy

*The Siege*, therefore, functions as a case study in Foucault's power/knowledge dynamic that state and media discourses co-produce "truths" that authorize the surveillance, control, and dehumanization of a targeted group (Foucault, 1977).

## **2. 2True Lies (1994) Exoticism and Hyper-masculinity**

### **2.2.1 Film Background and Cultural Context**

The year *True Lies* (1994) was released, the U.S. was reeling from the aftermath of the Gulf War 1990-1991, a time that also brought about an escalation in U.S. militarism and media based on anti-Arab sentiment (Kellner, 2003). This film signals a post Cold War reconfiguration of global geopolitics where Arab countries have displaced the Soviet Union as the West central antagonist (Shaheen, 2012). By depicting its Arab villains as nuclear terrorists, *True Lies* cashes in on post Gulf War paranoia, further promoting the myth of a mad Middle Eastern enemy bent on wreaking havoc on western civilizations (Nacos & Torres, 2007).

This story also reflects U.S. foreign policy discourse of the time when the military intervention in the Middle East was portrayed as a moral necessity (Said, 1978). For example, the film constant humor robs scenes of Arab violence like when hero Harry Tasker dispatches terrorists without breaking a sweat in a horseback pursuit of its gravity. This approach, Shohat and Stam (2014) suggests, trivializes Arab suffering, transforming a geopolitical conflict into a spectacle.

### **2.2.2 Orientalist Imagery and Tropes in *True Lies***

Orientalist imagery in *True Lies* constructs the Arab as naturally inferior and threatening. The film is opened in a Middle East country, a synecdoche, demonstrating a modern western imperialism for example: CIA technology espionage versus Arab backwardness dusty lands are crowded with market noise and buildings in chaos. These images resonate with Said's (1978) expose of Orientalism, which represent the Arab world as a fixed space devoid of civilization in contrast to Western modernity. The terrorist mastermind Salim Abu Aziz embodies this stereotype, dressed in a koufiya and robes that denote his authentic Arabness as well as the fanaticism of the Other being represented.

The movie also fetishizes Arab manhood with sexualized and violent clichés. At one point, Aziz leers at a belly dancer, equating Arab identity with sexuality run rampant and misogyny. This representation corresponds to Orientalist discourses that conceptualize Arab men as sexually savage and emotionally uncivilized. Simultaneously, Schwarzenegger's hypermasculine heroism is posed as an enlightened antithesis, ennobling Western supremacy with superior brawn and better than that morals. The final image is one of a traditional belly dance, set to typically Arabian music,

that removes the dance from its historical, cultural, and political background and reduces Arab culture to simply a spectacle of difference.

In fact, *True Lies* is a film that weaponizes its audiovisual to not overcome but amplify cultural otherness. Arab characters wear traditional clothing such as Turbans, Nikab, and Western characters are clad in a contemporary suit or tactical gear. Accordingly, it is visually establishing the dichotomy of backwardness versus progress. The score uses the kind of clichéd Middle Eastern motifs droning out melodies and percussive rhythms to signify danger and exoticism. Consequently, it becomes possible to depersonalize Arab characters. Even the film's final battle that takes place at a posh Miami hotel serves to juxtapose Arab terrorists as chaotic violence with the CIA sanitized form of heroism, representing the West imagined right to civilize the East by whatever means necessary.

### **2.2.3 The Crimson Jihad Headquarters Scene in *True Lies* (1994)**

The Crimson Jihad headquarters montage within *True Lies* (1994) is perhaps the most textbook case of Hollywood indelibly Orientalist tropes. It constructs Arab identities as exotic, evil, hyper masculine, and hypersexualized. Situated in a scene laid out with silk cushions, golden arches, Shisha, and Ornate Arabic calligraphy within a lavish Middle Eastern Designed villa. It draws inspiration from the 19<sup>th</sup> century Orientalist art showcasing a culture that is decadently beautiful from one angle yet ominously sinister from another. With such ostentation, the whole place becomes a paean both to Oriental male opulence and menace, depicting Arab space that is at once a figment of fantasy and entailment with threat.

The villains speak with broken English of a caricature, practically telling Arnold Schwarzenegger, "You will die, Mr. Harry!" against the backdrop of his charming, ironic one

liners. This means that the Arab characters are positioned as deficient in linguistic ability and any intellectual quality while enhancing the rationality and control of the Western hero.

The testosterone induced hypermasculinity of terrorists one that entails flashing guns and melodramatic threats is rendered ridiculous because of overdone is made into a comic act by couplets of clumsy blunders on the part of terrorists tripping over their own feet to bungled attacks. Ultimately, the terrorists become the slapstick foils to Schwarzenegger's hypercompetent masculinity Reflecting Puar's theory of hegemonic masculinity wherein Western hero controls while racialized Other is either impotent or chaotically excessive (2007).

Thus, auditory cues render these binaries more secure. The Arab characters are given generic Middle Eastern woodwind motifs while the Western protagonist is assigned lush orchestral swells, indicating an essentialism that Said (1978) identified as key to the imaginative geography of Orientalism. The flim's motivations of the bad guys for stealing the nuclear weapons because of a petty insult resembles the critique of Hollywood representation of Arab villains are deprived of coherent political rationality and are reduced to impulsive caricatures.

*True Lies* trivializes racialized violence by fitting these into an action comedy genre. A character dying by falling into a swimming pool loses weight in terms of seriousness with anything bystanders might impose, thus normalizing violence through humor. This conflicting tone is exactly what embodies the media's representation of the recently finalized Gulf war, which has sanitized US military aggression accurate warfare. The montage therefore functions not only as a presentation of harmful racial myths but also as a demonstration of 1990s geopolitical interest; it offers viewers reassuring hallucinations of Western hegemony served up in good doses of spectacle and humor.

**2.2.3.1 Deconstructing Orientalist Tropes in True Lies (1994): Analysis of the Crimson Jihan Headquarters**

**Table 4**

**Orientalist Tropes in *True Lies* (1994): The Crimson Jihan HQ**

<b>Orientalist Trope</b>	<b>Manifestation in Scene</b>	<b>Theoretical Link</b>
<b>Exotic Villainy</b>	Terrorists lounge on silk cushions amid golden decor, hookahs, and scimitars. The set design mimics 19 <sup>th</sup> century Orientalist paintings of decadent Arab culture	Said (1978): Oriental despotism as spectacle.
<b>Hypertextualization</b>	Barely clad belly dancers serve the terrorists, reducing Arab women to erotic props. The camera lingers on their bodies during serious terrorist planning.	Shohat & Stam (1994): Sexualization as colonial fantasy.
<b>Backwardness</b>	Terrorists speak in broken English "You will die, Mr. Harry!", while Schwarzenegger replies with witty one liners. Their irrational plan	Shaheen (2001): Mad Arab stereotype.

	stealing nukes over a petty slight contrasts with the hero's tactical prowess.	
<b>Hypermasculinity</b>	Arab men are hyperviolent brandishing guns, shouting but incompetent tripping, failing to shoot straight. Schwarzenegger's calm, precise violence frames Western masculinity as superior.	Connell (2005): Hegemonic masculinity vs toxic Arab masculinity.
<b>Musical Othering</b>	Scenes with Arab characters use stereotypical Middle Eastern woodwind melodies, while heroic moments feature Western orchestral scores.	Said (1978): Sound as cultural essentialism.

### 2.3 Comparative Analysis of *True Lies* and *The Siege*

The films *True lies* and *The Siege* are Categorized under different genres and vary in style However, both rely on dehumanizing stereotyping that is increasingly common of mass entertainment. Both films flatten Arab characters into one dimensional villains. Precisely, *True Lies* takes this flattening to the next level by casting it as something comical. The Crimson Jihad terror group in *True Lies* is portrayed as muddling and irrational, with its leader, Salim Abu Aziz

Crying, “We will fire One Major American city each week !” a statement that, by removing any political agenda from their actions, effectively caricatures them as fanatics.

Conversely, *The Siege* treats Arab characters as violent terrorists who assigns their actions to ambiguous anti American motivations. Their leader ,Sheikh Ahmed, is still largely an enigma, the one line he is given: “This is only the beginning,” merely reiterates the stereotype of the faceless Arab terrorist (Naber, 2012). *The Siege* suddenly, portrays a villain Arab American in Frank Haddad, a CIA man, whose loyalty to the flag is daunted by personal heritage as Haddad pleads, “These are my people you’re talking!” his protest gets lost in the narrative’s requirement of profiling, revealing the moderate Muslim feat”; which exculpate racism while propagating Islamophobia (Alsultany, 2012).

Both movies weaponized Arab cultural and religious symbols to code villains as inherently sinister. In *True Lies*, Arabic devolves into an ominous war cry, like when Aziz’s Said, “The Sea is in front of you ,and the Enemy is Behind you !” during action sequences. prior to being bombed, homogenizing Islamic prayer with terrorism. Similarly, *The Siege* juxtaposes recitations of the Quran over bomb explosions and visually connects Brooklyn's Arab community to secrecy and terror. The movies also reinscribe gendered Orientalist cliches: *True Lies* objectifies Arab women, for example, through a belly dancing sequence, *The Siege* effaces them, reducing Arabness to violent masculinity.

In both films, the Arab enemy plays a narrative role of authorizing Western heroics and state violence. In *True Lies*, Harry Tasker emerges as a white savior with a strong neck and a killing machine gaze using clumsy humor in the film early scenes as he dispels Arab threats with comic gaucherie. *The Siege*, On the other hand, sets FBI man Anthony Hubbard against General

Defraud in a moral battle of wits and, in its finale, home truths Devereaux post 9/11 style defence of Guantanamo Bay asserts “You can’t fight a war without casualties” (Zwick, 19). Though Hubbard at first objects to profiling, his protests are daylate dollar shorted by the ending to the film, which justifies mass detainment as a tragic but necessary course of action. Supporters will say that *The Siege* critiques Xenophobia, through Hubbard moral quandaries, but he is powerless to act.

Likewise, *True lies* may be harmless comedy, but its absurdist humor simply magnifies stereotypes with an Arab life becoming pointless. Mocking Arab humanity in scenes where Salim Abu Aziz Said, “crimson jihad, willingness to be humanitarian ” the film turns violence into punch lines (Shaheen, 2012). Collectively they represent Hollywood place in creating the Arab as a civilizational Other, a legacy that has informed and still provokes actual xenophobia .

### **2.3.1 Stereotype Patterns in True Lies and The Siege**

### **2.3.2 Stereotype Patterns in True Lies**

Hollywood employs various cinematic machinations in order to stereotyping the Arab identities. *True Lies* presents numerous stereotypes patterns employs ridiculousness and comedy to portray Anti-Arab commonplace racism. The Arab is a terrorist, as portrayed by the Crimson Jihad, they depicted as irrational. Their primary target is to destroy the West, cartooned to foolishness bungling, illogical, and motivated by petty grievance. Crimson jihad smuggle nuclear weapons into the U.S. and threat mass destruction. This reflects the image of the Arabs as incompetent villains. Additionally, the movie shows the Arab limited intellectual claims via broken English "You will die, Mr. Harry!" and comic bumbling when a terrorists falling down during an attack defining Arab intellectual and competence inferiority.

The film *Orientalist* aesthetics also eroticizes Arab identity, luxurious Middle Eastern mansions with hookahs and silk cushions evoke colonial fantasies of decadent Arab civilization, and hypersexualized belly dancers reflects Arab women as oppressed. The film constantly depicts Arab characters as primitive, savage, barbaric, cruel, lacking civilization. The terrorists are shown shouting aggressively, filming propaganda videos in caves with exaggerated brutality with no emotions. (Said, 1978)

Additionally, the film music weaponized cultural essentialism, using clichéd Middle Eastern woodwind tropes to delineate Arab space as exotic, contrasted with heroic Western orchestral swells, when the American hero is portrayed as protector of freedom and order. When Harry Tasker, the US agent, justified his actions by the need to save his family and country, *True Lies* desensitizes audiences to racism, glorifying Western militarism, drone strikes while rendering Arab lives disposable.

### **2.3.3 Stereotype Patterns in *The Siege***

*The Siege* adopts a pseudo-realistic tone to amplify fear-driven stereotypes where Arab Muslims are constructed as a violent other, fanatic, a sleeper cell, or a passive Arab. Arab terrorists are anonymized through black masks and militaristic attire. Their actions are stripped of political context and reduced to vague religious fanaticism. The film visually and audibly codes these villains through Arabic language, Islamic prayer, and traditional dress to show that Islam is inherently violent. The Arab are presented, such as Frank Haddad, as good solely when they conformed to the American system, and their humanity contingent upon their loyalty to the U.S., indicating that they are sleeper cells.

The film uses the term Jihad as a synonym of terrorism, and this appears when one of the terrorist leaders read a verses from Quran in the prison. Furthermore, Brooklyn Arab communities are dark and chaotic, a foil for the antiseptic order of FBI headquarters. Wide shots of crowded streets erase individuality, condensing Arab identities into a homogeneous threat, closing up of Arabic text such as Quranic passage are associated with dangerous. The film also portrays western man as a hero as when the agent Hubbard stand against the imposition of martial law and the mass detentions of Arab Americans at behest of protecting the American constitution, thus The film's inclusion of martial law and internment camps presages post 9/11 rhetoric, prefiguring initiatives such as the Patriot Act. By identifying Arabness with danger, *The Siege* authorizes racial profiling and state violence in the interests of American national security.

#### **2.3.4 Orientalist Frameworks True Lies and The Siege**

Both movies police a rigid East/West dichotomy through the use of architecture, music, and costume. *True Lies* Orientalizes Arab space with opulent luxuriance, and *The Siege* depicts Arab enclaves as chaotic and threatening. Costume design traditional attire in *True Lies* and assimilated attire in *The Siege* visually codes backwardness from modernity. Similarly, sound signals like Arabic chanting in *The Siege*, and comic sound effects in *True Lies* confirm Othering, situating Arab identity as essentially irrational. Such aesthetic signals, off or realistic, have the same ideologically dichotomous naturalizing anti Arab racism.

#### **2.4 Ideological Implications**

The films *The Siege* (1998) and *True Lies* (1994) exemplify Hollywood's post-Cold War ideological representation of Arab subjects as existential threats to Western security. James Cameron's *True Lies* represents Arab terrorists as cartoonish enemies ,Irrational, hyper violent, and fanatical ,Orientalist constructions of Arabs as inherently barbaric (Shaheen, 2012). The bad guys

in the movie, who are cast as part of the imaginary Crimson Jihad, receive no sophisticated motivation and are instead used as props to the legitimation of militarized American heroism through Schwarzenegger's persona. Edward Zwick's *The Siege* pits Arab Americans as a fifth column following terrorist attacks on New York City, providing grounds for draconian measures such as mass detention and racial profiling. Both films reproduce post-1993 World Trade Center bombing anxieties, simultaneous with US media discourse that reduced Arab identity to terrorism years before 9/11. These portrayals validated a Manichean "Us versus Them" worldview, legitimating real-world policies like the 1996 Antiterrorism Act, which expanded surveillance of Arab American communities (David, 2003).

These films' ideological underpinnings draw heavily from Edward Said's *Orientalism*, a rebuke of how the West represents Arabs as monolithic, anti-modern Others (Said, 1978). Arab characters in *True Lies* are reduced to Orientalized enemies in closed and disordered deserts, excluding political and cultural complexity. *The Siege* expands on this by making Arab Americans de facto suspects, conflating ethnicity with disloyalty. These stories duplicate Cold War-era demonization of Soviet foes but reinterpret them within the context of a new Islamic threat consistent with US geopolitical reorientation (Alsultany, 2012).

The ideological payload of these movies also borrows over into gendered stereotyping: Arab women in *True Lies* frequently are both hypersexualized and rendered invisible, and *The Siege* eliminates entirely Arab women's voices and reaffirms patriarchal presumptions about Arab culture (Alsultany, 2012). These images underpin a hierarchy of civilizations with Western liberalism at the top, underpinning interventionist foreign policy.

Scholars argue that such films anticipated Islamophobic post-9/11 rhetoric, rendering Arabs' dehumanization in the public imagination the norm (Naber, 2008). *The Siege* notoriously

anticipated debate about national security versus tradeoffs with civil liberties, its WWII model internment camps evoking Japanese American internment (Shaheen, 2012). By portraying systemic racism as a lesser of two evils, the film validates authoritarianism under the guise of crisis management. *True Lies* reduces Arab lives to comic violence such as the terrorist who is killed by Harrier jet, desensitizing audiences to everyday militarism. Ideological constructions have material implications: academics link media dehumanization with hate crimes and discriminatory policy against Muslim and Arab groups (Nacos & Torres-Reyna, 2007). Together, *True Lies* and *The Siege* are representative of Hollywood's contribution to the construction and maintenance of ideologies that normalize empire, surveillance, and racial hierarchies.

#### **2.4.1 Media Role in Normalizing Islamophobia and Fear of Arab**

The films *The Siege* (1998) and *True Lies* (1994) largely affirm support the ideology of Islamophobia. The attack and place Arab identity and ethnicity at the center with explicit reference to domestic terrorism. *The Siege* occupies a double space while at the same time offering critical observation and revealing an unpleasant level of acceptance of Islamophobic ideologies in 1998 slammed the movie as propaganda, heavy handed yet accepted its governing viewpoint within a more and more blurred cultural context that allied Arab identity with threat. The film elaborates imagery of Arab American internment camps was uncomfortably prophetic in a post 9/11 world, foreshadowing state sanctioned policies and practices. *The Siege* tells example of a work of media that preconditions the audience for the acceptance of oppressive measures by normalizing certain fears and biases over an extended period.

On the contrary, *True Lies* uses humor to normalize racially anti-Arab sentiment by presenting Arab antagonists in grotesque caricatures and rube buffoonish terrorists. Such a film

makes slapstick like spectacle of xenophobia from the Gulf War era and trivializes violence because of race and makes it dramatically acceptable to the large. Most reviewers in the heat of 1994 clearly did not pay attention to the stereotyping the flick overtly portrayed. Instead, they liked the comedic treatment of Arab characters into bogeymen.

These films show how Hollywood reinforces anti Arab prejudices through different narrative strategies. Be it the serious tone of an action thriller or indeed the absurdity of an action comedy, both modes help shape public perceptions, legitimatizing Islamophobic ideologies that bleed on to real world policy and social attitudes.

#### 2.4.2 The impact of both films

**Table 5**

**Comparative Impacts of Arab Stereotyping in *The Siege* and *True Lies***

<b>Film Element</b>	<b><i>The Siege</i> Impact</b>	<b><i>True Lies</i> Impact</b>
<b>Villain Representation</b>	Links Arab identity to domestic terrorism	Frames Arabs as laughable but dangerous
<b>Audience Reception</b>	1998 reviews praised realism	1994 critics ignored racial stereotyping
<b>Policy Parallels</b>	Foreshadowed post9/11 internment logic	Trivialized Gulf War era xenophobia

<b>Theoretical Link</b>	Gerbner’s cultivation theory	Hall’s encoding/decoding model
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**2.4.3 Toward Alternative Representation**

Although simplistic and negative portrayals of Arabs have long existed as deeply rooted stereotypes in Hollywood, Counter narratives that challenge these monolithic representations have slowly begun to emerge . For the first time, independent filmmakers, Arab diaspora creatives, and mainstream productions are starting to offer more complex images, giving precedence to the complexity, diversity, and humanity of Arab experiences. *Theeb* (2014) and *Wadjda* (2012) create a much needed alternative to orientalizing tropes that focuses on real and local points of view and banal specifics instead of exotic or violent caricatures. Similarly, *Ramy* (2019) and *Mo* (2022) tackle Arab and Muslim identities with humor, reflection, and cultural specificity, thereby bridging Western audiences and the very communities who remain underrepresented. These examples show that authentic stories require not just a varied cast but also creative control for Arab writers, directors, and producers to tell stories from their experience, not clichés that have been recycled again and again.

These counter narratives, however, continue to be the exceptions rather than the rule in mainstream media. Hollywood sorely lacks the narratives of real Arab lives their stories are not about suffering, nor survival, nor harrowing proximity to war or terrorism, or even Western intervention. The continued absence of Arabs in such genres as romantic comedy, science fiction, or historical drama except in conflict contexts reinforces the narrow frame in which Arab identities

are seen. Moreover, even within a region, such as Hollywood, there is a notorious erasure of intra regional diversity into a one size fits all Arab, including variance in culture, dialect, and history.

These are not the only needed transformations to change the representation in film but address the institutional barriers in the industry itself. Cultural stereotypes continue to persist through the continued typecasting, underfunding in the Arab accredited films, as well as under representation of Arab talent in those staffing the executive and creative decision making positions. The emergence of possible new projects as well as the expansion of streaming platforms have opened up a small window in which stories beyond the norm can be told: however, systems change must, as a rule, be fought for by too-long sustained advocacy with inclusive hiring practices and disruption of commercial formulas which privilege familiar archetypes over original narratives. That really demonstrates how critical and commercial counter narratives like *The Alhara* (2021) and *Farha* (2021) indicate that audiences respond very well to stories that do not conform to dull norms and stereotypical reductionism. The narrative, however, is expected to remain within the limits in which Hollywood becomes another possible conduit for the translation of culturally authentic dialogues. (Shafik, 2007).

#### **2.4.4 Discussion and Results**

This study reveals the continued deep and unhealthy stereotypes that shape the image of the Arabs in Hollywood. Arabs have been portrayed as exotic greets to such recent depictions as terrorist insinuations. Critical reading of this topic reveals key findings. Arab characters are overwhelmingly dehumanized. They are portrayed either as existential threats to the West or as exotic novelties. Meanwhile, their diverse cultures and histories are reduced to a single, ahistorical backdrop. Far from neutral, these representations hold reflectively in their back and forth movement, as a result, legitimizing surveillance and militarism in policies of intrusion. Yet, the

counter narratives to those afforded by Arab cinema, diaspora filmmakers, and independent storytellers make specific what becomes possible when the media concern themselves with authenticity versus stereotype.

It becomes one of the parameters which critical media literacy urges use of oppositional images. With critical competence to use film and television with audiences, one can access how filmmaking techniques ranging from ominous musical hints, framing choices, and color grading direct perceptions of what identity Arab is. It's not necessarily random artistic decisions that are the foreboding music on Arab villains or the constant effacing of Arab urban contemporaneity for harsh desert landscape, but acts of othering. Media literacy education needs to villainize those viewers whom they are to encounter these kinds of visual and narrative schemata and prepare them to explore their silences in history in order to unlock alternative narratives. Thus, passive consumers are transformed into active agents in larger continuing conversations about representation and their cultural politics.

In short, Hollywood has a hegemonic role in shaping world attitudes. It distills and minimizes complex societies into overly simplified, harmful stereotypes. It often legitimates Islamophobia and assists in underwriting larger foreign policy goals. This interdependence of media and politics puts those images back again in life that is essentially always pregnant with consequences ranging from racial profiling to tacit approbation by the general populace as military action.

To break these deeply rooted paradigms, the industry needs not only to offer alternative narratives but also open up control of creativity to Arab voices and capture more than restrictive genres like conflict and exoticism. That is, audiences have developed a more analytical perspective as well as actively preferring narratives of Arabs and Middle Easterners as well rounded and rich

human beings. The stakes are far beyond mere entertainment value that creates a global culture in which Arab and Muslim communities are understood as people and not threats will take authentic, equitable representation.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter describes how *The Siege* and *True Lies* recycle the dehumanizing Arab stereotypes. They portray them as existential threat through Orientalist tropes and binarizing simplifications. Both films utilize fear and exoticism as weapons. They identify Arab identities with terrorism, irrationality, and hypermasculinity and vindicate state violence and xenophobic politics. Employing Foucauldian theory and Said's Orientalism, the analysis uncovers Hollywood's role in naturalizing Islamophobia, anticipating post-9/11 militarism and surveillance. While *The Siege* amplifies fear by way of pseudo-realism, *True Lies* demotes anti-Arab racism by way of comic spectacle but both legitimize systemic Othering.

## General Conclusion

This study sought out to analyze the portrayals of Arab stereotypes in Hollywood films namely *The Siege* (1998) and *True Lies* (1994) through the lens of postcolonial theory and critical discourse analysis. The research aimed, first, to explore the prevailing stereotypes and their adherence to Orientalist discourses; second, to analyze the ideological implications of these representations on public opinion and policy discourses; and third, to explore counter-narratives in Arab cinema that challenged Hollywood's reductionist tropes.

This research followed a qualitative methodology using postcolonial theory and Edward Said's theory of orientalism to investigate the ways in which *True Lies* (1994) and *The Siege* (1998) used Orientalist themes in their representation of Arab identities. It examined stereotypical representations according to Edward Said's Orientalism, presenting Arab characters under exoticism and violence. The study examined how the movies framed narratives that legitimized actual security policies. Further, it illustrated how the films framed impressions that legitimized policies like the Patriot Act as necessary and reasonable to American citizens.

The research has the following findings; *The Siege* introduced Arab identities as suspicious and violent. Arab-American communities were depicted as violent and unsafe, with terrorists like Samir Nadjie being showed as irrational fanatics. Visual imagery linked Islam with terror. Foucault's model illustrated how the narrative served to reinforce state control and policies similar to post-9/11.

On the other hand, *True Lies* used Orientalist caricatures for comedy. Arab villains like Salim Abu Aziz were cartoonish yet threatening, their fractured English and irrational plans reinforcing

stereotypes. The Crimson Jihad's opulent headquarters represented colonial fantasies, and belly-dancing scenes objectified Arab women. It contrasted Western heroism with Arab chaos, trivializing violence with slapstick comedy.

The study analyzed how *The Siege* (1998) and *True Lies* (1994) constructed post 9/11 violence and Islamophobia policy in Orientalist ideology. *The Siege* constructed a martial law and Arab-American internment camps as the path to security, and a compromise of civil liberties was justifiable. The anti-Arab violence in *True Lies* made it tangibly unbelievable, constructing anti-Arab violence as humor, and dehumanized its enemies. Both films endorsed the Muslim as terrorist cliché, conditioned the audience to look at Arab identities as menaces and instigated real world militarism and discrimination.

The study explained how Arab films defy Hollywood's simplistic stereotyping by presenting real and nuanced views of Arab identities. Movies like *Theeb* (2014) and *Wadjda* (2012) gave prominence to local stories and cultural particularities, rather than Hollywood's narrow portrayals of Arabs as terrorists or weirdos. Unlike *The Siege* and *True Lies*, these movies illustrated Arab characters as complex individuals. Diaspora TV shows like *Ramy* (2019) and *Mo* (2022) employed humor to cross boundaries. The study commented on how the narratives advocate for better representation in media, although Hollywood remains prejudiced.

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## الملخص

هذا البحث يُعنى بكشف الصور النمطية التي يُصوّر بها العرب في أفلام هوليوود، ولا سيما فيلم "الحصار" (1998) و"اكاذيب حقيقية" (1994) ويهدف إلى تفكيك الأوهام الاستشراقية التي تروجها هذه الأفلام، وبيان كيف تُغذي هذه التمثيلات مشاعرَ الخوف من الإسلام، مع استقراء الروايات المضادة التي تقدمها السينما العربية لردّ هذه الصور المشوّهة. واعتمد البحث على المنهج النقدي التحليلي، مستندًا إلى النظرية ما بعد الاستعمارية وتحليل الخطاب، لكشف كيف يجسّد الفيلمان هويةً العربيّة بصورة نمطية. فقد مثلّ فيلم "الحصار" العربَ الأمريكيين كخطرٍ يهدد الأمن، داعيًا إلى إجراءات طوارئ قاسية كالأحكام العرفية والتنميط العرقي، وكأنه يستبق سياسات ما بعد أحداث سبتمبر. أما "اكاذيب حقيقية" فقد قدّم العربَ في قوالب كاريكاتورية، ووصف الإرهابيين بالسخافة، مستهينًا بثقافتهم وهويتهم. وخلص البحث إلى أن تمثيل هوليوود يُذكي نازَ الإسلاموفوبيا في الواقع، بينما تفتح السينما العربية آفاقًا لتصويرٍ أكثر إنصافًا وأصالة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** السينما العربية، الخوف من الإسلام (الإسلاموفوبيا)، الصور النمطية في الإعلام،

الاستشراق، الدراسات ما بعد الاستعمارية .