**<u>The Representations of Islam and Muslims in popular media: Educational
Strategies and to develop critical media literacy</u>**

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ABSTRACT

The way Islam is understood today, and for much of the Western world, is based on the perception that was established by Orientalist scholars of the 18th to 20th century. Many studies have demonstrated that the negative images of the Muslim world, in American Western mass media, particularly Hollywood movies, are inherited attitudes from the old 'guild tradition' school of Orientalism. As the matter of fact, these biased attitudes, which still in some ways dominate the Western way of thinking, are deeply rooted in the history of colonialism and orientalist scholarship. Today, American mass media and particularly Hollywood is taking these inherited misconceptions of the Muslim World and representing it to the world in a new format.

This study examines the representations and portrayal of Islam and Muslims in American Popular Culture, especially Hollywood movie productions. The findings indicate that Islam and Muslims received negative coverage. A consistent stereotyped association with violence, terrorism, fundamentalism and extremism marks the representations of Islam and Muslims in Hollywood movies. These representations encapsulate the perception of Islam and Muslims by mass media to the point it becomes very difficult to perceive Islam and Muslims differently.

The study also attempts to examine the role of education in demystifying the negative representations of Islam and Arab Muslims in Popular Culture. Moreover, it demonstrates that the critical study of these misrepresentations in the American popular culture may contribute towards establishing a more democratic, peaceful, and just world.

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Introduction

Despite its considerable worldwide reach, Western mass media, particularly in the United States, has been assuming a negative polarized role by dividing the world into two parts: Occident versus Orient. Regrettably, for many decades, United States mass media has been promulgating negative stereotyped images about the Arab Muslim world. These negative images have been dramatically intensified after September 11 attacks when Al-Qaeda admitted its responsibility for the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York. Since then, an aggressive campaign has been waged against Muslim values, traditions, cultures and people. Islam and Muslims in American mass media, as well as the entertainment media, have become synonymous to terrorism, violence, extremism, fundamentalism, anti-democratic and anti-freedom. Moreover, we have witnessed the emergence of negative terms regarding Muslims and Islam: 'The Green Danger', 'the Clash of Civilizations', 'Ideological Conflict', 'The Third Millennium Crusade', etc. All these images are employed by American mass media in order to demonstrate that American democracy is a victim of terrorism. Thus, any military aggression against the Arab Muslim world is sustained and any legitimate defence of a violated Muslim land is overruled.

Hence, it becomes important for education to assume its fundamental role in promoting democratic, peaceful and non-discriminatory societies. I believe that education, formal and non-formal, is the domain where learning and unlearning takes place. It is also where knowledge can be constructed and/or deconstructed validated and/or refuted. The quest for acquiring Knowledge, True Knowledge, is essentially a human struggle or what I call in Arabic-Islamic term: *Jihad*.

Goals and objectives of the study

Western Mass Media is a part of Popular Culture and it plays a major role in peoples' lives by informing them on issues and problems around the world. With the technological advancement, the pervasiveness of mass media became intense in peoples' lives. Its impact grew considerably stronger, especially in its persuasive effect when it comes to the formation of public opinion, creating reactions, influencing moods, and stirring up feelings such as anger or sympathy regarding news and events. All in all, today's Western mass media's influence is far reaching and its presence touches almost every country around the globe.

Stereotypes are dangerous and the stereotyping of any group of people is a damaging phenomenon. Thus, the primary goal of this study is to challenge stereotypes about Islam and Muslims and try to overturn them. To a large extent, this thesis intends to provoke thoughts and reactions which will ultimately bring about changes.

The study plans to show how stereotyped representations about Muslims in popular culture enclose a twofold intention: first, it heightens fears of Islam and Muslims; 'the other' in the public mind, and second it manufactures public consent for military intervention by U.S. government in Muslim countries when desired. Furthermore, the study intends to demonstrate that these stereotyped representations serve as a pretext for policy makers in the United States to justify the use of military aggression against Muslim countries. Hence, the study attempts to reveal the symbiotic relationship between American mass media and American politics.

The goal of this study is also to demonstrate the relevance of integrating the academic study of the representations of Islam in popular culture from a multicultural perspective

that emphasizes inclusion and not the exclusion of the 'other'. It is my hope that integrating the study of the representations of Islam in popular culture within curricula will help in demystifying the simplistic characterization of Islam and Muslims and will help in overturning the dangerous stereotypes. It is a matter of changing attitudes towards other cultures and once these attitudes are changed, the 'other' will be able to be an effective member of his of her society and subsequently will contribute towards building a democratic, just and peaceful world.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the conceptual framework of cultural theorists Edward Said and Henry A. Giroux. Taken together, both theorists provide extensive conceptual frameworks to analyse the inherent cultural ideologies and their relation to power. Both theorists advocate for questioning, deconstructing and changing dominant discourse associated with power and cultural ideologies. While Said's work addresses the politics inherent to Orientalism academia, Giroux's work, on the other hand, discusses the politics inherent to education.

 The first section of this study draws extensively upon Said's theory of Orientalism and the power of discourse that defines the Orient in a binary opposition to the Occident. Said's work provides insights into the power of knowledge which created and defined the Orient as the inferior 'other'. Said's work is significant when examining the representations and the stereotypes of Islam and Muslims in mass media. Interestingly, mass media stereotypes of Islam and Arabs are nothing but an extension of Orientalist

discourse that historically framed the Orient as uncivilized, primeval, primitive, and inferior to the West.

The second section of this study relies on the work of Henry Giroux and his theoretical articulation of critical pedagogy that makes a case against inherited assumptions. Just as Said, Giroux is also concerned with how power dynamics are established, what protract them, and how they can be changed. Giroux regards popular culture and particularly films as a pedagogical opportunity for open dialogue. Thus, popular culture is regarded as a site for struggle where power could be negotiated and democracy could be promoted. The prime role of critical pedagogy in analysing Hollywood movies would be to identify the oppressive cultural, economic and political structures and try to change them.

Literature Review

Plenty of ink has been spilled over the question of the representation of Islam or Muslims—I use these terms interchangeably—in Hollywood movies and the mass media. The topic has generated a considerable literary substance to the field of social science, and prompted many new grounds for debates and research.

Edward Said (1987) in his ground-breaking book *Orientalism* offers historical insights on the representations of Muslims and Islam. He argues that the dominant Orientalist and colonial discourse, since World War II, have been progressively constructing a frame of reference to the world about Islam and Arab Muslims. Islam was persistently represented as a threat, something to be feared or a form of subversion.

Syed M. Reza (2011) argues:

> [C]overage of Islam and Muslims in the media today is inherited from historical representation. Form European writers, to the French song of Roland, Dante, Marin Luther and historical grudges

have crafted misrepresentations on Islam and Muslims. Many of them are resurrected in popular press coverage today. The motion picture industry and particularly Hollywood has taken part in framing misrepresentations as well. From 1896, Muslims and Arabs have played antagonistic roles in popular cinema in over 900 movies (p.234)

Said (1997) in his book *Covering Islam* adds that scholars also take part in promulgating negative images about Islam and Muslims. Scholars such as Peter Rodman, Bernard Lewis, Daniel Pipes, Samuel P. Huntington, Judith Miller and many more contribute to the construction of a reductionist and biased image of Islam and Muslims. Said (1997) says that Bernard Lewis article:

> "The Roots of Muslim rage" which appeared in the September 1990 issue of The Atlantic, […] "is a crude polemic devoid of historical truth, rational argument, or human wisdom. It attempts to characterize Muslims as one terrifying collective person enraged at an outside world that has disturbed his almost primeval calm and unchallenged rule." (p. xxxii)

Said (1993) adds that representations in Orientalists' discourse "have purposes, they are effective most of the time, they accomplish one or many tasks. Representations are formations, or as Roland Barthes has said of all the operations of language, they are deformations" (p.250). Said believes that Orientalist discourse infiltrates all aspects of societies and can be traced particularly in movies. According to him, the following deformations framed by the Orientalist discourse highlight the ideological and racist attitudes regarding the Muslim World:

> "In the films and television the Arab is associated either with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty. […]He appears as an oversexed de-generate, capable, it is true, of cleverly devious intrigues, but essentially sadistic, treacherous, low. Slave trader, camel driver, money changer, colourful scoundrel: these are some traditional Arab roles in the cinema" (Said, 1993, p.262).

Jack Shaheen, author of the book *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (2001) demonstrates in a documentary based on his book how Muslim Arabs have been stereotyped and vilified in Hollywood films for many decades throughout the course of Hollywood history. Shaheen examines over 100 films from the earliest of Hollywood productions till today. He discovers a dangerously consistent pattern of hateful Arab

stereotypes. According to Shaheen (2001) "Muslim Arabs have been the most maligned group in the history of cinema, characterized by excessive stereotyping that exceeded negative images of Blacks, Native Americans, Asians, Hispanics and Jews" (p.12).

Shaheen, like Said links Hollywood images to politics and power. He contends that Hollywood image and politics are linked and they reinforce each other: "Policies enforce mythical images and mythical images help reinforcing policies" (Retrieved, May-17-2012, from, http://www.media.org). In the documentary, Jack Valenti, former President and CEO of Motion Picture Association of America says: "Washington and Hollywood spring from the same DNA" (Retrieved, May-17-2012, from, http://www.media.org).

Hollywood's misrepresentations of Islam and Arab Muslims have a great impact on people's opinion and shape the way people perceive Muslims. Dolby (2003) argues that popular culture's scope is very significant in the United States: it reaches into every aspect of people's lives, and influence how people think, act and react. For instance, the following statistics reveal to what extent the misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims in mass media has impacted Americans' feeling towards Muslims. According to USA Today/Gallup Poll in 2006:

> "48% of Americans believe torturing suspected terrorists is often or sometimes justified. 39% of Americans believe Muslims living in the U.S. are not loyal to America. More than one-third of Americans believe Muslims living in the U.S. are sympathetic to Al Qaeda. Nearly one-fourth of Americans say they would "not like to have a Muslim as a neighbour" (May-18-2012, Retrieved from: www.mediaed.org)

In the light of the above statistics and given the pervasive role of mass media, education today has the responsibility to demystify these misrepresentations in order to promote democracy, justice and peace in society.

When looking at the role of education in promoting democratic, peaceful and non-discriminatory societies it is useful to consult the sources that are concerned with the

topic. Henry Giroux (2001) argues that analysis of representations in Hollywood movies in schooling is imperative for promoting democracy, fairness, justice and anti-racism in societies. Moreover, Tisdell and Thompson (2007) believe in the powerful influence media has as a non-formal learning site in our daily lives, and thus the importance to teach critical media literacy not only for youth but especially for adults. They contend that since the adult learner is a consumer of entertainment media, it becomes important to teach media literacy in order to promote diversity and equity and develop resistance for the dominant cultural values which discriminate or stereotype the 'other'. According to Dolby, educators "cannot afford to ignore the role of popular culture [particularly Hollywood movies] as a site where things happen, where identities and democratic possibilities are worked out,"(2003, p. 276) and where the dominant cultural structures are constructed and challenged.

The role of education in promoting and implementing democracy, justice, and peace through the critical analysis of Hollywood movies cannot and should not be underestimated. Students should be taught about the values of democracy, justice and peace. But at the same time they should be taught how to identify political, economic and cultural realities that impede the development of democratic, justice and peaceful ideals and Hollywood movies offer a great learning opportunity for a critical understanding of these issues in concern.

<center>**Chapter One**</center>

<center>**Representation and Stereotypes of Islam and Muslims in Hollywood Movies**</center>

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the negative stereotypical representations of Arab Muslims in American popular media, and in Hollywood movies. I start by discussing the magnitude of stereotypes and their detrimental consequences on society. Then, I address the historical roots that contributed to the stereotyped representations of Muslim Arabs in Hollywood movies. I also argue that stereotyped representations of Muslim Arabs in Hollywood movies are historically grounded in and inherited from European Orientalists' tradition of colonialism. I demonstrate how producing a set of knowledge and images about the Orient, the West came not only to create the orient, but also to dominate it. I challenge the veracity and neutrality of the representations of Islam in the Orientalist discourse. I argue that while direct Colonialism has ended but imperialism lingers in political, economical and social practices. Such practices result in recurring stereotypes of Arab Muslims some of which are now manifested in the representations of notions like Jihad. The conceptual discussion if followed by an analysis of three movies. First I analyze two popular movies *Kingdom* (2007), and *Rules of Engagement* (2000) to demonstrate how these movies represent Muslims in a stereotypical manner. Second I analyze the movie *New Muslim Cool* (2009) as a counterpoint to show how such movies are needed in to promote of justice, peace and harmony in the world.

I would like to mention that Hollywood movies are by no means the only type of mass media or popular culture in which representations of Muslims in general and Arab

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Muslims in particular are made. Arab Muslims are repeatedly depicted as villains or negative/deviant characters in Disney movies, cartoons, computer games, comic books, books, magazines, newspaper, television and radio shows. Shaheen (2001), for example contends that Arabs in Hollywood movies are "hardly ever seen as ordinary people, practicing law, driving taxis, singing lullabies or healing the sick" (p.10). Although in this study I make reference to different types of mass media; however, my main focus will be on Hollywood movies. Given the frequency of their production, the considerable size of their audiences and the global reach of these movies; I believe that Hollywood movies provide an important field for the study of stereotyped representations of Islam and Arab Muslims because they have an immense influence in shaping attitudes and behaviour of viewers.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes have detrimental consequences for societies at all levels. They not only affect the group being stereotyped, but they also have an impact on the person who believes and applies the stereotype. For instance, tagging an entire race, nation, sex, profession, etc., with one label is a fixed preconception that distorts reality and denies people their diversity and individuality. In contrast, people who apply stereotypes tend to fall prey to misjudgement and deprive themselves of "the opportunity to discover the common humanity they share with others" (Lippman, 1922, p.50) and to have relationships with others based on rationality and critical judgment.

Similarly, according to Nelson:

> "Stereotypes can arise from, and sustain, intergroup hostility. They are sometimes linked to prejudices based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, and just

about other social category. They can serve to maintain and justify hegemonic and exploitive hierarchies of power and status. They can corrupt interpersonal relations, warp public policy, and play a role in the worst social abuses, such as mass murder and genocide. For all these reasons, social scientists—and especially psychologists—have understandably approached stereotypes as a kind of social toxin" (2009: p.199)

In his book, *Public Opinion*, Walter Lippman explains how stereotypes are formed in peoples mind. He states that "for the most part, we do not first see, and then define; we define first and then see" (Lippman, 1922, p.50). Lippmann pinpoints the causes of stereotypes and highlights the human tendency to instrumentally accept stereotypes as "pictures in our head" (Lippman, 1922, p. 9) before we even reflect upon them. What we know about ourselves, others and the rest of the world, is not what we have actually experienced but rather what we have been repeatedly told to be 'true'.

Richard Dyer analyzes stereotyped representations in terms of power relations. He argues:

"[…] how social groups are treated in cultural representation is part and parcel of how they are treated in life, […] how we are seen determines in part how we are treated; how we treat others is based on how we see them; such seeing comes from representation." (Dyer, 2002, p.1)

For instance, the stereotyped images created by Europeans during colonial times determined how Europeans understood and treated Muslims in the Orient. Said (1994) contends that western discourse in representing the Orient in a stereotyped way as the 'inferior other' gave the Western world the justification and legitimization to oppress, exploit and colonize the orient for centuries.

Dyer, R. (2002) says: "The position behind all the considerations [about stereotypes] is that it is not stereotypes, as an aspect of human thought and representation, that are wrong, but who controls and defines them [and] what interests they serve" (p.12. parentheses mine). Moreover, the problem with stereotypes is that they impose a certain

view of reality "he who has the bigger stick has the better chance of imposing his definitions of reality" (Dyer, 2002, p.12). Thus, stereotypes are a discursive type of power and that embodies relationships of inequality and domination. This brings us to the Foucauldian notion of discourse and power whereby discourse is intimately related to power and those who hold the power hold the 'truth' as well as the right to speak on behalf of the powerless. Edward Said notices this prevailing attitude to speak on behalf of Islam, despite lack of knowledge in the religion, even among western academic experts today. According to Said:

> "Academic experts on Islam in the West today tend to know about jurisprudential schools in tenth-century Baghdad or nineteenth-century Moroccan urban patterns, but never (or almost never) about the whole civilization of Islam—literature, law, politics, history, sociology, and so on. This has not prevented experts from generalizing from time to time about the 'Islamic mind' (1997, p. 15)

The identification of the connection between discourse and power has brought new perspective on colonial and postcolonial studies. It has contributed to the understanding of how historical and actual relations of inequality are constructed and sustained. In *Orientalism,* Said focuses on postcolonial studies with particular attention to the notion of power. He articulates the relationship between colonial imperialism, scholars, and the representation of the Orient.

Said contends that Orientalism represented Arab Muslims and the Orient in a stereotyped manner. He defines Orientalism discourse as a:

> "corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the orient" (Said, 1994, p.21

Said's statement sheds some light on how stereotypes operate, who holds them, whose benefit they serve and who gets affected by them. Negative stereotypes have harmful

consequences on people who experience them. In general, negative stereotypes allot low consideration regarding the person or the group being stereotyped. Stereotypes also reveal lack of sympathy and acceptance towards the 'other'. This is why it comes in no surprise that we see stereotyped people suffering different types of oppression, discrimination, reduced access to employment, fair income and good education, violation, unjust prosecution and in extreme cases violence committed against them. More often than not, stereotyped people tend to internalize oppression by developing low self-esteem or falling into depression. This is why it becomes important to take the challenge and address stereotyped representation of Muslim Arabs in Hollywood movies in anticipation to deal with them, create awareness about them and possibly prevent them.

Waking up Colonial history

It is important to examine the historical roots that contributed to the stereotyped representation of the Muslim world in Hollywood movies. I argue that stereotyped representations of Muslim Arabs in Hollywood movies are historically inherited from European Orientalists' tradition of colonialism.

To have an adequate grasp of how Hollywood stereotyped representations have been generated, and in order to fully understand how the West came to perceive Islam, Muslims and Arabs today, it is imperative to step back in time. Said (1994) argues that:

> "Appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is the past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps" (p.3).

Several historians such as Douglas Little (2002), Zachary Lockman (2004) and others went back to the seventh century, since the advent of Islam, the period of antiquity of ancient Greece and Rome, in order to investigate the western negative attitudes towards Islam. They argue that from the outset Islam was perceived as a threat to Christianity and Muslims were nothing but infidels who believed in the wrong God. Lockman (2004) argues "Muslims were for a long time understood to be just another pagan horde assaulting Christendom, not the bearers of a new monotheistic faith which was in many ways similar to Christianity and Judaism" (p.19). Besides, they were deemed "worshipers of the wrong God"; Muslims were perceived as enemies. Lockman contends that earlier attempts 'by western church scholars" to understand Islam were fundamentally "motivated by the kind of know your enemy attitude" (Lockman, 2004, p.24)

The point to note here is that the more contemporary representations of Islam and Muslims are rooted in and inherited from the early Orientalist scholarship. As much as these roots are important to be reached and introduced, due to the constraints of space and scope I will limit the scope of my research to the period stretching from colonialism where France and Great Brittan colonized the Orient to the end of the Second World War when the United States emerged as the world strongest power to present day. The contemporary phase left an intellectual legacy that underlines the contemporary knowledge of Islam and Muslims.

European colonial legacy and the divide

European physical and discursive colonization of the Muslim world constructed a binary representation between the West and the Orient, Islam and Christianity, Arabs and European, and even black and white. Unfortunately, these binaries remain pervasive in discourses, cultural conceptions, and power structures. Colonialism brought in mythical hierarchies and hostile racial demarcations that continue to shape contemporary views and behaviours against Arab Muslims.

In his book: *Colonial Gazing: The Production of the Body as 'Other',* George Yancy (2008) gives an account of the different mythical binaries between the colonial and the colonized which were constructed by colonialism:

> "Colonial invasive powers bring with them their own myths, beliefs, and forms of colonial ordering which create a bifurcated form of hierarchy that is designed to distinguish between the natives and the colonizers, a form of hierarchy where the colonizer (white, good, intelligent, ethical, beautiful, civilized) is superior in all things, while the native (dark, exotic, sexually uncontrollable, bad, stupid, ugly, savage, backward) is inferior. (P. 4)

Said believes that stereotypical images about the Orient as inferior, retrograde, ignorant are rooted in the old tradition of colonialism. Said (1994) argues that "[…] the extraordinary global reach of classical nineteenth- and early- twentieth century European imperialism still casts a considerable shadow over our own times"(1994, p.5). Since colonial times, and even before, Islam was perceived as a threat to Western society. "Islam has been looked at as monolithic and with fear and hostility (Said, 1997, p. 4). Said argues that there are of course religious, psychological and political reasons for this fear, "but all these reasons derive from the sense that Islam represents not only a

formidable competitor to the West, but also a latecoming challenge to Christianity" (Said, 1997, pp.4-5). He continues by saying that even when the world of Islam entered a period of decline and Europe a period of ascendency, fear of 'Mohammedanism' persisted (p. 5). And Islam was mainly seen as:

> "[…] a demonic religion of apostasy, blasphemy, and obscurity. It did not seem to matter that Muslims consider Mohammed a prophet and not a god; what mattered to Christians was that Mohammed was a false prophet, a sower of discord, a sensualist, a hypocrite, an agent of the devil."(Said, 1997, p. 5)

The colonial legacies especially the intellectual legacy creates the space where knowledge and power implicate each other to an extent where one cannot be understood without the other.

Knowledge, power and hegemony

By producing a set of knowledge and images about the Orient, the West came not only to 'create' the orient, but also to control and dominate it. How Europe came to know the 'other' Orient, through Orientalism, is what essentially connects knowledge to power. After all, the knowledge through which Europe came to know the Orient became an unquestioned truth. And this knowledge became the tool with which Europe discriminated, denigrated, and dominated the Orient culturally, economically and politically. Orientalism became a powerful system through which the Orient came to be understood and known. For Orientalism, no matter what the disciplines were, no matter how the methods varied, the end product was still the same: a fixed, inferior, primitive, violent, irrational, demon, exotic …Orient. The Orient has persistently and continually emerged as stereotypical image within Orientalism discourse and this is how Orientalism managed its hegemonic power over the Orient.

Said establishes the relationship between knowledge and power through his analysis of Belfour's Speech. Balfour defended the British occupation to Egypt by claiming: "We know the civilization of Egypt better than we know the civilization of any other country. We know it further back; we know it more intimately; we know more about it" (Said, 1994, p.32). According to Said:

> "The object of such knowledge is inherently vulnerable to scrutiny…To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And authority here means for "us" to deny autonomy to "it"…British knowledge of Egypt is Egypt for Balfour … Balfour no-where denies British superiority and Egyptian inferiority; he takes them for granted as he describes the consequences of knowledge" (1994, p.32)

To Balfour knowledge of Egypt not only provided the means to dominate Egypt, it gave the colonialists the justification to dominate. Balfour's "argument, when reduced to its simplest form, was clear, it was precise, it was easy to grasp. There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominates; the latter must be dominated," (Said, 1994, p.36).

This is but a small example of how Western political and cultural institutions established the binary opposition between the Orient and the Occident through knowledge regimes.

Orientalists have imagined, fantasized and fashioned the Orient in a manner to envisage Western values, whims and greed. Orientalists have depicted the Orient as a monolithic entity and historically speaking, the Western social and political discourse regarding Arab Muslims has been marked by a prejudice and singular discursive that reinforces and maintains the mythical foundation of colonialism. The important point is that colonialism was not just about physical occupation and political domination it was much more than this. Colonialism was also about the reproduction of the Islamic World or the Orient

through texts, records, and reports. Hence, any reproduction about the Orient reveals the close connection between knowledge production and power.

Knowledge, power and interpretation

Said directs a critique against academic Orientalists because they made the Orient a constructed piece of subject studies. Moreover, Said blames the academic discourse along with the political for constructing stereotyped and negative images about the Orient. He also believes that academic Orientalists have forged a trend of thinking which literary theorists have adopted.

Media and academic experts have dealt with Islam and its various cultures "within an invented or culturally determined ideological framework filled with passion, defensive prejudice, sometimes even revulsion". (Said, 1997, p.6) The pitfalls of this framework made it very difficulty to achieve any understanding of Islam as any thing other than the way it came out of the Orientalist discourse. Said examines the persistence of the apparent shortcomings that is plaguing the work of media and academic experts in representing Islam. He recognizes that these shortcomings are due to the intimate relationships between knowledge and power. United States government, media, academic experts, and scholars form a tightly closed circle and play together the unchanged role in delivering a single stereotyped image of Muslims and in perpetuating oppression against Muslims.

Media and academic experts' endeavour should bring to light honest and sensible information about the world; instead, their work became another form of cultural hegemony. Their constant preoccupation has been focused on how to portray an

"innocent" "good" image of American government in a waging warfare against "terrorists" and "demonic" Muslims. Muslim's World image through the media comes as uniformed and monochromatic, despite its complexity and plurality. Said (1997) argues that:

> "[..] media are profit-seeking corporations and therefore, quite understanbly, have an interest in promoting some images of reality rather than others. The do so within a political context made active and effective by and unconscious ideology, which the media disseminate without serious reservations of oppositions." (p.49)

Said asks how can any one say with any sort of fairness that media express one general view? He argues that the evidence "is in the quantitative and qualitative tendency to favour certain views and certain representations of reality than other" (Said, 1997, p. 49). For Said, American media and academic experts have failed to fulfil their responsibility as humanists, critical knowledge producers in every sense. They align with their government policies and reflect US agenda towards Muslim countries. Said (1997) argues that "studies have been done from differing standpoints affirm that […] the American media inevitably collect information on the outside world inside a framework dominated by government policy" (p.50).

Said draws our attention to the "implicit loyalty" and "patriotism" which influence news reporters and the way they report about the world. Evidently, American reporters promote and protect their American identity and by virtue they promote America and even the West. "They all have the same central consensus in mind. This shapes the news, decides what news is and how it is news." (Said, 1997, p. 52)

Said (1997) says: "Without a demystifying look at the relationship between power and knowledge in one context, we will have dodged the central nub of things" (p.133). Thus, it becomes crucial to Said to critically analyze and unveil the symbiosis of knowledge

and power. The drive for acquiring knowledge about the Muslim world is based on political and economic interests impinge upon knowledge production. Hence:

> "[…] the negative images of Islam continue to be very much prevalent than any others, […] such images correspond not to what Islam 'is' […] but to what prominent sectors of a particular society take it to be. Those sectors have the power and the will to propagate that particular image of Islam, and this image therefore becomes more prevalent, more present, than all others." (Said, 1997, p.144)

Said deplores the intellectual regulation of discourse about Islam because it is dangerous and it "positively and affirmatively encourages more of itself." Said is essentially telling us that Orientalist discourse is like a virus; the more it communicates with others, the more it infects, and the more it spreads. "This is why [Orientalist discourse] has persisted despite changes taking place in the world; and this is why it has continued to draw recruits to its service" (Said, 1997, p.157).

In challenging the veracity and the neutrality of the representations of Islam, Edward Said argues that all knowledge about human society, excluding the natural world, rests upon interpretations. First these interpretations are not without precedent or connection to other interpretations. Furthermore, these interpretations are situational, because they depend on the interpreter's purpose and who he or she is addressing. Thus, "knowledge about the other culture is subject to unscientific imprecision and to the circumstances of interpretation" (Said, 1997, p.162).

To sum it up, interpretation is not devoid of human feelings, this is why:

> "[…] interpretation must be self-conscious in its methods and its aims if it to be vigilant and humane, if it is also to arrive to knowledge. But underlying every interpretation of other cultures—especially of Islam—is the choice facing the individual scholar or intellectual: whether to put intellect at the service of power or at the service of criticism, community, dialogue, and moral sense. This choice must be the first act of interpretation today, and it must result in decision, not simply a postponement." (Said, 1997, p.172)

Said draws intellectuals attention to the interplay between interpretations and ones values. He believes that the intellectuals' predisposition has bearing on how they interpret the world and subsequently impact their knowledge production. But most importantly, Said is asking intellectuals to make a self-conscious decision by putting their knowledge at the collective service of humanity and moral sense. This done, intellectuals will be helping in changing the oppressive social conditions which are ravaging our world today. Said (1997) wonders:

> "[…] How many people use the labels [about Islam] angrily or assertively have a solid grip on all aspects […] on Islamic jurisprudence, or the actual languages of the Islamic World? Very few, obviously, but this does not prevent people from confidently characterizing 'Islam' […] or from believing they know exactly what it is they are talking about" (p.10)

He urges experts, scholars and media to be critical in their understanding of Islam and of 'other' cultures. Said believes that readers, writers, and viewers should be critical about the knowledge production of other cultures. The point here is not to defend Islam and other cultures when it comes to western media representations of them; but to make every one accountable of his/her role in building a world in which humans live in peace and harmony.

Orientalism after WWII: Ending colonialism and prolonging imperialism: discrimination, racism, dehumanization and social Darwinism

Nothing can make us further understand the connection between the present and the past more than the development of imperialism. Although today direct colonialism has ended; imperialism however "lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic and social practices." (Said,

1994, p.9) Thus the prevailing attitudes that existed during the eighteenth century or the period of direct colonialism remained albeit in new forms.

Said contends that after WWII Orientalist attitude of racism flooded the press and thus the popular mind. Arabs, for example, are thought of as "camel-riding, terroristic, hook-nosed, venal lechers whose undeserved wealth is an affront to real civilization" (Said, 1994, p.111). These false notions were used to justify western superiority over Arabs and the control of their lands. Said says: "Always there lurks the assumption that although the Western consumer belongs to a numerical minority, he is entitled either to own or to expend (or both) the majority of the world resources" (Said, 1994, p.111).

Said asks why these consistent stereotypes and discriminations are recurring in the Oriental discourse? The answer is simple: "unlike the Oriental, [the Occidental] is a true human being" (Said, 1994 p.111). Said cites Anwar Abdel Malek to describe the new Orientalists attitudes that have emerged after WWII towards Arab Muslims as: "the hegemonism of possessing minorities" (p.112) and "anthropocentricism allied with Europocentricism" (p.112). White Western supremacy ideologies are central to the conception of the relationship between discourse and politics/power.

For centuries, Western White World, dehumanized "non-white" and believed in its inherent "prerogative" to "manage and own" them. Said depict these widely held ideologies in the Orientalist discourse. For instance, "Friedrich Schlegel's lectures on language and on life, history and literature were full of […] discriminations against Semites language and low Orientals: agglutinative, un-aesthetic, and mechanical, they were different, inferior, backward" (Said, 1994, p.98). "Much of the racism in Schlegel's strictures upon the Semites and other 'low' Orientals was widely diffused in European

culture" (Said, 1994, p.99). Said contends that these racists and discriminatory attitudes in Orientalism correspond with the emergence of Darwinist theory that gave rise to hierarchal racial and cultural theories. To Said, these theories were incorporated in new Orientalist ideologies and gave no chance for non-Europeans to rise above their doom of being from a 'lower' origin. These theories "asserted that there was no escape from origins and the types these origins enabled; it set the real boundaries between human beings" (Said, 1994, p.233). In this way, an "irreducible distance" between Europeans and their vanquished "other" is maintained through simple racial prejudice. Since the Oriental, by means of 'scientific theory', was condemned to being from a lower race, every thing else about the Oriental subsequently became 'lower': knowledge, tradition, language, mind, history, society, faith, religion, and so on. Said quotes Friedrich Schlegel discriminating Muslims and Arabs language as an example of the above: "Hebrew, […] was made for prophetic utterance and divination; the Muslims, however, espoused a dead Empty theism, a merely negative Unitarian faith" (Said, 1994, p. 103).

There is not doubt that the racial theory has helped in reinforcing the notion of European superiority, as a race, underpins the binary general standpoint of 'us' versus 'them' again. Said criticizes in his book these types of theories which fuel the proliferation of racial myths of dominance:

> "Race Theory, ideas about primitive origins and primitive classifications, modern decadence, the progress of civilization, […] all these were elements in the peculiar amalgam of science, politics and culture whose drift, almost without exception, was always to raise Europe or European race to dominion over non European portions of mankind" (Said, 1994, p.232)

Modern Orientalism

"Stereotype may be so consistently and authoritatively transmitted in each generation from parent to child that it seems almost like a biological fact" (Lippman, 1992, p.5).

Said calls the phase of Orientalism that emerged after the Second World War: Modern Orientalism. However, modern Orientalism was not totally modern as it carried within itself the legacies of the great European hostility towards Muslims and Islam. The general scope that was once given to an Arab has developed "form a faintly outlined stereotype as a camel-riding nomad to an accepted caricature as the embodiment of incompetence and easy defeat" (Said, 1997, p. 261). However, after the Arab oil embargo against the US and the (Egyptian and Syrian) surprise attack on Israel in 1973, a new image of a Muslim Arabs has emerged: "something more menacing and cause of trouble". A Muslim Arab was perceived as "at the bottom of all oil shortage trouble" in the West, and as "the disrupter of Israel's and the West's existence, or in another view of the same thing, as a surmountable obstacle to Israel's creation in 1948" (Said, 1997, p.261).

Any portrayal of the Muslim Arab in modern Orientalism was either something conferred to him or "taken from him by the Orientalist tradition, and later, the Zionist tradition" (Said, 1997, p.262). In the films and television for instance:

> "Aside from his anti-Zionism, the Arab is an oil supplier. The Arab is associated either with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty. He appears as an oversexed de-generate, capable, it is true, of cleverly devious intrigues, but essentially sadistic, treacherous, low. Salve trader, camel driver, money changer, and colourful scoundrel: these are some traditional Arab roles in the cinema" (Said, 1997, p.262).

In newsreels or news-photos:

> "The Arab is always shown in large numbers. No individuality, no personal characteristics or experiences. Most of the pictures represent mass rage and misery, or irrational (hence hopelessly eccentric) gestures. Lurking behind all of these images is the

menace of *jihad.* Consequence: a fear that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world" (Said, 1997, p.262).

Books and articles about Islam and Arabs reflected "no change over the virulent anti-Islamic polemic of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance" (Said, 1997, p.262). Slanderous and racist attitudes such as "Arabs are […] murderers and violence and deceit are carried in the Arab genes" (Said, 1997, p.262) circulated in articles and magazine. The negative stereotypes (sexist, violent, anti-Semitic, anti-democratic, anti-human, barbaric, irrational) haunted Muslims Arabs in all aspects of modern Orientalism especially after 9/11. Since then, a hostile milieu of political violence associated with Islam and Muslims has set the boundaries for modern Orientalist discourse. Islam and Muslims image emerged as problematic, jeopardizing world peace, public safety and security of the Western world. Modern Orientalism (like its predecessor traditional Orientalism) combined with US political views and utterance, fueled and perpetuated stereotypes and misrepresentations against Muslim Arabs in public consciousness. The most recurring stereotype of Muslim Arabs that Western society hears in modern Orientalism is: Terrorists. Said says that "a survey of *Arabs in American Textbooks* reveals the most astonishing misinformation, or rather the most callous representations of an ethnic-religious group" (Said, 1997, p.262). Muslims were believed to be terrorists, fundamentalists, extremists who are not compatible with the modernist western life style. There is no doubt that misinformation and miss representation of Muslim Arabs in modern Orientalism have serious implications. The failing to portray objectively the Muslim Arabs image in modern Orientalism discourse has contributed significantly in the shaping of wars and peace conflict resolutions. The whole world is still bearing the consequences socially and economically. These misrepresentations have heightened

mistrust between the East and the West and contributed to the rise of Islamophobia. Moreover, it hindered the peace process in the world and played a major role in the upsurge of extremism and radical movements.

Jihad equals terrorism? Who has the power to define Jihad?

The term *Jihad* has been one of the most discussed and represented issue by the American media. Although misconstrued, and mistakenly interpreted as a 'holy war', *Jihad* continued to make headlines in news and films. For instance, Said discusses in his book a PBS documentary film/book entitled *Jihad in America* was written and produced by reporter Steven Emerson; Said contends that:

> "[…] despite a few explicit statements in the film that most Muslims are peace-loving and 'like us', the purport of the film is to agitate against Islam as sinister breeder of cruel, insensate killers, plotters, and lustfully violent men. […] The Impression Emerson finally leaves the viewer with is that Islam equals *jihad* equals terrorism, and this in turn reinforces a feeling of cultural fear and hatred against Islam and Muslims" (Said, 1997, pp. 76-77).

Once again, Said demonstrates how the American media speaks on the behalf of Islam and Muslims about a concept such as *Jihad*. Emerson gave himself the right to define a very complex term *jihad* with a myopic vision. Although the word *Jihad* carries multiple connotations linguistically and religiously; for example: not following ones whims, fasting, abstinence, giving money to the needy, defending and protecting the week, and even resorting to peaceful actions and solutions in times of conflict. Nonetheless, Emerson intentionally chose to define *Jihad* only through a violent and bloody lens. *Jihad*, in Emerson's 'understanding', and in many other Orientalists' understanding as well, is nothing but a holy war waged against the West. Debates, books, news, and films are dedicated to portray *Jihad* exclusively as a holy war. This misconception penetrated

the general American public's mind, which subsequently excluded any other interpretation of *Jihad*. The simplified "interpretation" of the word "*Jihad*" has triggered endless debates about the issue itself in Western media especially since 9/11.

Said discusses the '*Jihad*' motif even further in the second chapter of his book: *The Iran Story*. He explains:

> "The Jihad (holy war) motif was also given an extraordinary run by the Los Angeles Times in and article by Edmund Bosworth […], and has become the single most important motif in Western media representations of Islam. […] Bosworth goes on indiscriminately to adduce a great deal of historical 'evidence' to support the theory that all political activity for a period of twelve hundred years in an area that includes Turkey, Iran, Sudan, Ethiopia, Spain, and India can be understood as emanating from the Muslim call for Jihad." (Said, 1997, p.114)

Said shows how the media coverage of the concept *Jihad* in Orientalists' discourse has persistently associated Islam with violence, fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism. These reductionist views of Islam formed the framework based on which hostile and aggressive American policies were implemented against Islam and Muslims inside the US and around the world.

In her book: *Their Jihad…Not My Jihad*! author Raheel Raza discusses how the broad concept of *Jihad,* which means to struggle, has become known by western society through "hatred, destruction and suicide bomber". To convey a more just meaning of the Arabic word *jihad* she says:

> "*Jihad* is probably one of the most misunderstood words in the world today by both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The word means to strive, and it defines the Muslim "struggle" to do the will of Allah. This struggle is primarily a personal one but secondarily a social one. In both cases, since the struggle is to fulfill the will of a merciful and compassionate God, *jihad* involves putting aside personal and national ambitions for the betterment of humanity." (Raza, 2005, p.17)

Interpreting the word Jihad to mean just 'holy war' has certainly fueled public fear against Muslims. The terrorists' events committed by 'Muslim' extremist individuals have exacerbated the interpretation of the word *Jihad.* Moreover, *Jihad* was manipulated

by other extremist groups to fuel tension between Jews and Muslims. For example, in September-2012, a series of ads were run in the New York City subway reading: "*In any war between the civilized man and the savage. Support the civilized man. Support Israel. Defeat Jihad.*" These narrowly apprehend interpretations of *Jihad* have contributed to irrational actions and intensified hatred against Muslims. These types of interpretation drove Erika Menendez to push Sunado Sen, a Hindu man, to his death in the path of an oncoming subway train in New York City. Menendez stated to the police that she thought she was pushing a Muslim man. This highlights the anti-Muslim atmosphere that has been created by wrongful and subjective representations of Islam.

To illustrate the power of such misrepresentations Said says:

> "Once we finally grasp the sheer power and the subjective components of interpretation, and once we recognize that many of the things we know are ours in more ways than we normally admit, we are well on our way to disposing of some naïveté, a great deal of bad faith, and many myths about ourselves and the world we live in." (Said, 1997, p. 78)

Said (1997) discovers the harnessed fear of Islam in 'academic experts' like Samuel Huntington, Martin Kramer, Daniel Pipes, and Barry Rubin, and a whole battery of Israeli academics. Said (1997) says: "the role of these so called experts is to make sure that the "threat" [of Islam] is kept before our eyes." (p.79) He believes that these experts take advantage of the "indifferent" and "poorly informed American clientele" to make the Islamic threat "disproportionately fearsome" […]. "Lending support to the thesis (which is an interesting parallel to anti-Semitic paranoia) that there is a worldwide conspiracy behind every explosion" (Said, 1997, p. xxxiv). Said also contends that these experts are disseminating a culture of fear "while assuring themselves profitable consultancies, frequent televisions appearances and book contracts" (Said, 1997, p. xxxiv).

Said believes that academic experts and media play a complementary role in spreading a demonizing view Islam and Muslims. Said also believes that media coverage of terrorists attack has contributed to the accentuation of fear against Islam, and "strengthened the hand of Israel and the United States as well as their regimes in the Muslim world" (Said, 1997, p. xxxv). Media coverage and books such as: *God Has Ninety Nine Names: Reporting from a Militant Middle East,* by Judith Miller, or *Militant Islam Reaches American* by Daniel Pipes, are nothing but mere "manipulation" of Islam for "retrograde political purpose":

> "[...] they furnish and additional weapon in the contest to subordinate, beat down, compel, and defeat any Arab or Muslim resistance to United States-Israeli dominance. Moreover, by superstitiously justifying a policy of single-minded obduracy that links Islamism, however lamentable it is, to a strategically important, oil-rich part of the world, the anti-Islam campaign virtually eliminates the possibility of any sort of equal dialogues between Islam and the Arabs, and the West or Israel. To dehumanize and demonize a whole culture on the grounds that it is "enraged" at modernity is to turn Muslims into the Objects of a therapeutic, punitive attention" (Said, 1997, p. xxxv).

In Tigar (2007) book: *Thinking about Terrorism: the Threat to Civil Liberties in Times of National Emergency*, professor of the Islamic Studies in the Sorbonne: Mohammed Arkoum comments on the drama that is facing our world today:

> "There is the Occident and the rest of the world, the world's waste product. And as there are countries that are treated like the waste production of an ancient archaism who are called terrorists, Islamic fascists there is a terrifying division of people living on our planet. That's not about justifying the murderous terrorism but about listening to human suffering origination from prison where whole peoples are." (p. 101)

Said recognizes that there have been acts of terrorism and he does not try to diminish the horror of these acts, but he also recognizes the connection between terrorism and injustice. As Tigar argues:

> "Recognizing this connection is not a means to excuse or justify terrorist acts by state or non-state actors. Rather, one can see that military force can contribute to higher levels of violence and that often interventions in the name of anti-terrorism are, in fact, a cover for maintaining unjust systems" (2007, p. 98).

Said has been arguing that the demonization of the Muslim world has served to maintain control over Muslims and the exploitation of their resources. Moreover, this demonization of the Muslim world has resulted in many aggressions around the world against Muslims such the occupation of the Palestinian land, the ethnic cleansing of Bosnians Muslims by Serbians, Russian aggression against Muslims in Chechnya, US war against Iraq, bombing Muslims in Afghanistan, in Pakistan, and in Yemen. Although many innocent Muslim civilians are being attacked and killed every day, nonetheless, the West is justifying these horrors.

Media in general and Hollywood movies have contributed to the justification of atrocities against Muslim civilians around the world. Their representations of Muslims were extensive and for sure they were successful in making Islam known. However, their representation is deceptive, biased, and does not even come close to being objective.

Almost the majority the United States media, experts or scholars have ever placed any terrorist, 'Islamic fundamentalist', act in its political and social historical context. US media has always turned a blind eye on the flagrant atrocities committed against Muslims. This deeply rooted bias can be traced back to the Middle Ages and the Orientalist guild tradition that shaped Western attitudes towards Islam.

We should not forget to mention the economical interests that influence American media in covering Islam. Said argues that American media discourse on Islam "if not absolutely vitiated, then certainly colored by the political, economic, and intellectual situation in which it arises" (Said, 1997, p. lvii). Thus, it would not be an overstatement to say that representations of Islam, Arab Muslims in media and Hollywood movies have an interest in some authority or power. Moreover, it should not come as a surprise to any intellectual

mind to watch Arab Muslims being represented in a stereotyped manner in Hollywood movies.

Putting the text into the context: United States modernization and renewed colonialism

We cannot fully understand the current precarious situation concerning the relationship between the West and the Muslim World unless we deeply investigate the root of the problems. Efforts to promote the modernization agenda in the Muslim world persisted through many decades following the Second World War. As many western countries were moving along the path of modernization, the assumption that Islam represents an obstacle to the modernization process of the Muslim world was hotly debated in western discourse. The general assumptions of these discourses is that whereas the 'greater West' "has surpassed the stage of Christianity, its principle religion, the world of Islam […] is still mired in religion, primitivity, and backwardness" (Said, 1997, p. 10).

Huge sums were invested into the Muslim world (Africa and Asia) in order to stop communism; while a discourse of 'modernization' emerged to celebrate and diffuse American values of 'democracy', 'peace', 'freedom', and 'equality'. The main purpose of the modernization process was to "promote United States trade, and above all, to develop a cadre of native allies whose express *raison d'être* seemed to be the transformation of uncivilized countries into mini-Americas (Said, 1997, p. 29).

Although 'modernization' was celebrated for its positive aspects in the western world, nonetheless, its negative aspects on the Muslim world should be recognized. Modernization epitomized an oppressive hegemony of cultural infiltration in the Muslim

world. The ideological determination of the United States to change the Muslim world resulted in the development of counter hegemonic Islamic movements. After the Second World War to present day, the Muslim world has been witnessing the rise of reactionary fundamentalist religious groups against imposed American norms of secularism. The western style of thoughts and habits of perceiving Islam and the Muslim world as a 'threat' to democracy and liberation prompted the United States to meddle in the prevention of religious groups to attain power in many Muslim countries. For instance,

> "[f]ears generated in the West by the electoral victories of the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria in 1990-1991, and the Turkish military's ending of the government of Necmettin Erbakkan in 1997 attests to [the] […] underlying assumption that an Islamic state, even if democratically established, would be transformed into an illiberal and undemocratic 'theocracy." (Voll, 2007, March-2-2012 Retrieved from: http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/IMG/pdf/islam_democr.pdf)

The meddling of the United States in the political affairs of Algeria resulted in many years of civil war and blood shed between the FIS and the Algerian national army. The 'fear' of Islam by the United States has been translated into its support to oppressive regimes all over the Muslim world. While promoting democracy and liberty through modernization, the United States prevented nations in the Muslim world from determining their own destiny and exercising their free will to choose their own governments. Thus, the seeds of radical Western policies in the Muslim world grew into radical Islamic movements. It is within this complicated-intertwined context that political and social events are taking course today.

Modernization did not only have its negative political implications on the Muslim world, but it also brought about its economic ruin. Modernization was a concocted instrument to conceal the hidden agenda through which the Muslim world was economically penetrated. Throughout the Muslim world, American 'modernization' policy consistently

sought to hinder efforts promoting independent nationalism. Independent nationalism means efforts that attempt to attain national autonomy or any sovereignty in managing security, resources and domestic and foreign policies.

In his book: *Middle East Illusions: Including Peace in the Middle East? Reflection on justice and nationhood,* Noam Chomsky (2003) gives a detailed illustration on how US policies in the Muslim World, since the Second World War, have contributed to the impoverishment of Arab Muslims and prevented them from "independent nationalism" by exploiting their wealth, energy resource such as oil, and by implementing and supporting dictatorship regimes. Any attempt to resist US political framework in the Middle East was quickly prevented. According to Chomsky:

> "[…]A conservative nationalist government led by Mohammad Mossadegh tried to extricate from United States political framework in 1953 that attempt was quickly reversed with a military coup sponsored by the United States and Britain that restored the Shah. […], [in] Egypt Gamal Abdel Nasser became influential figure and a symbol of independent nationalism [he] was considered a major threat […], and a "virus" that might "infect others". (Chomsky, 2003, pp.210-212)

The above historical illustration proves that the 'modernization' of the Muslim world was not intended to bring democracy or liberty to Muslims. It was essentially a tool to control, subjugate and impoverish Muslims. Today, the Muslim world occupies the highest ranking on the poverty echelon. Despite its abundant natural wealth, the scope of poverty has become wide spread to the point it reached almost all Islamic nations. Many Muslims live in deprivation and below the poverty line especially in the African countries. There are certainly a number of factors that have contributed to the lamentable situation in the Muslim world; however the installation of totalitarian regimes by the US in the Muslim world has been detrimental. For decades, the US consistently supported dictatorships in the Muslim world, provided that dictators would ensure stability to the US and Israel, and

safeguard American interests in the area. The US enchantments of 'freedom' and 'democracy' turned out to be the shackles through which they dominated the Muslim world.

Said (1997) argues that there has been no important "scholarly or expert that counterweighed the blindness" (p.22) of United States policy regarding the Muslim world. He sends an alarming message by predicting disastrous results as a consequence of American cruel and unjust policies. He further contends that the United States cannot expect the Muslim World "to embrace the West wholeheartedly" while its policies and military forces are oppressing and killing people in the Muslim World. Moreover, when American media and especially Hollywood portray Arab Muslims as extremist, fundamentalist, terrorists and fails to put the text into context; this is will not promote constructive relationships between the West and the Muslim World and this will hinder the peace process around the world.

In the following section, through a detailed analysis of two Hollywood movies, I provide an illustration of how Hollywood movies have contributed to the misrepresentations of Muslims and consequently to the many injustices against them.

Representations of Islam and Muslims in Hollywood movies: Analysis of The Kingdom (2007) & Rules of Engagement (2000)

In this section is I show how stereotyped representations of Islam and Muslims in Hollywood movies mirror US politics towards the Muslim world. It is, in my belief, that representation of Arab Muslims in Hollywood movies should be read and understood in relation to the larger context of US political and economic domination of Muslim

countries. I also demonstrate that Hollywood movies fuel negative pubic feeling towards Muslims and seek to reinforce and favour military violence in resolving conflicts between the US and Muslim countries. I undertake my analysis through the examination of *The Kingdom* (2007) a post 9/11 movie and *Rules of Engagements* (2000) a pre-9/11 movie. These two movies do not exhaust the examination of Hollywood stereotyped representations of Islam and Muslims; nonetheless they provide a good example of how Hollywood movies have been circulating negative images about Islam and Muslims. These movies articulate the US political agenda behind the 'war on terror'. It is important to highlight in this instance how US governments and particularly during the Bush administration "have frequently turned to movies and television industries during time of war and crisis to enlist their support in public education of threats and danger" (Dodds, 2008, p.230).

The Kingdom

The Kingdom is an action thriller genre movie and its content is profoundly grounded within the discourse of the US engagement with the "war on terror". The movie's storyline is inspired by a (2003) real terrorist event that took place in a compound in Riyadh Saudi Arabia, where a suicide car bombing took the lives of many innocent people, including American citizens. The movie requires particular attention to its content and how it functions as a promoter to US policies in Muslim and how it fuels the climate of fear of Muslims in the US. Thus, it becomes interesting to analyse how *The Kingdom* not only contributes to the accentuation of the culture of fear but also reinforces the

classical stereotypes of Muslims that Orientalist discourse has been propagating. I begin my analysis by providing a general summary of the movie.

Following a suicide bombing attack on an American compound in Saudi Arabia (Riyadh), a team of four FBI agents are sent to Saudi Arabia to investigate the incident, catch the criminals and bring justice to American citizens who have died in the attack. The Saudi authorities limit the team's sojourn to five days and also limit its movement around the country in order to ensure their safety. With the assistance of a Saudi officer, Colonel Al-Ghazi, FBI agent Ronald Fleury (main character) and his team lunch a dangerous investigative mission on Saudi soil. Al-Ghazi who is somewhat 'Westernized', speaks English, acts as a translator and mediator between the FBI team and the Saudis and facilitates the operation of Fleury's team on Saudi's soil despite the impediments of religious and cultural conventions. The turningpoint of the story is provided when the terrorists group kidnaps Leavitt, one of Fleury's team members. Al-Ghazi and the FBI team track down the kidnappers to their apartment where they were planning to prepare a videotape of Leavitt beheading. A violent shooting occurs, but in the end, victoriously, the FBI agents (good guys) are able to uncover the mastermind who was responsible for the bombing; an old man named Abou Hamza who wants to be another "Osama Bin Laden". Abou Hamza is executed, and his grandchild, a teenaged boy, who was following his grandfathers' footsteps, dies during a violent shoot-out but not before he kills Colonel Al-Ghazi towards the end of the movie.

The Introduction sets the stage by laying down the foundation of a retrograded and primitive image for Saudi Arabia, a country that symbolizes Muslims and Islam, versus a

modern and advanced image of the West. We hear the voice of a narrator shedding some light on the history of how Saudi Arabia came to be established as a kingdom:

-Narrator: *"After capturing most the Arabian Peninsula with the help of the Wahhabi Islamic warriors, Ibn Saud establishes the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Wahhabis were fiercely anti-Western. They want to go back in time to a pure Islam that wasn't threatened by the West.*

The above narration demonstrates how Hollywood depicts "pure Islam" as regressive, fundamentally "anti-Western" and in opposition with "modernization". The message is reinforced by a visual and clichéd representation casting upon an open desert with camels and men on horses fighting with swords. Later on, the voice of the narrator explains how the Saudis discovered oil "*by chance*" in their land when looking for water. Since that time, the narrator adds: "*They* (Saudis) *want America to be there in the Kingdom because we are their security…. the Saudi elite became notorious big spenders*"; the narrator's voice recycled the old stereotypes that depict Arabs as rich and incompetent who do not know the value of money and thus in need for Americans to ensure their security and help pump their oil. In order to accommodate the American workforce in Saudi Arabia, "*The first western housing compounds were created.*" However, a woman's voice adds: "*The strict Islamic laws enforced outside of these walls do not apply inside* (the compounds)." From the very beginning, the movie sets the stage for two contrasting cultures: The moderate and modern Christian West versus the strict and old-fashioned Muslim East.

Viewers are then taken immediately into the American compound in Riyadh where we see Americans playing a softball game. Inside the compound, we see American men playing with their children and wives cheering them on. The camera takes us back into the US (Washington, DC), where FBI agent Fleury is in his son's school talking to kindergarten children about his son's birth. The movie offers the viewers a serene and

peaceful environment about American life wherever they live. Suddenly, peace is shattered by gunshots, followed by bombs blowing in the American compound. A suicide bomber emerges onto the scene hiding grenades in his clothing. He repeats to Americans: "*Please do not panic every thing okay. Come. Follow me, please. Come with me.*" After he gathers people around him, he screams in Arabic: "*Allah Akbar*: God is the greatest", detonates the grenade and kills more innocent people. With this extremely violent scene the movie sets the stage to construct Islam and Muslims as the enemy of the West. Arab Muslims in the kingdom are portrayed as ruthless and evil terrorists who are devoid of compassion towards human misery. In contrast, the movie shows that Americans are innocent victims who lost their lives in trusting a cunning evil Muslim man. During the violent scene, we hear people screaming and children crying, we see dead American bodies on the ground. In the midst of this violence, we see a Saudi man (one of the perpetrators) on a balcony, holding his child's face in his hand, forcing him to callously watch how Americans are getting killed. Back in the US the movie shows Fleury, as a loving caring father, hugging his son, talking to him softly and protecting him by hiding the news about the horrible event.

The movie draws a clear distinction between the character of an Arab Muslim and of an American by switching locations between Saudi Arabia (where the terrorist attack takes place) and the United States (where Fleury tells children a story about his son's birth). The sharp contrast between the two cultures is further emphasized in a dialogue between Fleury and his son Kevin; Fleury receives a phone call informing him about the terrorist incident in the American compound in Saudi Arabia. The little boy asks his father:

Kevin: "*what happened?*"

Fleury: "*Some bad things happened.*"

Kevin: "*A lot of bad people out there?*"

Fleury: *Yeah. But you are not one of them.*

The characterization of Arab Muslims as "*bad people*" from the little boy and the father answering "*But you are not one of them*" reveals the ideological persistence of colonial heritage and the old orientalist attitudes that dichotomizes the world into the "Good Christian West" versus "Bad Muslim East".

What is most notable about the movie is the fact that it does not provide any contextualization or any explanation for the terrorist attack; hence the violence committed by Muslims appears to be driven by irrational religious radicalism. However, the use of excessive violence by Americans on Saudi soil is authorized, legitimized and rationalized in the movie because it is driven by the motive to catch the criminals, bring justice to those who have died and insure the safety and security of the American people. A conversation between Fleury and Leavitt highlights the rationalization of the FBI's mission in Saudi Arabia:

"Al Qaeda lost the first phase of this war. And they know it. So a new zero-sum phase has begun. If you're a Westerner or a moderate Arab and you won't join us, we will let loose the truly talented murderers. Men like Abou Hamza. These are operational commanders who plan, organize, train, brainwash, and preach extreme violence. These are the men we're fighting."

The Americans' fight is courageous, honourable and heroic because it is not ideologically driven like Muslims; it is rather a *necessary* fight that doesn't compromise the safety and security of Americans by letting loose religious fanatics that kill the innocent. It is in the

final scene of the movie where Americans' violence is most justified even against children. A confrontation takes place between the FBI team and the terrorists. A teenaged boy kills Officer Al-Ghazi, the only moderate Muslim helping the FIB team. Agent Fleury shockingly screams: *"God, he's just a kid. He's just a kid."* FBI agent Mayes sees the boy directing his gun towards agent Leavitt and Mayes warns the boy:

"Put it down! Put it down! Put that gun down. Put the […] gun down right now! Put the gun down!" When the boy doesn't respond to Mayes' order, she shoots him dead.

This is the most dehumanizing scene in the movie proving that Arabs are violent and breed violent children. Given the fueled tension and emotions against Arab Muslims in the United States, the movie certainly does not give leeway for the general public to perceive Muslims outside the scope of "terrorist". In addition, the movie contributes to fix the terrorist image of Arab Muslims in the public's imagination. Moreover, at the time where mutual trust and understanding is greatly needed, unfortunately the movie reinforces the negative image of Muslims as violent and dangerous people including their little children.

Remarkably, the final scene in the movie closes with two identical conversations where the terrorist Abou Hamza whispers to his grandchild: *"were gonna kill them all"*; and FBI agent Fleury whispers to Janet, the wife of one of the terrorist attack victims, *"were gonna kill them all."* The movie leads the viewers to feel that while Muslim violence towards all Americans is based on racial hate; American killing is based on self-defence and justice. The final message in the movie is: there is no end to killing. They will both kill each other while the motivation for the killing differs. One is morally motivated

while the other is morally bankrupt. The vicious cycle of killing continues and all hope for building peace is dissipated by Muslims, as portrayed by the movie.

The character About Hamza who is depicted in the movie as a deranged man who wanted to be another "Osama Bin Laden", brings to mind the horrors of the 9/11 events. Abou Hamza and his grandchild are portrayed as another incarnation of Osama bin Laden. This leaves the viewers to believe that even if Osama bin Laden dies, there will be more bin Ladens like him in the Muslim World. Thus, they should be prevented from perpetrating other 9/11 events. The death of the teenaged boy, Abou Hamza's grandchild suggests that terrorism among Arab Muslims is inherited from grandfather to grandchild. This reconfirms the basic pattern that Hollywood propagates that violence in Arab Muslims is inherent. The movie makes a clear association between the Islamic religion and violence through the theme of *Jihad*. We see the perpetrator of the bombing preaching a group of young men including little boys by telling them:

> *The operation of Al-Rahmah compound was a blessed invasion and a great Jihad. This is only the beginning. If God is willing, we shall kick out all infidels from all Muslim lands. Go bless you, my sons. Allah will give us victory. God is the Great. Peace be upon you all. Glory to Allah.*

This statement leads viewers to believe that the conflict between Muslims and the West is un-ending due to the violent nature of the Islamic religion, hence validating the theory of the "clash of civilizations".

In addition to being portrayed as terrorists, Arab Muslims are represented as inept and incapable of conducting their own investigation on their own soil to uncover the perpetrators of the terrorist act. They needed the intelligence of American FBI agents to

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do the job for them. We see a Saudi prince telling the press about the FBI team's presence in Saudi Arabia: "*They are not here to arrest anyone, they are here to help*". American agent Sykes asks Officer Al-Ghazi condescendingly: "*Do you understand evidence? Little things that are clues? Clues can be very helpful to a fellow trying to solve a crime."* With these questions, the Saudi Officer is depicted as ignorant in his own field and in need for a master to show him how to conduct an investigation and collect evidence. In the film, we see female agent Mayes conducting her forensic investigation while Officer Al-Ghazi walks behind her clueless, telling her not to touch Muslim male bodies because it is "*Haram*" (forbidden) and against Islamic conventions. The depiction of the Saudis as inept and incapable proves how much Hollywood movies represent Arab Muslims in a stereotyped manner. They reinforce the structure of power relationships between the US and Arab Muslim countries by sustaining the superiority of a modern and advanced West over an ignorant backward Muslim World.

A close examination of the role of female agent Janet Mayes reveals that her role represents the liberal, superior and advanced American culture to which Mayes belongs versus the hermetic, inferior and backward Saudi Islamic culture to which Saudi women are associated. Although in some instances Mayes is denied access and gets prevented from meeting the Saudi Prince because she is a female; nonetheless, Mayes appears as a free woman, dressed in pants and shirt that reveal her body features. She has scientific knowledge and works as a forensic investigator. She is strong, independent and intrepid; equal to her male colleagues and an indispensable member of her team. Mayes is regarded as the saviour of Leavitt's' life since she executes the boy who wanted to shoot

Levitt. Mayes personifies the American female warrior who joins her country in the "war on terror".

The role of the Saudi Muslim woman has barely any impact despite the fact that the Saudi male presence is very obvious in the *Kingdom*. The Arab Muslim woman appears in three instances and very briefly. In introduction, we see the backside of two women dressed in black *Abaya (*long dress*)*. Ironically, the appearance of these two women coincides with the narrator's voice commenting on Saudi culture by saying: "*this is a nation where tradition and modernity are in violent collision*". This makes the viewers believe that the woman in Saudi Arabia is an incarnation of what is old, prehistoric and anti-development. Although the Muslim woman's body has no significant presence in the movie, it serves to establish a parallel with their own culture and to contrast her with the body of the American woman. The body of the Saudi Muslim woman symbolizes the primitive 'other' in comparison to the body of the civilized American woman. Intriguingly, these two women do not have any role; their brief appearance serves as a tool through which the uncivilized Arab Muslim culture can be established. Towards the very end another Arab Muslim female figure appears during a violent scene where the perpetrators are tracked down and executed. This time we hear her frail voice in Arabic asking her little nephew to reveal his grandfather's final message. This scene, though very brief, depicts the Arab Muslim woman as helpless and week. There is no mention of her name; she is sitting in a dark corner of the room with many other women around her with only one man (Abou Hamza). This leads viewers to believe that the women are in a "*Harem*" like situation emphasizing their subjugation to one man thereby reinforcing the stereotyped image of the Old *"sheikh"* who has many women around him.

The *Kingdom* exemplifies the problematic and discriminatory representations of Arab Muslims that Hollywood has been propagating. Through careful selection and exclusion of certain representations, the movie recycles every single stereotype perpetuated against Arab Muslims. The movie does not allow for a construction of a more diversified characterization of Arab Muslims; the underlying goal is to build a negative stereotyped image of Arab Muslims.

The *Kingdom* is particularly alarming given the time of its release, after 9/11 attacks, and the intensified anxiety towards Islam, Muslims and Arabs as they are perceived as an threat. The potential political implication of such misrepresentations is to justify harsher military measures against Arab Muslims by the US government and undermine the possibility of future dialogues between the Muslim world and the West. The movie is a case in point of how Orientalist discourse influences Hollywood movie production about Arab Muslims.

Rules of Engagement

Rules of Engagement (2000) is another Hollywood action movie that depicts Muslims as villains. The movie takes place in Yemen, home of over twenty millions Muslims. The storyline of the movie is centered on an anti-American manifestation in front of the American embassy in Sana'a that goes out of control. The demonstrators start throwing firebombs, rocks and a sniper starts shooting at the American embassy. A marine squad lead by Colonel Childers is dispatched to rescue the American ambassador and his family. During the mission, three marines are killed, consequently Childers orders his squad to fire on the crowd, killing 83 Yemenis and wounding others. Childers goes on

trial for breaking the navy rules of engagement and for illegally ordering the shooting of innocent people in Yemen, including children. His appointed lawyer and friend, Colonel Hayes Hodges investigates the situation in Yemen and discovers that there was actually a conspiracy to carry on with a terrorist attack against Americans. In the final scene of the movie a flashback uncovers the true story. We see the Yemeni mob shooting at the embassy. Among them, a woman dressed in black with a machine gun in hand points towards Childers and his crew, and a little girl walking around on one leg is holding a gun, ready to kill.

In the beginning, the viewers are lead to believe that the killing of innocent Yemenis is wrong, but in the end, and as usual, the movie shows that the killing of the Yemenis is justified and necessary, including the murder of children. All 83 Muslim Yemenis are sub-human and deserve to die. Childers giving the order to his navy squad to shoot at the Yemeni crowd turns out to be self-defence.

The movie starts with a flashback and takes the viewers to a US navy mission in Vietnam in the year 1968. Colonel Hayes Hodges remembers how the Vietnamese army ambushes his team. The movie shows how Childers' prompt and wise decision to shoot a Vietnamese officer in the head, helped save the lives of all Americans in Vietnam. This flashback serves to justify American violence and to establish Childers ability to take sensible and honourable decisions in order to save American lives. The Vietnamese scene establishes a parallel with the shooting in Yemen. It makes the viewers conclude that when the American army resorts to violence it is always a necessary national duty.

The movie uses different elements to portray the Yemenis in a negative stereotyped image. First, when the navy squad is dispatched to Sana'a (Capital city of Yemen), the

arrival of the squad in helicopters allows the viewers a panoramic view of the city. The helicopter hovers over a desert where we see an oasis and palm trees. The city's dwellings seem to be made of clay mud. No signs of modern urbanization are represented to the viewers regarding the Capital city of Yemen. This type of depiction of the Yemenis landscape connotes cultural degradation and backwardness. It suggests that the inhabitants of this land are uncivilized and violent. This is a very reductionist representation of Sana'a, since it houses both modern and old architectural buildings. Hollywood topographical representations of Yemen devalue what is considered to be one of the world's architectural gems. The intention is to cast the city in an old and uncivilized picture in order to link geography to culture and nature to nurture.

The depiction of Yemen as an uncivilized culture is highlighted when Colonel Hodges visits the hospital in which the shooting victims are treated. It is the most repellent scene in the movie. First, the supposed hospital appears to be like a camp. We hear flies buzzing and lingering around patients. All the patients have blood on their sheets and clothing. The absence of hygiene is dramatically emphasized when the only existing physician in the hospital appears in a dirty and bloody white scrub. The physician approaches Hodges and speaks to him in English: "*There are hospitals like this all over the city.*" Yemen is casted in an appalling manner which fixes the country and its population in a negative stereotyped image.

The menacing topography of the Yemenis' home is further accentuated by a hostile protest composed of an angry crowd in front of the American embassy. The entire crowd—men, women and children—are shouting the same slogan while raising their arms in a uniformed manner presage a looming danger. A closer and swift view of the

crowd highlights the crowd's aggressive character. From the crowd emerges a cruel face of an on old bearded man with thick brows and missing teeth. Behind the man lurk the angry and scary eyes of women covered in black. Suddenly, the angry mob starts throwing stones and Molotov bombs towards the embassy. On the top of the homes, men and woman are holding guns and shooting. This entire dramatic scene serves to paint a one dimensional and codified picture of Yemeni people. They are all dangerous and evil people. This stereotyped representation devoids Yemenis of their humanity especially when their depiction is put in sharp contrast to Americans. For instance, as is depicted in the movie *Rules of Engagement*, inside the walls of the American embassy, the movie offers a completely different image. The US ambassador's beautiful wife, frightened, holds a cute little boy in her arms and tries to protect her son. The representations of Americans as "soft speaking, cute, beautiful, frightened" inside the American embassy, serve to amplify the representations of the Yemenis as "evil, ugly, wild lunatic". Once again, the scene exemplifies the Orientalist discourse that then to dichotomizing the world into Good Americans versus the Bad Yemenis.

The movie doesn't provide any reason for the Yemenis demonstration in front of the American embassy. The Yemenis actions are represented as irrational through a dialogue between the little American boy and his mother. The boy asks:

Boy: *"What's wrong, Mommy?"*

Mother: *"The people are upset about some things, darling"*

Boy: *"Are they mad at Daddy?"*

Mother: *"No, they're not mad at your Daddy."*

Boy: *"Why are they yelling?"*

Mother: *"They're trying to get attention so that people will listen to them"*

The decontextualization of the Yemenis manifestation serves to emphasize the irrationality of their actions. This further underlined when the ambassador tells one of his employees: *"we get the hell out of here. They are crazy."* There is an attempt "in all fairness" from the Americans to understand the cause of Yemenis' demonstration. Ironically, the Americans can't seem to find any justification for the demonstration. The failure "to find a reason" for Yemenis' demonstration leads the viewers to believe that Yemenis' actions' are motivated by hatred towards Americans. Otherwise, why would Yemenis shoot at peaceful and innocent people?

As the plot develops, the notion of Muslim hatred towards Americans becomes clear and evident. Colonel Hodges flies to Yemen to bring evidence in support of Childers' defence. Hodges sees a one legged little girl and he follows her into a hospital. The girl's appearance draws Hodges sympathy but the girl looks at him cruelly and calls him "*Qatel, Qatel*" (Murderer). In the hospital next to a wounded man's bed, Hodges finds the evidence which exonerate Childers from the accusations against him. It is an audiotape calling for people to kill all Americans. The tape calls for *Jihad* and incites people to kill because it is a religious duty. The Yemeni physician, who perjures himself on the witness stand during Childers' trial, translates the content of the audiotape:

"Declaration of Jihad against United States: We call on every Muslim who believes in God and hopes for reward, to obey His commands to kill Americans and blender their possessions wherever he finds them. To kill Americans and their allies both civil and military is the duty of every Muslim who is able."

This translation of the audiotape establishes not only Yemenis hatred towards Americans but that this hatred is encouraged through the religious teaching of Islam. Indeed, the Yemenis anti-American attitude is most epitomized when the Yemeni crowd fires at the American flag.

While it is not possible to list all visual codes through which the Yemenis are portrayed as villains and anti-American, it seems that the principal motive is to deliberately demonize and dehumanize the entire Yemeni nation and all Muslims. Once again Hollywood reinforces the idea that Muslims are fanatics, terrorists and pose a threat to American security. Furthermore, the killing of Muslim men, women and children is justified and deemed necessary to ensure American safety and security. These types of Hollywood movies are dangerous because they fuel Islamophobia and hatred against Muslims.

The legacy of fear and hatred prevails in the Western society due to the American media representation of the Muslim world. As the matter of fact, the representations of the Muslim world as the embodiment of all threat to American life, (particularly security, democracy and freedom), has been all over American Media. This continues to dichotomize the world into 'Us' versus 'Them', and to provide justification for the hard line approach against the Muslim world.

Movies such as *Kingdom* and *Rules of Engagement* are propagandist because they shape viewers' perception negatively towards Arab Muslims and fuel racist attitudes against Arab Muslims. Hollywood is persistently vilifying Arab Muslims and framing them as enemies of the US. The anti-Muslim campaign and hostile depiction of Muslims in Hollywood is in part implementing an ideological conformity into each American home

which has been used to gain public consent to wage war against Muslim countries. The dissemination of fear became dangerously potent. It hegemonizes the American minds to the point that they agree on any kind of military aggression or intervention against the Muslim world. The results of this harnessed fear has contributed to the deepened polarity between the West and the Muslim world and hindered the chance of dialogue between cultures. As Said observes:

> "On one hand, in the eyes of the West there was an "entirely factious connection between Arabs, Muslims, and terrorism" And on the other hand, in the eyes of Muslims, "Western, mostly Christian powers and peoples are mobilized to fight a continuing war against Islam" (Said, 1997, p. xv).

Hollywood movies such as the *Kingdom* and *Rules of Engagement* are only a few examples of how Hollywood plays upon negative stereotypes with respect to the violent nature of Arab Muslims; thus creating a negative understanding of Islamic culture. These two movies do not give an explanation for the motive behind the terrorists' act that has been perpetrated nor do they put terrorists' act into context. These stereotyped representations have a negative effect on how people in North America regard Arab Muslims and on how they behave towards them and hinder efforts towards building peace between the Muslim World and the West. Hollywood offers a subtle influence on people's lives through what has been represented and omitted. Hollywood movies need to include a more balanced image of Arab Muslims and must partake in the promotion of dialogue between cultures and take responsibility in building democracy, peace and justice around the world.

In what follows, I analyse a documentary: *New Muslim Cool,* (2009) *by* filmmaker Jennifer Maytorena Taylor. The film follows the journey of Hamza Perez, a Muslim American Convert, and his wife Rafiah and their circle of family and friends. They offer

a quick insight into the diversity of the American Muslims as it becomes part of the American national fabric. The film invites its viewers to make personal reflection on themselves within the diverse American Culture.

New Muslim Cool

Hamza Perez is a hip-hop artist who brings himself out of drug dealing after converting to Islam. He moves to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where he decides to get remarried after his first divorce and rebuild his life. Hamza believes that faith in God can help people overcome poverty, crimes and injustice. He sets himself the goal to bring people together by finding a universal understanding of faith. Through his rap music, he tries to convey the universal message of faith and thereby trying to connect people in his community. Hamza and his brother Suleiman form a hip-hop music group they call *Mujahedeen* (M-team); the name of their team derives from the word *Jihad* (struggle). The name they have chosen for their team highlights that the nature of their art is to raise awareness about poverty, injustice and human rights. The film portrays Hamza's struggle as well as the struggle of many American Muslims.

Perhaps one of the important messages centers on the complexity of a Muslim person's identity. I have argued earlier that Hollywood movie representations of Muslims are usually one-dimensional. In contrast, *New Muslim Cool* offers a more nuanced and complex image of Muslims by representing them as an amalgam of identities. In *New Muslim Cool,* the viewers are acquainted with Hamza Perez the ex-husband, the father of a baby girl, and the ex-drug dealer who is trying to forge a new path in his life through hip-hop music. Then, the complexity of his personality starts to emerge as Hamza visits

his family with his Muslim fiancé Rafiah. In this scene, viewers see Perez the son, the grandchild, the brother, the nephew, and the uncle.

In subsequent scenes, Muslims are depicted as humans and not as demons by providing a more balanced and realistic representations of their lives. For instance, the viewers see Hamza (Puerto Rican) and Rafiah (African American) getting married. The movie follows the couple's daily life routine. The movie portrays them as a typical young American couple who struggle in life. Rafiah wants to open a restaurant business. She works and goes to school in order to pursue her dream. Hamza helps her in house chores such as cooking, feeding the kids and teaching them how to read and write. We see them dropping the children at a day care, taking them to a picnic, and playing games.

New Muslim Cool highlights the positive role of Islam in Hamza's life. Hamza decides to follow the message of Islam by being a *Mujahed*: "*a real Muslim activist,*" he says. This type of thinking becomes another turning point in his life after he stopped drug dealing. Hamza discovers the universal message of Islam through which humanity could connect with each other and help each other. Hamza finds, in his hip-hop music, a way through which he can both practice his faith and launch an anti-drug campaign. The movie follows Hamza going to jail to meet with prisoners from different cultural backgrounds and speaks to them about how to change their lives and make it better "*by working on themselves: the message of Jesus Christ,*" Hamza says. For Hamza, meeting with prisoners is "*an opportunity to get closer to God*".

Another scene in the movie underlines the peaceful and universal message of Islam when Hamza and his friends are praying in the mosque. We see the *Imam* (preacher) of the mosque reminding worshippers that "*we all came from the same mother, the same father.*

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How you gonna be fighting each other? ...Hold on to the rope all together and do not become divided." This statement tries to reverse Hollywood's stereotyped image about Islam. It demonstrates that Islam is not a religion that promotes terrorism. Islam is a religion that invokes peace and brotherhood between people.

The movie reaches its climax in one of its most disturbing scene by showing how Muslims are treated suspiciously and with prejudice in the post 9/11 milieu. The FBI raids Hamza's community mosque during Friday congregational prayer and arrest some community members, including Hamza. The movie reveals that the FBI does not provide any explanation or justification for the arrest. Community members are left wondering about such hostile behaviour towards them. Moustafa, who works as a journalist asks the following questions: *"Could this happen on a Sunday at a church? Does the government have a reasonable justification for treating mosques differently than other religious centers?"* These questions raise deep concern about America's cherished ideals of democracy and civil liberty.

The movie sheds some light on the (2001) USA PATRIOT Act. The purpose of the Act is to deter and punish terrorist acts in the United States and around the world. The documentary shows how this Act has become an oppressive tool that infringes on people's privacy. It also demonstrates how the Act has become a tool for anti-Muslim propaganda. They show how the FBI arrest Muslims in most humiliating and dehumanizing manner and how FBI agents use force against defenceless Muslim worshipers during the arrest. Hamza points at an FBI camera spying at his community mosque. Hamza says: *"the FBI put it there to watch everyone coming and going from the masjed* (mosque)." Hamza also says that while the FBI spies on Muslims, drug dealers at

the corner of the street are dealing drugs freely and with no arrest or investigation. The movie shows how the FBI's arrest has saddened the Muslim community and made them feel the pain of injustice. The arrest shows that the Muslim community in the US is suffering the pitfalls of stereotypes and discrimination.

Another important message is the call for open dialogue between religions in order to promote world peace. The documentary features Carol Elkind, a Jewish woman, editor of *Crossing Limits: Poetry from American Muslims and Jews*. Carol says that her "*life was always about bringing people together*." She further says that she went to her Rabbi and suggested to him that she wanted to do something about African American and African Jews. Her Rabbi advised her that she would make a difference in the world by working on the relationships between Muslims and Jews.

Carol is shown working with Hamza on a poetry pamphlet that they distribute later at a Muslim pot luck event. Carol reaches out to Muslims and in return Muslims reach out to her. She meets new Muslim poets and their acquaintance enriches each other's lives. Carol says that it is by getting to know people from different cultures that she is able to break her fear of 'others'.

In general, in this film, we get to see American Muslims as ordinary people who eat, drink, breath, go to work, make mistakes, cry, laugh, and work to build their community. It does not vilify Muslims nor does it put Muslims on a pedestal. Muslims are portrayed as simple regular human beings who go through ups and downs and struggle to build their lives. The movie tries to reverse the feeling of hate and racism that Hollywood tries to infuse among different cultural groups.

New Muslim Cool demystifies all the negative stereotypes that have been circulating in Hollywood movies about Muslims being terrorists. It also makes a rupture in the association of Islam with Arabs by showing the diversity of racial and ethnic composition of Muslims in America. The filmmakers challenge 'the taken for granted beliefs' and invite people to think critically about the presumed clash of civilizations between Muslims and the West. The film also gives an example about how getting to know the 'other' helps to build trust in the 'other' and dismantles the walls of fear against the 'other'. It is certainly a huge step forward towards building peace and harmony within members of the American society.

Conclusion to section one

In this part of my study, I tried to demonstrate how Muslims are stereotyped in Hollywood movies. I have also analyzed why Muslims are being represented in a certain manner in popular culture and why these representations continue to be persistent in popular culture despite their obvious pitfalls on the process of democracy, peace and justice in the world. I talked about how Muslim stereotypes have originated. I examined their intended objective by questioning whose benefit they serve. I addressed their bearing on the western and eastern divide. I talked about their magnitude on the national and international scale and how they affect the process of democracy peace and justice around the world.

Although non-Muslims are naturally inclined to think of Muslims as one monolithic group, it is a fallacy to believe that this is the case. While there have been incidents where Muslims were involved in violent and terrorist acts in the name of religion, the majority

of Muslims around the world condemn these acts and qualify them as morally reprehensible. While maintaining the immorality of terrorist acts, we should analyse and criticize the overarching political, social and economical issues that contribute to such acts. We cannot take part in harsh condemnation of terrorist acts if we remain apathetic to the evils of the social and economic injustices, and unless we remove or at least alleviate these injustices; the likelihood of living in a peaceful world will diminish.

Chapter Two

Deconstructing Representations of Islam in US Media and Popular Culture: Education for Democracy, Justice and Peace

The Goal in this part of my thesis is to make a case for a critical pedagogy of popular culture learning and teaching. The main objective is to focus on changing attitudes by creating awareness and awakening consciousness regarding the influence of popular culture in general and Hollywood movies.

In order to achieve this objective, I engage Henry Giroux's critical pedagogy in the reconstruction of democracy, peace and justice. I discuss the role of critical pedagogy in the deconstruction of the stereotypes of Islam and Muslims in popular culture by highlighting the importance of teaching media literacy through critical pedagogy to reverse the negative impact of trend that media culture inculcates within the society. I demonstrate how the deconstruction of these stereotypes through education will promote the establishment of democracy, justice and peace in the world.

Furthermore, I discuss how teaching popular culture based on critical pedagogy will enhance critical thinking. In other words, the adoption of teaching popular culture in the curriculum is akin to promoting democratic peace and justice in societies. I explore the significance of teaching popular culture and Hollywood movies by using approaches and methods aiming at understanding Hollywood movies as a text and not only as source of entertainment. The purpose of including the teaching of popular culture in the curriculum is to develop the student's aptitude to comprehend the relationship between media, power, society and themselves.

Why we need to consider teaching Popular Culture?

In the first section of my thesis I demonstrated how Hollywood has consistently represented Arab Muslims in a stereotyped manner. Historically, Hollywood has been circulating the negative image about Muslims: ignorant, evil, violent, terrorist. These ideological constructions have served to maintain Western political power and hegemony over the Muslim world. In addition, these manufactured constructions continue to dichotomize the world into Good West versus Evil East.

Today, the Muslim world, despite its diversity and heterogeneity, is perceived as a one-dimensional monolithic entity. Western mass media and Hollywood movies are one of the conduits in the construction of such perceptions. Behind its "benevolent" entertainment it conceals what it tries to project; Hollywood targets the shaping and construction of cultural meanings and thus intensifies stereotypes against Muslims. Hollywood instils values, shapes consciousness and acts as an educational machine. Hollywood texts distort realities, neglect to put subjects into context and fail to assume their responsibility in critically educating public mind. Michael Eisner, former CEO of the Walt Disney Company once revealed that the educational and political power of American entertainment holds a considerable bearing in shaping values and that it was somewhat responsible for the breakdown of the Berlin Wall. According to him,

> "The Berlin Wall was destroyed not the force of Western arms but by the force of Western ideas. And what was the delivery system for those ideas? It has to be admitted that to an important degree it was by American entertainment" (as cited in Giroux& Pollock, 2010, p.29).

People in general watch Hollywood movies but they are unaware of Hollywood's pedagogical influence. According to Kellner and Share:

"[…] media culture is a form of pedagogy that teaches proper and improper behaviour, gender roles, values and knowledge of the world. Individuals are often not aware that they are being educated and positioned by media culture, as its pedagogy is frequently invisible and is absorbed unconsciously. This situation calls for critical approaches that make us aware of how media construct meanings, influence and educate audiences, and impose their message and values" (2007, p.4).

In the light of the above quotes, when we talk about entertainment media it is not only a question of how this powerful form of public pedagogy functions as a force in shaping values, influencing minds and mobilizing interests; it is rather a question of how we can harness the potential of this educational machine in a way that we can guarantee for humans to live in a democratic, just and peaceful society.

Media and popular culture ought to contribute to the promotion of democracy, peace and justice by diligently providing the general public with a rational coverage of the issues that media tackle and popular culture represent. For many decades, Hollywood has been exporting to the world a favourable image of American culture while portraying other cultures in a negative manner. Hollywood has been selling the notion for Americans and for people around the world that the United States is the heaven of democracy, freedom, safety and security where individuals can enjoy a decent life. However, this appealing image is deceiving and sells a false hope to the American public. It diverts public awareness from the political, social and economic problems of their reality. It does not give citizens the opportunity to address their problems and deal with them as they arise. This type of unreliable and fanciful image keeps the public misinformed. Moreover, it does not put them in a position to make sensible decisions when they practice their 'democratic right' when voting for their moral leaders.

Giroux (2001) reminds us to pay careful attention to popular culture and Hollywood movies because they are not without harm. They construct and reinforce hegemonic

ideologies; hence they should be challenged in/by education with the intention to guide students to become critical mediators who are apt to uphold the responsibility to deconstruct oppressive mechanisms while carrying on with their humanistic mission towards the safeguarding of democracy, peace and justice around the world. Moreover, following Kellner & Share"[…] a critical education should produce pedagogies that provide media understanding and enable students, teachers, and citizens to discern the nature and effects of media culture" (2007, p.4).

Attention needs to be directed towards popular media and the enormous influence it exercises on people. The danger of Hollywood becomes most significant when we realize that it is managed by a small number of dominant elites who control society by dissemination of knowledge. The control of knowledge by a minority group epitomizes the anti-democratic principles. Teaching how to read Hollywood movies through critical pedagogy becomes indispensable. Hollywood movies provide a pedagogical opportunity and education should take films seriously by questioning why and how Hollywood engages in discriminating practices against Islam and Muslims. Hence, integrating Hollywood movies in the educational realm is akin to the preservation of democracy and any dismissal of Hollywood movies could come at high cost to human democratic values.

In his article entitled: *Breaking into the Movies: Pedagogy and the Politics of Film*, Henry Giroux (2001) argues:

> The decline of public life demands that we use film as a way of raising questions that are increasingly lost to the forces of market relations, commercialization, and privatization. As the opportunities for civic education and public engagement begin to disappear, film may provide one of the few media left that enables conversations that connect politics, personal experiences, and public life to larger social issues. […] Film does not simply reflect culture but actually constructs it. (Giroux, 2001, Nov-11-2012 Retrieved from: www.jaconlinejournal.com

Thus, it is imperative to perceive Hollywood movies not only as a source of entertainment, but rather as a pedagogical force that impact major social issues. There is an imperative need to read Hollywood movies as a text and to understand how these texts connect to society.

Why we need critical pedagogy in education and Hollywood movie analysis?

Education is considered to be a battlefield where imaginations are encouraged, new and critical ideas are developed and repressive trends are challenged. Education should endeavour "to promote a more just and equitable society by making education as a site of democratic participation, critical dialogue and engagement with social issues (Kellner, & Share, 2007, p.9).

Giroux believes that democratic education and academic freedom are increasingly under assault. In his article, *Education and the Crisis of Democracy: Confronting Authoritarianism in a post-9/11 America*, Giroux (2006) says, "democracy is removed from the purpose and meaning of schooling, the dominant media engage in a form a public pedagogy that appears to legitimate dominant power rather than holding it accountable to the highest ethical standards"(July-14-2012 Retrieved from http://www.wce.wwu.edu/resources/cep/ejournal/v003n001/a006.shtml).

Democratic education should be concerned with a number of issues. One of these issues is the need to provide students with the necessary skills in order to resist knowledge related to power. Teaching popular culture, though critical pedagogy, allows students to be conscious consumers of Hollywood movies. Critical pedagogy enables students to enjoy Hollywood movies while realizing they construct cultural norms and shape

thinking. Critical pedagogy encourages students to read movies as a text that contribute to the empowering or disempowering of cultural groups. Giroux (2011) says: "I stress pedagogical approaches that enable students to read texts differently as objects of interrogation rather than slavishly through a culture of pedagogical conformity that teaches unquestioning reverence" (p.5).

Critical pedagogy tries to draw attention to the authority of Hollywood movies as a vehicle that produces cultural knowledge. It is also concerned with how movies mobilize meanings and values and how they charge people with feelings. It invites students to reflect on the stereotyped and racist representations of the 'other' (Islam and Muslims. in our case) Critical pedagogy also encourages students to reflect on how these stereotyped representations connect to the political and economical structures of inequality. In essence, critical pedagogy thrives to be the pedagogy of hope through which the process of democracy, justice and peace is secured.

In the following section, I will address how education can incorporate Hollywood movie analysis through critical pedagogy. But before I engage into this question, let me state at the outset that I firmly believe that the starting point for any social change is to initially identify and recognize the structures of oppression and power domination. Social changes do not occur in a vacuum. We need to admit to ourselves that we are either dominating/oppressing others or being dominated/oppressed by others. Second, and drawing on the Gramscian notion of "the organic intellectual" (I will elaborate on this notion later on when I address the role of the intellectual); I also believe that any social change for the betterment of a given society has to be a collective effort where every social member takes part in the struggle. Third, I believe that simultaneous efforts should

be invested on both sides; the oppressed/un-privileged and the oppressor/privileged in order for social change to occur. From these fundamental premises humanity shall move on to correct what went wrong and try to undo the damage.

How we can deconstruct Hollywood stereotypes of Islam and Muslims?

How can we implement the understanding/deconstruction of Hollywood movies through critical pedagogy? Are there any set rules or guides lines, or methodologies for implementing critical pedagogy in classrooms? In general, critical pedagogy is much less concerned with rules and technicalities than it is with matters such as democracy, social justice, peace, politics and power. As the matter of fact, fixed rules and methodologies are incongruent with the emancipatory spirit of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy inscribes itself as force that constantly advocates for change. "Critical pedagogy is not about an a priori method that simply can be applied regardless of context" (Giroux, 2011.p.3). One of the main tenets of critical pedagogy: "is the endeavour to unravel oppressive practices where social agencies are denied or subdued" (Giroux, 2011, p.3).

Inviting students to undo Hollywood movie stereotypes of Muslims could be a daunting task. First, educators have to make students perceive Hollywood as something more than a source of entertainment source. Second, students have to examine their own beliefs and question their assumptions about the 'other' (Muslims in case of this study). More importantly, students might have to realize and deconstruct their own racism, internalized stereotypes and prejudices. I have argued earlier that one of the principle prerequisite of social change is that both dominant and dominated groups need to be aware of their positions in order for social change to occur.

Debunking Hollywood stereotypes requires both a self-reflection and a general social reflection. For instance, after watching a Hollywood movie in class, educators can address Hollywood stereotypes by raising a few questions. Educators can ask students how the stereotyped depiction of Muslims in Hollywood movies impacts their opinion about Muslims. How much these depictions contribute to reinforce their negative/positive assumptions regarding Muslims? How do these depictions make them believe that aggression against Muslims is right? Students can deal with these questions through different types of activities such as group discussion, writing essays, general class discussion and writing a personal journal. The main idea is to break the ice and help students realize how Hollywood movies shape their mind about Muslims by doing self-reflection.

The second phase in undoing Hollywood stereotypes would be to connect the stereotypes to larger social issues. Educators should invite students to reflect on how the stereotyped depictions of Muslims in movies are one-dimensional and do not portray the reality of the Muslim population. For instance, Muslims always speak Arabic in movies while the majority of Muslims around the world do not speak Arabic. Educators can debunk the monolithic and homogenous representations of Muslims by emphasizing the diversity and heterogeneity of Muslims through the acquisition of cultural knowledge. Educators can invite students to enumerate the names of Muslim countries where people do not speak Arabic such as Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Turkey which are heavily populated countries; yet they do not speak Arabic. Educators should highlight to students that these depictions inhibit critical thinking because they do not allow people to perceive Muslims differently.

Students can be asked to analyse how Hollywood depiction of Muslims can be seen as a reinforcement of American Hegemony. For example, we can analyze why Americans play the main characters in movies while Muslims play a secondary role. Analyze why Americans speak on the behalf of Muslims while Muslim characters are barely allowed to speak for themselves.

Educators can invite students to discover how religious and racial stereotypes are mobilized to serve government policies. Students can be asked how these stereotypes are exploited over time by Hollywood and other mass media and how these stereotypes are sanctioned by government. Students can be asked how these stereotypes are used to implement harsh policies against Arab Muslims and wage war against Muslim countries. Similarly, students can be invited to do a thorough examination on the history of religious and racial stereotyping and the implication of such stereotypes. For instance, analyze the stereotyping of Jewish people by the German media and how this led to the Holocaust. Students should recognize that stereotypes have devastating consequences on the stereotyped group. Students should also recognize that stereotypes do not function in a vacuum; they have an immoral purpose. Stereotypes are the means through which the annihilation of nations is justified.

Educators can draw students' attention to words and phrases in the movies that are offensive to anyone to hear: terrorist, fanatic, violent, crazy. Students can be invited to analyze the use of some Arabic words from movies such as the word *Jihad* and Allah. Educators should ask why these words have been cynically used in Hollywood movies. Educators can ask students to research the real meaning of these words. This will allow students to discover how Hollywood infers the wrong meaning to these words.

Students should be asked to reflect on how stereotyped representations of Muslims in Hollywood movies place them at a social disadvantage in the West. They should be made aware of how the advantages they enjoy in their lives intersect with disadvantages of others. For instance, they can analyze how and how much of their wealth, safety and security was built on the destruction of Muslim countries or any other country. The marginalized groups have to develop an awareness of their oppressed status; and the privileged groups have to realize how they are enjoying some privileges that are taken for granted.

Another critical pedagogical strategy can be to ask students to investigate the controversial media representations and place them in a historical and social context. Students can discover how some derogatory representations of Muslims have changed over time in Hollywood. Students can engage in the analysis of the historical and political context related to the changes of these representations. Educators can show a complete movie in the class and can bring other media information about the people depicted in the movie. This will help students understand the connection between the erroneous representations in Hollywood movies and other types of media. It will also help students understand how corporate media operate. Educators can then reveal how corporations impose their hegemonic discourse on society because they are owned by a small group of people.

Combining religious literacy with movie analysis

In this section, I argue for promoting and teaching religious literacy in order to undo Hollywood stereotypes of Islam. Since the second part of my study focuses on the

promotion of democracy, peace and justice through education; I will demonstrate that the promotion of religious literacy in this global era is akin to fostering critical thinking, democratic discourse, and peace building in our increasingly pluralistic societies.

Why should education include religious literacy in the curriculum? A complete understanding of Hollywood movie stereotypes of Muslims cannot be accomplished without a fundamental understanding of the Islamic religion. In order to capitalize on the educational potential of Hollywood movie analysis and construe movies in greater depth, a religious approach to movie analysis is deemed necessary. I argue for the inclusion of Islamic religious materials in the Hollywood movie analysis and curricula. Effective teaching and understanding of religious stereotypes cannot be accomplished without integrating religious-specific issues in the movie analysis. The integration of religious materials will help students to interpret movies and provide them with the right knowledge and necessary skills to challenge Hollywood discourse. The critical analysis of Hollywood stereotyped representations of Muslims is constructive, but it does not completely inform students about crucial issues of Muslim stereotypes. There are complex and controversial issues in Islam that continue to be misrepresented by Hollywood. For example, Hollywood and Western mass media have distorted the true meaning of the notion of *Jihad*. To reverse this distortion, a deeper understanding of the notion of *Jihad* through an Islamic lens is required. I would like to illustrate my point further by borrowing an example from both movies: *The Kingdom* and *Rules of engagement*. These movies portray Islam as a religion that promotes the killing of oneself and of innocent people including children. For instance, in the *Kingdom*, we see a Muslim male cynically screaming "*Allah Akbar*". Afterwards, the man blows himself

killing innocent Americans whom he asks to gather around him. Similarly, in the *Rules of Engagement*, viewers listen to a tape preaching Muslims that it is a religious duty to kill Americans wherever they are. These stereotyped representations suggest that violence is inherent to Islamic teaching. The idea that Islam commands violence against innocent people is dominant in the western mind because of Hollywood's miss-representation of Islam. "A recent survey by the Pew Foundation found that Americans are distrustful of Islam more than ever. To them, Islam is not peace or humility; it is violence and bloodshed. They are getting this information from their media" (Badaracco, 2005, p.124). The ideological miss-representations of Islam cannot be reversed only through simple analysis of Hollywood movies. Unless counter-ideological arguments could be provided; the deconstruction process remains difficult. The situation calls for a reconstruction of new understanding through religious literacy and learning.

There is an imperative need for measures to outweigh the negative image of Islam and Muslims that Hollywood movies have generated so far. I believe that teaching about Islamic religion combined with Hollywood movie analysis will help achieve a more balanced and objective understanding of Islam; an understanding which despite derogatory and hostile attitudes highlights the richness of Islam and the shared spirit between Islam and other religions.

There is no doubt that through the learning of various religions, people will discover and re-live the peaceful message that every religion preaches. They will come to a consensus that fundamentalism, extremism, and terrorism is not what universal religions preach. In addition, through religious education, young people will be able to realize how the lives of religious groups of their own society are being affected by Hollywood negative

stereotypes. They will also understand how the lives of certain religious groups are being marginalized and overlooked by stereotyped representations such as the ones in Hollywood movies; particularly in a time where 'us versus them' discourse is extremely heightened.

Teaching about religions or religious literacy will encourage initiatives towards preventing religious discrimination through the promulgation of accurate knowledge with emphasis on equality, mutual philosophy and shared moral judgment between religious groups. Hollywood has persistently miss-represented and spoke on behalf of Islam and Muslims while deliberately omitting to provide viewers with the right information. Promoting religious literacy or religious education essentially means giving voice to the 'other' by allowing the 'other' to be heard and to speak up on his of her behalf, and by restoring to the 'other' his or her discursive space.

Giroux addresses the notion of "voice" in education as an essential element for developing a democratic and critical pedagogy. Although Giroux viewed the notion of voice as simply various measures by which students and teachers actively participate in dialogue" (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009, p.445), I also believe that "voice" could mean giving students a place for their culture and religion in curricula.

Religious literacy becomes a powerful tool of self-representation that gives voice to religious groups to speak back and correct what has been historically wrongfully constructed and challenge hegemonic representations of the 'other'.

In her book, *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: A Cultural Study Approach to the Study of Religion in Secondary Education*. American writer Diane L. Moore demonstrates through several examples related to culture wars, how "religious [cultural] illiteracy can

and often does thwart democratic discourse in schools by creating conditions whereby the violation of principles of nonrepression and nondiscrimination are widespread" (2007, p.28). Moore (2007) argues that public education must promote religious and cultural understanding in order to prevent wars "fueled" by cultural and religious ignorance and by Hollywood miss-representations"(p.28).

The Intellectual's role

Upon pondering over the situation of our world, I asked my self the question: where and how can we find a glimmer of hope? The difficult problems facing humanity are overwhelming in their complication. Injustice, inequality, poverty, hunger, diseases, wars, unemployment, and the sluggish economy, the list is long. The situation is dire but we must not surrender to pessimism and give up hope. Humanity is endowed with the intrinsic capabilities that are necessary for transforming and changing the social realities that jeopardize our future. Every one of us has a responsibility to assume and a role to play; perhaps a role by which we should be bonded as an intellectual being. I explore in this section the role of the intellectual to undertake the mission of creating a new reality and preserve democracy, peace and justice. I investigate this role based on five different models presented by: Edward Said, Antonio Gramsci, Henry Giroux, the Muslim model and the Novice Model. My goal in presenting these multiple models is not to try to capture the debate or the epistemic differences, but to demonstrate how all these models fit together towards an ultimate objective: to promote democracy, peace and justice.

Bringing changes into the world by positioning oneself at the forefront of the battle against inequality and injustice is a daring and daunting task but it is not impossible. It

requires willingness, perseverance and the restraint of selfish personal interests to the benefit of humanity at large. There is nothing wrong for someone to look after his or her own interest; however, when self-interest becomes destructive and hurtful this is where it should be controlled.

Said's Intellectual

In the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting, a massacre that took the lives of twenty innocent children and six more adults on December-14-2012 in Newtown, Connecticut; Lucinda Marshall, founder and director of the Feminist Peace Network, wrote an article entitled *A Culture that Condones the Killing of Children and Teaches Children To Kill.* The article was addressed to President Obama in response to the shooting. In her article she says that the shooting did not happen due to the lack of gun control laws in the United States. Marshall contends that:

> "Sandy Hook did not happen because of a lone, disturbed young man and it is not an isolated incident. It is an epidemic and we are all to blame. And today (and tomorrow and every day after that) is the time to confront this self-inflicted tragedy" (M. 2012, Dec-23-2012. Retrieved from: http// www commondreams.org

Marshall sees that the problem of the massacre lies within the American Culture "that condones the killing of children in Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries and also teaches children at home 'that killing is okay'." Marshall links the shooting to different factors. Her first culprit is the amount of "violence" that people are watching on television and the big screen. She also addresses the issue of budget "cuts in education" that resulted in a widespread privatization of education, higher tuitions fees, and left the fate of educational institutions under the financial control of businesses. Marshall also criticizes

the United States' national and international policies. She said that while national policies "deny children their basic rights, they teach the young generations to be "violent" and "it is okay to kill for what they want" and finally make people believe that Americans "have the right to kill children with drones or by dropping toxic munitions on their countries that cause birth defects and miscarriages" (M. 2012, Dec.23, 2012. Retrieved from: http//www commondreams.org).

Marshall as a peace activist is trying to convey to us a strong message: if we sow violence around the world, we cannot expect ourselves to reap peace at home. Sadly, 400 U.S. children die every year from gunshot wounds, and another 1, 770 die from child abuse. 921 children were killed during U.S. strike on Iraq and 231 children were killed in Afghanistan this year and 35 children died in Gaza this month under Israeli bombing, but the most devastating fact is that 16,000 children die every day from hunger around the world.

I consider Lucinda Marshall one of those humanistic intellectuals who through her engagement to change oppressive political and social structures, does not waver to make a difference in the world by "speaking truth to power" as Edward Said puts it.

Said ponders in his book *Orientalism* about the role of the intellectual and asks the question: "Is he [the intellectual] there to validate the culture and state of which he is a part?"(Said, 1994, p.326). This question certainly highlights the Foucauldian influence on Said whereby Foucault believes that:

> "The intellectual's role is no longer to place himself 'somewhat ahead and to the side' in order to express the stifled truth of the collectivity; rather it is to struggle against the forms of power that transform him into its object and instrument in the sphere of 'knowledge,' 'truth,' 'consciousness,' and 'discourse." (Spanos, 1993, p.195)

For Edward Said the endeavour of the intellectual is to rise above conventions and widely held beliefs that confine the minds in mythological creations. Said calls upon intellectuals to free themselves from the shackles of tradition. He believes that "Scholars and critics who are trained in the traditional Orientalist disciplines are perfectly capable of freeing themselves from the old ideological straightjacket (Said, 1994, p.299). Said says that Clifford Geertz is a good example to be followed because "his interest in Islam is discrete and concrete enough to be animated by the specific societies and problems he studies and not by the rituals, preconceptions, and doctrines or Orientalism" A good scholar then should work for the betterment of human life and not to its detriment.

Said recognizes the fact that as a human being, the intellectual is naturally attached to the culture and society he or she belongs. This is where the task of the intellectual becomes harder: to work against his/her natural penchant. This is why it becomes necessary for the intellectuals to constantly submit themselves to "critical scrutiny" and continual self-examination of their methodology and practice.

Said urges intellectuals to free their knowledge by cautioning them and reminding them to beware of the "guild tradition" and not to be willingly indifferent to what they do as scholars. He says: "And what better norm for the scholar than human freedom and knowledge?" (Said, 1994, p.300).

In his book *The Representations of the Intellectuals*, Said (1996) calls upon intellectuals to "practice universality". He cautions intellectuals against upholding double standards regarding issues on foreign and national policies. For example, "if we condemn an unprovoked act of aggression by an enemy we should also be able to do the same when our government invades a weaker party" (Said, 1996, p.x).

Said (1996) perceives the Intellectual to be "[…] the author of a language that tries to speak the truth to power" (p.xvi, ibid). Finally, the intellectual for him is:

> "[…] someone whose place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to reproduce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose raison d'être is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug." (Said (1996) p.xvi)

Gramsci's Intellectual

While the role of the intellectual in Said's work is more centered on humanistic and philosophical issues, Antonio Gramsci intellectual takes an active and practical role in the battle field of life. Gramsci called upon intellectuals to move beyond philosophical rhetoric and theoretical realm to actual practice by saying:

> "The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organizer permanent persuader and not just a simple orator." (Gramsci, 1977, p. 10)

Gramsci understood that one of the intellectual's functions is to persuade the public; however, in order for the intellectual to become a "permanent persuader" and perhaps a credible one, his or her thoughts should be translated into actions otherwise, he or she will remain a mere "orator". To a broader extent, Gramsci perceived that an intellectual is a combination of both "good sense", a contrast to "common sense" according to Gramsci, and good deeds.

Gramsci broadened the mass of intellectuals and left the doors wide open for every social member to assume an intellectual role within any given society. This leads us to the notion of the "organic intellectual" that Gramsci maintained in his writings.

Gramsci's revolutionary thoughts were most significant when he addressed the question of hegemony and how dominant class controls by popular consensus. He believed that since it is through the popular class that the dominant class protracts its hegemony, it becomes a requisite for the popular class to develop its own "organic intellectuals" in order to offset hegemony and bring about social change. Undeniably, Gramsci trusted humanity and their inherent ability as "organic intellectuals" to identify oppressive instruments and transform them.

Giroux's Intellectual

While Gramsci's "organic intellectual" role is to offset hegemony and bring about democracy, Henry Giroux puts his faith in role of educators as a public intellectual who participates in the democratic process.

The mission of educators is to help students identify the mode of cultural knowledge and of knowledge production that perpetuates unequal and unjust relationships of power that in turn reinforce the status quo. Critical educators should enable students to crucially reflect on their self-experience and reality in order to gain control and change the repressive systems that dominate their lives. Giroux, like Paulo Freire, believes that "democracy could not last without providing critical counter-narratives against dominant pedagogy and restoring the formative culture which made democratic public life possible" (Giroux, 2011, p.164). Since Giroux perceives that market fundamentalism turned classrooms at all levels into "a dead-zone"; he greatly emphasizes the role of the intellectual educators to develop counter-market pedagogy:

[…].educators can play a role in promoting not the market-driven agenda of corporate interests, but the imperatives of critical agency, [by] raising questions about both the aim of schooling and the purpose and meaning of what how educators teach. (Giroux, 2011, p.79)

The importance of critiquing a market-driven agenda is to provide the foundation of a practical agenda for social change. In this sense, the role of the intellectual educator does not remain confined into the theoretical aspect of education; it rather becomes a tool to move beyond.

The Muslim Intellectual

The atrocities committed by individuals who claim an association with Islam have reinforced the idea that Islam is a religion that leads to uncontrolled violence. Due to these violent acts and especially after 9/11, Islam became synonymous with terrorism, hatred and ignorance; whereas Islam is supposed to lead humanity towards progress. This reality has made the role of the Muslim intellectual even more challenging and more difficult.

Today the question remains: how can Muslim intellectuals keep assuming their universal role as promoter of peace, justice, democracy around the world? How can Muslim intellectuals adapt to modernism while holding on to their Islamic heritage and identity? Finally, how can Muslim intellectuals revive the dialogue between Islamic and Western culture in order to reconnect humanity? Perhaps the answers to these questions may seem an oxymoron, but the fact of the matter is that the redefinition of the future of Islam remains in the spirit of its past and precisely in the spirit of *Ijtihad* and *Islah*. *Ijtihad* is defined as the critical reflection and effort a person ought to apply in the light of Islamic teachings in order to respond and render judgment in a given time and space. *Islah* is a

broad concept and holds various positive connotations; it could mean, reform, improvement, reconciliation, peace-making and more. These two concepts (*Ijtihad* and *Islah*) among other concepts are fundamental to the spirit of Islam and every Muslim Intellectual is expected to apply them. They are the concepts through which Islam, as an end and not a means, adapts to changes throughout space and time. These two concepts rely on the effort of interpretation; a field that Islam has left wide open for every individual. Every Muslim should endeavour to apply these concepts and by virtue of these two concepts, every Muslim can assume the role of an intellectual.

The intellectual regression that afflicted the Muslim world was by and large due to the neglect of *Ijtihad* and *Islah*. Some traditional, rigid groups that refused to adapt to changes have rejected the Islamic commitment to critical thinking and renewal (*Ijtihad* and *Islah)*. These groups have submerged the Muslim *Ummah* (entire Muslim world or societies) in dark times.

There is a pressing need for Muslims to grasp the real and peaceful message of Islam. The divine and universal message that Prophet Mohammed conveyed 1433 years ago has been misconstrued and distorted. The Lack of education and "*Ijtihad"* and the unyielding conventions and superstitions are among many things that permeated the Islamic religion and brought ambiguity to the understanding of the real spiritual message of Islam. The consequences of these observable facts were proclaimed religious affirmations and violent actions advanced on false Islamic foundations.

Muslim nations need to redefine the meaning of Islam by re-opening the doors of "*Ijtihad" and "Islah"* (reform). Muslims are in greater need to re-learn the authentic message of Islam in order to renew and reconcile their relationship with the rest of the

world. Islam is a religion that calls for embracing humanity with all its diversities; Muslims around the world and the West have to bring their contribution towards building this image of Islam. Through open-minded Islamic ideals, critical thinking and cultural interchange we can work together with citizens to build a democratic, just and peaceful society. Tariq Ramadan (2010), a Muslim philosopher who resides in Europe, contends that Muslim societies are awaiting the emergence of a new "We" that would bring people together regardless of their sex, religious affiliation and race to work together to resolve all forms of discrimination and oppression within society.

The Novice Intellectual

Before I draw this chapter to a close, I would like to express my personal thoughts and reflection regarding the present reality of our world and my hope for tomorrow. In doing so, I feel I needed to fulfill my own role as a novice intellectual, an organic Muslim intellectual who would like to share her beliefs, hopes and concerns.

I would like to say that I dream of a Utopia. Then emerges the question: what is Utopia? How can we see it materialize in the midst of all the atrocities that are taking place around us, and what is the true meaning to Utopia? I believe that the true meaning of Utopia culminates in the ultimate goal to offset oppression and build a world where every human can grow democratically, safely, peacefully, and freely. In other words, Utopia is a space where men and women are able to actualize themselves and reach their full human potential. Inspired by Maslow's theory of self-actualization and the hierarchy of needs, he placed the physiological needs (food, water, air, and sleep) at the lowest level of his hierarchy pyramid in order to for a human being to reach self-actualization or reach

their full potential. In my opinion, democracy ranks at the lowest level of the hierarchical prerequisites towards materializing Utopia. But what does democracy mean and how can we say that we live in a democratic society?

Often, when I hear someone uttering the word democracy on the news, in movies or in politics, it seems to me as if I am hearing a strange or mythological word. It resonates in my heart and soul as a sad, nostalgic hymn that keeps repeating itself in the back of my mind. The hymn brings within its stanzas vivid and painful images of millions of children around the world, living or dying under the saddle of oppression. I can see the hungry children of Africa being famished, the orphans of Iraq searching for their parents, the bodies of Palestinian children being pulled from under the rubble, and the homeless children of Afghanistan scattered in the cold rugged wilderness.

Democracy emerges as a fleeting moment and every time I try to capture its true meaning, it vanishes in the atrocities and aggression inflicted upon others under the very name of democracy. Its true meaning disappears in the occupied homeland, in invasions and stolen natural resources and in every single violation of human right and breach of justice.

I do not mean to be pessimistic and announce the demise of democracy. I still believe that there exists a glimmer of hope for humanity to renew its commitment to democracy by redefining the real meaning of democracy. For instance, democracy cannot be used as an empty slogan in political discussion every time a political leader decides to wage war against 'anti-democratic' nations. Democracy must create a change in the political and social understanding in a manner to create a safe and secure environment for humanity.

While wealthy countries such as Canada and United States are spending billions of dollars on military programs waging wars and securing oil reserves, children around the world are lagging behind. They are lacking the basics needs for their full development as human beings. They are deprived of good nutrition, clean water, shelter, safety, education, and health care. The world today is in need for a democracy which is devoid of words such as war, killing, bombing and shooting. Moreover, democracy cannot hold its authentic values when its outcome serves the interest of one nation or group of people on the detriment of another.

As the quest for democracy continues, one question remained unanswered or perhaps even unasked:

How long can humanity bear the pitfalls of intellectual catastrophes?

Conclusions

Perhaps it would be best to commence my conclusion by elucidating what this thesis is not. It is not, and it does not claim to be an exhaustive study of the representations of Muslims and Islam in Western media, Hollywood movies; nor does it purport to be a complete examination of western attitude and perception regarding Islam, Muslims, or Arabs. There is a lot more to be said about the representations of Islam and Muslims in Western media, particularly Hollywood movies, than the issues that I have tackled in this thesis. My hope is that this thesis will kindle further dialogues, stimulate critical thinking and motivate other researchers to undertake this huge project in order to give a thorough understanding of the issue of media representations of the 'other' and of Islam, Muslims and Arabs.

Va-t'en, ce n'est pas ta place ici! (Go away, it is not your place here!)

I cannot sincerely declare that I have concluded my thesis without genuinely exposing the real drive behind my chosen topic. First, my deep interest in the issue of democracy, peace and justice, has led me to discuss Hollywood stereotyped representations of Islam and its negative impact on the process of democracy, peace and justice around the world. Second, there are also some critical and personal cultural reasons for addressing the notions of Muslim stereotypes in Hollywood movies. I cannot deny the influence of my cultural background as a Muslim who grapples everyday with her identity in order to live a more fulfilling life. I needed to exercise a stronger sense of control by examining the pitfalls of stereotyped representations of Muslims in Hollywood movies and break the silence of my own suffering and of others as well. Perhaps, and in retrospect, I wanted to take an active role in my own social agency in restoring my space fully within the Canadian society and stop those voices that have been telling me:

"Va-t'en, ce n'est pas ta place ici! (Go away, it is not your place here!)"

Finally, I would like to add my call to that of Edward Said, Henry Giroux, Antonio Gramsci, and to all of those who think that humanity should work collectively in order to create a democratic, peaceful and just world. I would like to say that the entire world today is facing major challenges: the huge tide of revolutions sweeping the Muslim Arab countries, the economic problems in the U.S. and Europe, the poverty and famine in Africa. If these challenges are not sufficiently and prudently dealt with, our world will risk collapsing: we are on the brink of another World War. The situation has reached its crucial moment and it is about time for Hollywood, media, scholars, experts and every intellectual to put their work and efforts in the service of humanity in its totality, and not

at the whims of imperialist greed. As Said puts it, "[…] until knowledge is understood in human political terms as something to be won to the service of coexistence and community, not of particular races, nations, classes, or religions, the future augurs badly" (Said, 1997, p. 171).

This thesis analyzes how stereotypes about Muslim Arabs originated. It argues that Orientalism is at the root of Hollywood stereotype representations of Islam, Muslims and Arabs. It provides a historical overview about Orientalism from the 18th century onward with particular attention to the style of knowledge it has produced about the Muslim world. This thesis also discusses how Orientalist knowledge production has shaped the way in which the Western world came to perceive and understand the Orient, Islam and Arab Muslims. Orientalism has a bearing on Hollywood movies and the way they represent Muslim Arabs in a stereotyped manner. I argue that the stereotyped representations of Muslims have a negative Impact on the process of democracy, justice and peace. I examined the role of education, and particularly critical pedagogy and religious literacy in reversing the stereotyped Muslim representations by Hollywood movies, hence promoting democracy, justice and peace. In the end, through five different models, I probe the intellectual's role in promoting democracy, peace and justice.

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