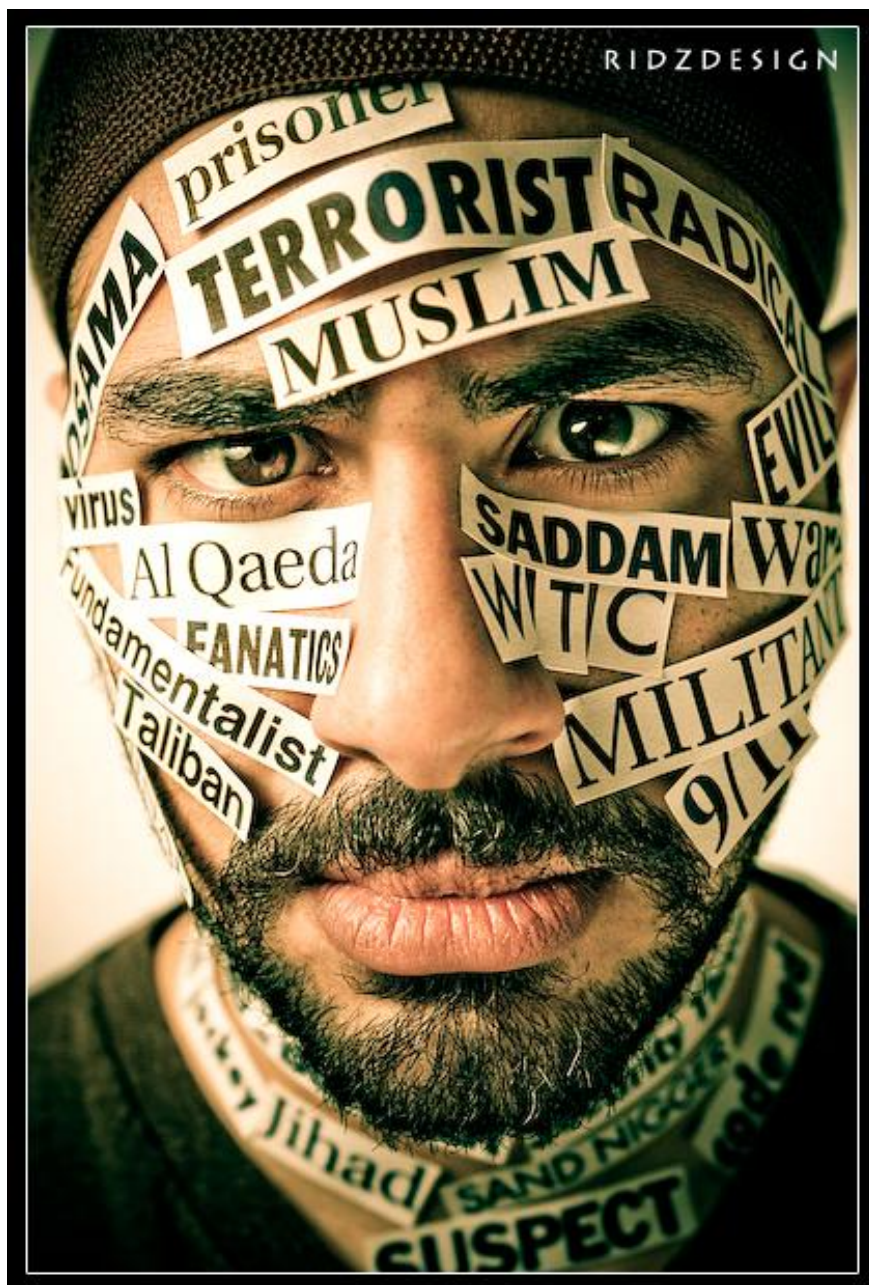# Constructing Islamophobia: Hollywood

A Master's Thesis by Marloes Veldhausz
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Abstract

Islam has become highly politicized post-9/11, the Islamophobia that has followed has been spread throughout the news media and Hollywood in particular. By using theories based on stereotypes, Othering, and Orientalism and a methodology based on film studies, in particular mise-en-scène, the way in which Islamophobia has been constructed in three case studies has been examined. These case studies are the following three Hollywood movies: *The Hurt Locker*, *Zero Dark Thirty*, and *American Sniper*. Derogatory rhetoric and mise-en-scène aspects proved to be shaping Islamophobia. The movies focus on events that happened post-9/11 and the ideological markers that trigger Islamophobia in these movies are thus related to the opinions on Islam that have become widespread throughout Hollywood and the media since; examples being that Muslims are non-compatible with Western societies, savages, evil, and terrorists.

Keywords: Islam, Muslim, Arab, Islamophobia, Religion, Mass Media, Movies, Hollywood, The Hurt Locker, Zero Dark Thirty, American Sniper, Mise-en-scène, Film Studies, American Studies.

To my grandparents, I can never thank you enough for

introducing me to *Harry Potter* and thus bringing magic into my life.

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Lastly, thank you to my mom for handling a stressed me as well as ever and to my friends Federica and Niels for reading through parts of this thesis and offering me feedback on whether or not it made any sense at all.

Preface

Anyone that knows me even a little bit knows that I have never been a fan of the literature courses during my five years as an American Studies student. Do not get me wrong, I love reading, have since I was little, yet I have never enjoyed reading what others refer to as "the classics". The genres that are more up my alley are fantasy and dystopian literature. It is the genre of fantasy that I, as an eight-year-old, was first introduced to, in the form of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. I remember getting the book from my grandparents for my eighth birthday vividly. I could not stop reading as soon as I began and tore through the book in one sitting.

Harry Potter introduced me to themes such as loneliness, loss, pain, and discrimination. These themes play a role in the everyday life of minorities, with discrimination often being the leading one that has the other three as a result. I am passionate about fighting for the rights of women, the LGBTQ community, and other minorities, which is why the topic of Islamophobia interests me greatly. Throughout the last five years, I have become more aware of and involved with human rights issues such as these. Being part of a minority myself (the LGBTQ community), I refuse to idly stand by and let other minorities that face discrimination be condemned, such as the Muslim community has been in Western countries since 9/11.

By combining this passion for human rights with another passion of mine, namely mass media (anyone that knows me can attest to the fact that I watch too many TV shows and movies), I want to showcase how Islamophobia in real life has seeped into mass media, often being a dominating theme, and thus perpetuating and spreading the Islamophobic sentiment.

Table of Contents

Introduction

"You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise."

Maya Angelou - "Still I Rise."

As of November 8th, 2016, Donald Trump has become the new President-elect of the United States. Never before has a candidate as divisive and fear-mongering as Donald Trump been elected to the office of President, ringing in a new era in US politics. In a statement posted in December 2015 on Donald Trump's official website it is stated that "Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on" (Donald J. Trump Statement On Preventing Muslim Immigration 1), and recently Trump has expanded his views on Muslim immigration, proposing that immigration "from any nation that has been compromised by terrorism" should be stopped (qtd. in Diamond 1). The implications of this proposed travel ban are far-reaching, as illustrated in appendices A through D (Sciutto, Yellin, and Browne). Appendix A focuses on immigrants from so called "terrorist safe havens", appendix B on immigrants from "state sponsors of terror", appendix C on immigrants from countries in which terror networks are based and from which they operate, and appendix D on immigrants from countries with active terror cells - which also includes Western European countries. In total, citizens of over forty countries would be targeted by this ban, which added up to over 2,7 million visas in 2015 (Sciutto, Yellin, and Browne). Furthermore, Donald Trump's team is currently, November 2016, considering a so-called 'Muslim registry' which has been likened to what happened to Jews in Nazi Germany and in Japanese-American internment camps in the United States during World War II (Hawkins; Haberman and Pérez-Peña).   Donald Trump's islamophobic views have gained traction in the United States, especially in light of terrorist attacks such as the ones in San Bernardino, where fourteen people were murdered

and twenty-two injured in an attack on an event/party hosted by the Department of Public Health, and Orlando, where forty-nine were murdered and fifty-three injured in an attack/hate crime inside the gay nightclub Pulse. These attacks are mostly carried out by radicalized lone wolves or groups, yet many moderate Muslims in Western countries are often portrayed as also being 'radical' or even as 'terrorists' while neither is true. By portraying all Muslims as dangerous, as Trump and (most of) his supporters are currently doing, Muslim Americans are condemned because of the actions of a few that have been radicalized.

These anti-Muslim sentiments are not a new phenomenon. A survey called "Two Decades of Americans' Views on Islam & Muslims" by the Bridge Initiative, a multi-year research project of Georgetown University's Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, exemplifies how anti-Muslim sentiments have been a part of American society for at least two decades. It is stated that the Super Survey has "compile[d] and analyze[d] polling questions collected by over a dozen polling organizations from 1993 to 2014" (5). The main conclusions reached by the survey are: 1) "Americans remain unfamiliar with Islam," 2) Americans "feel more coldly towards Muslims than any other religious group," and 3) Americans "to see Islam as "more violent" than other religions during national debates about military action in the Middle East" (5). Moreover, a key observation is made, namely that the outcomes of the survey demonstrate that "Americans have tended to be more leery of Islam and Muslims when they're presented in a general way or tied up in a political issue [yet] . . . Americans have been more supportive of the religion and its followers within the context of local, everyday issues" (7). This finding showcases how politicized Islam and Muslims have become when talked about in a political or more general sense, which can be related back to the causal role of representation in the news. Positive news regarding individuals often is not seen as being newsworthy, yet negative news such as terror attacks is.

By only broadcasting or publishing what they consider to be newsworthy, TV networks or newspapers influence how certain population groups are regarded by the general public, with Muslims being a prime example of this causal relationship.

In the years post-9/11 the debate surrounding Muslims and Islam has been politicized to the extreme, as can be seen for example in the 2016 election campaign in which Donald Trump used this debate in order to rally Americans to his cause. This debate is amplified by how Muslims and Islam are portrayed in the news. In the news the religious common denominator is often used to portray the entire population group as violent or scary instead of putting the blame on the ones responsible: radicalized lone wolves or groups. By doing so the anti-Muslim sentiments are spread and can seep into Hollywood productions. The danger that lies in this is that Hollywood has an enormous sphere of influence, especially among younger generations, thus perpetuating the problem. Not only will the themes portrayed in Hollywood productions play a part, political opinions of and endorsements made by actors are often even more influential among the younger generation as they are more likely to idolize these celebrities (Pease and Brewer; Jackson; Thrall et al.).

Examples of how Hollywood perpetuates anti-Muslim sentiments can be found in two books, *The TV Arab* and *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs after 9/11*, by writer Jack Shaheen. Jack Shaheen is one of the most, if not the most, prolific author in regards to anti-Muslim and anti-Arab stereotypes in entertainment programs and movies, hence the choice has been made to use these books in particular. *The TV Arab*, first published in 1984, examines anti-Muslim and anti-Arab stereotypes in over a hundred different television programs, movies, documentaries and even cartoons. Not only does Shaheen illustrate how the well-known stereotype of the Arab terrorist is perpetuated, he also showcases other stereotypes, such as the belly dancer, the rich sheikh or the barbaric and uncultured Arab that have moved to the background in recent times (Shaheen, *The TV Arab* 4). In *Guilty:*

Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs after 9/11 Shaheen focuses on movies made after 9/11 and demonstrates how Hollywood can influence public opinion. Moreover, he sheds light on the close connection between Hollywood and Washington. The stereotypes that were discussed in *The TV Arab* are once again discussed in this book. According to Shaheen's analysis, Muslims and Arabs are still seen as more violent and as the "Other" by the American population, which was also one of the findings of the survey by the Bridge Initiative.

It is important to acknowledge that Muslims and Arabs are not the same thing, as not all Muslims are Arabs, nor are all Arabs Muslim. However, ever since 9/11 took place, prejudice against those that look like they are from the Middle-East has increased and the distinction between being Arab and being Muslim is rarely acknowledged. The 9/11 attacks are seen by most as 'radical Islamic terrorism' (though I distance myself from this terminology) and anyone that 'looks' even remotely Muslim is attacked (verbally and/or physically), as can be witnessed by the attacks on, for example, Sikhs.

Shaheen's analysis demonstrates the vast influence of mass media. By continuing to dehumanize and stereotype Muslims and Arabs, Hollywood will perpetuate the problem of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab sentiments and violence, and government policies such as the ones suggested by Donald Trump (or his team) will continue to garner support. If one part of the American population continues to be seen as second-class citizens because of a common denominator, religion or heritage in this case, there is a possibility of American society reverting back to the times of white supremacy in which civil rights for minorities were not considered important. This is already being showcased by certain groups of Trump supporters, namely the so-called "alt-right", who have organized a conference in Washington, D.C. at which the Nazi Sieg Heil salute was used (Lombroso and Appelbaum). The "alt-right" is often considered to be neo-Nazi and it is important to note that while neo-Nazis have been present in the United States long before Trump announced his presidential ambitions, these

groups have become more visible lately because of Trump's statements regarding Muslims.

Jack Shaheen's books on anti-Muslim and anti-Arab sentiment in mass media are extensive and thorough, however, his book on post 9/11 movies was published in 2008 and thus does not examine movies released post-2007. By examining three movies that were released after 2007, this thesis aims to fill a gap in the research relating to Islamophobia in Hollywood productions.

The movies that will be used as case studies are: *The Hurt Locker* (2008), *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), and *American Sniper* (2014). These movies in particular were chosen as case studies not only because they were released after 2007, but also because 1) they focus on events that happened after 9/11 and 2) it can be assumed that they have reached large audiences because they were box office successes and/or because they have received one or more important awards (such as Academy Awards). *Zero Dark Thirty* earned over one-hundred-and-thirty million US dollars on a budget of forty million US dollars and *American Sniper* earned almost five-hundred-and-fifty million dollars on a budget of almost sixty million dollars. Furthermore, both movies won one Academy Award while being nominated for five and six respectively. *The Hurt Locker* was not necessarily considered a box office success, making almost fifty million US dollars on a budget of fifteen million US dollars, but it was a big hit at multiple award ceremonies including the Academy Awards, where it was nominated for nine awards of which it won six including Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor. By choosing these three Hollywood productions that were successful at the box office and/or at awards ceremonies, thus reaching more people than most independent films would for example, one can presume that the Islamophobic sentiment as portrayed in these movies has had the chance to have been spread more widely, thereby perpetuating the sentiment (underlined by Shaheen's analysis that demonstrated how far-reaching the influence of mass media can be).

Another reason why these movies in particular were chosen is because they take place in different settings but under similar hostile circumstances. Of these movies 1) *The Hurt Locker* takes place in Iraq and focuses on an Explosive Ordnance Disposal team, 2) *Zero Dark Thirty* takes place mainly in Pakistan documenting the hunt for Osama bin Laden, and 3) *American Sniper* follows the life of Chris Kyle, the deadliest sniper in US history, on his four tours of Iraq during the Iraq War. By examining how these movies, taking place under hostile circumstances, construct Islamophobia cinematically one will be able to showcase how the Islamophobic sentiment that has spread across the United States (as well as most of the Western world) post-9/11 is portrayed.

The research question that will guide this thesis is therefore as follows: How is Islamophobia constructed cinematically in the Hollywood productions *The Hurt Locker, Zero Dark Thirty*, and *American Sniper*? The sub questions that will be answered throughout the chapters in order to answer the main research question are: 1) Which ideological markers trigger Islamophobia in these Hollywood productions? and 2) How do mise-en-scène elements shape Islamophobia in the case studies? To answer the research question as well as the sub questions the thesis will be delineated as follows: the next section will focus on the theoretical framework and methodology that will be used in order to answer the research question. It will define the term "Islamophobia" so as to gain a clear clarification of what this term entails. The theoretical framework will consist of key literature regarding stereotypes, "Othering", and Orientalism in order to analyze and discuss the case studies in a nuanced manner. Lastly, film studies literature focused on mise-en-scène will be explored which will serve as the basis of the methodology that will be employed throughout the thesis. Together, the theoretical framework and methodology will be used to answer the research question and sub questions. They will reveal how Muslims are demonized, uncover the ideological markers that trigger Islamophobia, and uncover the mise-en-scène elements that shape Islamophobia in

the three movies that will serve as case studies in this thesis. Each movie will be discussed in a separate chapter as to allow it to be examined in depth. Each of these case study chapters will focus on various, but the same for each movie, elements of mise-en-scène and will examine how these elements play a role in the incitement of Islamophobia. A concluding chapter will follow in which the findings related to each movie will be compared and contrasted in a discussion section, followed by a general concluding section to the thesis. Even though both the research question as well as the sub questions will be answered throughout the chapters in which the case studies are discussed, the concluding chapter will bring all the findings together in one place, creating a clearer overview.

Theory and Methodology

Introduction

In order to showcase how these movies do construct Islamophobia cinematically, the term 'Islamophobia' itself needs to be clearly defined. By doing so a clear clarification of what exactly this term entails will be available and can be applied to the case studies. The definition of the term will allow for a more thorough and focused examination of how Muslims and Arabs are demonized as well as allowing for the identification of certain ideological markers that trigger this demonization in the case studies.

To provide a complete and thorough definition, three different sources and their definitions of the term will be used in order to put together a workable definition for this thesis which will be applied to the case studies. The first definition is provided by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), which is a Washington D.C. based advocacy group that challenges stereotypes about Muslims and Islam. It states that "Islamophobia is closed-minded prejudice against or hatred of Islam and Muslims. An Islamophobe is an individual who holds a closed-minded view of Islam and promotes prejudice against or hatred of Muslims" ("About" 2). A concise yet straightforward definition of the term.

The second definition is provided by the Bridge Initiative and examines the term a little more in-depth:

> Islamophobia is prejudice towards or discrimination against Muslims due to their religion, or perceived religious, national, or ethnic identity associated with Islam. Like anti-Semitism, racism, and homophobia, Islamophobia describes mentalities and actions that demean an entire class of people. Jews, African-Americans, and other populations throughout history have faced prejudice and discrimination. Islamophobia is simply another reincarnation of this unfortunate trend of bigotry.
>
> ("What is Islamophobia?" 1)

The Bridge Initiative also provides a clear example of what Islamophobia is not, thus defining the term even more so and providing a clear 'framework' in regards to this term and how to apply it: "Rational criticism of Islam or Muslims based on factual evidence is not intrinsically Islamophobia, just as criticism of the tenets or followers of other religions or ethnic groups does not necessarily indicate bigotry or prejudice" ("What is Islamophobia?" 2).

Lastly, the third definition is provided by the University of California, Berkeley's Center for Race and Gender:

> Islamophobia is a contrived fear or prejudice fomented by the existing Eurocentric and Orientalist global power structure. It is directed at a perceived or real Muslim threat through the maintenance and extension of existing disparities in economic, political, social and cultural relations, while rationalizing the necessity to deploy violence as a tool to achieve "civilizational rehab" of the target communities (Muslim or otherwise). Islamophobia reintroduces and reaffirms a global racial structure through which resource distribution disparities are maintained and extended.
>
> ("Defining "Islamophobia" 3)

This particular definition does not just clarify the term in the strictest sense, it illuminates how certain power structures influence the Islamophobia phenomenon, which will be discussed more in depth in the next section regarding the theoretical framework as *Orientalism* by Edward Said will be discussed there.

Together, the three provided definitions will be employed to define Islamophobia and will, together with the theoretical framework and methodology, be used to examine the case studies and prove that the selected movies do incite Islamophobia. An important observation that needs to be made is that the words "Arab" and "Muslim" are not necessarily synonymous, yet are often considered as such by those that discriminate against these groups. Not all Arabs are Muslim and not all Muslims are Arab, yet these distinctions are often

forgotten. When a theoretical text is used in this thesis that refers to just one of these groups, yet it is obvious that in the current day and age the same argument can also be applied to the other group (as is often the case with these two groups and the negative rhetoric surrounding them), it can be presumed that this thesis will use the argument made by the author of said text and apply it to the stereotyping of and discrimination against both Arabs and Muslims.

Theory

Demarcating the theoretical framework that will be the foundation of this research thoughtfully and precisely is of the utmost importance as without doing so this research would be impossible. The choice has been made to focus on a number of selected texts that will serve as a suitable and fitting theoretical foundation to this research. The theoretical framework will focus on key literature regarding stereotypes (Richard Dyer), Othering (Jack G. Shaheen; Stephen Harold Riggins), and orientalism (Edward W. Said). These texts in particular were chosen for varying reasons. The two books by Jack G. Shaheen concentrate on the same kind of research as this thesis will, yet no movies that came out after 2008 are discussed in these books. This thesis will therefore serve as an expansion upon Shaheen's earlier research, filling a gap. *Orientalism* was chosen due to its status as a foundational text within the academic discipline of Orientalism, and despite its controversy among scholars, this thesis would not be complete without the ideas discussed in the book. Richard Dyer's text on stereotypes was selected because he discusses the varying functions that stereotypes can have, which in regards to a hotly debated issue such as Islamophobia, is of the utmost importance in order to create nuance. Lastly, the text by Stephen Harold Riggins was chosen due to the fact that it approaches the subjects of stereotyping and Othering in a more sociological and philosophical manner. It allows for a more in-depth analysis in combination with the other texts, creating more nuance. Film theory focused on mise-en-scène (John

Edward Gibbs; Gillian Rose) will be the focus of the methodology section and will thus be discussed there. Combining scholarship about stereotypes, Othering and orientalism with scholarship about film theory will serve as an enabler to look at the three case studies through a particular lens, focusing on not just what is obvious, such as language, but also on what is not as obvious at first glance, such as lighting and camera angles.

In his paper "The Role of Stereotypes" Richard Dyer uses the term 'stereotype' as used by the man who coined it, Walter Lippmann. Dyer states that Lippmann "lays out very clearly both the absolute necessity for, and the usefulness of, stereotypes, as well as their limitations and ideological implications," even though the term has come into a more negative light lately due to it being used abusively (206). Lippmann argues that:

> A pattern of stereotypes is not neutral. . . . It is the guarantee of our self-respect; it is the projection upon the world of our own sense of our own value, our own position and our own rights. The stereotypes are, therefore, highly charged with the feelings that are attached to them. They are the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defenses we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position we occupy. (206)

To elaborate, a stereotype is a notion that is highly personal, as we use it to find our place in the world and to relate to other people. Stereotypes can be considered a "comfort zone" to some extent as we are comfortable with the world that is created by employing these stereotypes and are not forced to challenge our own thinking and values (or lack thereof).

Lippmann's theory explains the workings of stereotypes further by stressing that stereotypes are: "(i) an ordering process, (ii) a 'short cut', (iii) referring to 'the world', and (iv) expressing 'our' own values and beliefs" (207). Dyer expands on these topics in his essay and states that he moves between the "more sociological concern of Lippmann (how stereotypes function in social thought) and the specific aesthetic concerns (how stereotypes

function in fictions)" as both need to be considered because according to Dyer "[t]he position behind these considerations is that it is not stereotypes, as an aspect of human thought and representation, that are wrong, but who controls and defines them, what interests they serve" (207). It is therefore vital to place the case studies that will be examined later on in this thesis in a broader societal framework: When were they made? What was/is going on at that time? Are there ulterior motives for Islamophobia being portrayed the way it is and if so, who does it benefit and/or influence?

Stereotypes as an ordering process is the first topic that Dyer expands upon, arguing the following: "Stereotypes as a form of 'ordering' the mass of complex and inchoate data that we receive from the world are only a particular form . . . of the wider process by which any human society, individuals within it, make sense of that society through generalities, patternings and 'typifications'" (207). He calls it a necessary though inescapable way through which societies "make sense of themselves, and hence actually make and reproduce themselves" (207). He does note that these acts of ordering are always partial and limited, however, this does not mean that they are invalid knowledge; it is simply not complete knowledge. Furthermore, there are two problems that accompany stereotypes as an ordering process, namely 1) 'ordering' is always a historical product and thus needs to be seen and placed in the proper historical context while keeping the power relations of that time in mind as these influence the 'ordering', and 2) 'ordering' can bring about "a belief in the absoluteness and certainty of any particular order" which is often accompanied by "a refusal to recognize its limitations and partiality [and] its relativity and changeability . . ." (207).

The second topic Dyer expands upon is stereotypes being used as a short cut. He argues that "Lippmann's notion of stereotypes as a short cut points to the manner which stereotypes are a very simple, striking, easily-grasped form of representation but none the less capable of condensing a great deal of complex information and a host of connotations" (208).

Dyer quotes T.E. Perkins' article "Rethinking Stereotypes" in which it is argued that the simplicity of stereotypes can be extremely deceptive. Giving an example of a 'dumb blonde', T.E. Perkins explains how referring to someone as such requires an understanding of a "complex societal structure" as it refers, for example, to the status of women in society, the relationship of women to men and the inability of women to "behave or think rationally" (qtd. in Dyer 208).

Stereotypes as a reference to the world is the third topic that Dyer expands upon. In the perspective of representations in media and fiction being both aesthetic as well as social constructs, "stereotypes are a particular subcategory of a broader category of fictional characters, the type" according to Dyer (208). Moreover, Dyer argues that:

> Whereas stereotypes are essentially defined, as in Lippmann, by their social function, types, at this level of generality, are primarily defined by their aesthetic function, namely, as a mode of characterization in fiction. The type is any character constructed through the use of a few immediately recognizable and defining traits, which do not change or 'develop' through the course of the narrative and which point to general, recurrent features of the human world. (208)

It is therefore necessary to not only pay attention to the social function of the characters being stereotyped in the case studies, but also at their aesthetic. Furthermore, we should look at if they fit into the definition as described above or if they fit into the opposite of the type, the novelistic character, which is "defined by a multiplicity of traits that are . . . gradually revealed . . . [throughout] the narrative . . . which [hinges] on the growth or development of the character" and focuses on the character's "unique individuality, rather than pointing outwards to a world" (208).

Lastly, the fourth topic Dyer expands upon is stereotypes as an expression of values, stating that: "The stereotype is taken to express a general agreement about a social group, as if

that agreement arose before, and independently of, the stereotype. Yet for the most part it is from stereotypes that we get our ideas about social groups" (209). This can be seen as a form of "us versus them" which relates to Othering. Dyer elaborates by quoting Orrin E. Klapp's differentiation between what Klapp calls "social types" and stereotypes as can be read in his book *Heroes, Villains and Fools* (1962). Klapp argues that social types are the sort of people that "one expects, and is led to expect, to find in one's society, whereas stereotypes are those who do not belong, who are outside of one's society" (qtd. in Dyer 209). This distinction between social types and stereotypes allows us to determine which people do or do not belong in our society as a whole, and by doing so we allow the ones in power to determine who "belongs" and who is the "Other", essentially reinforcing the vicious cycle of stereotypes and ingraining it into our minds and/or society (Dyer 209). By doing so, the paramount function of a stereotype is exposed, namely to "maintain sharp boundary definitions" on what belongs to "us" and what belongs to "them" (Dyer 211). Lastly, Dyer makes a vital remark, arguing that: "The role of stereotypes is to make visible the invisible, so that there is no danger of it creeping up on us unawares; and to make fast, firm and separate what is in reality fluid and much closer to the norm than the dominant value system cares to admit" (211). In other words, while the ones in power, the "social types", want us to believe that there is a chasm between those who 'belong' to the social types and those who 'belong' to the stereotypes, the differences are not that profound as the social types want us to believe.

In his two books that will be discussed in this thesis, *The TV Arab* and *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs after 9/11*, Jack Shaheen reflects on the way Muslims and Arabs are stereotyped and shown as the "Other". One of the most vital comments he makes, which can be linked to Dyer's text (especially to the topic of stereotypes as an expression of values), is that "[e]thnic stereotypes and caricatures corrupt the imagination, narrow our vision and blur reality" (*The TV Arab* 3). As mentioned briefly in the introduction of this

thesis, there are what Shaheen calls "four basic myths" about Arabs: "they are all fabulously wealthy; they are barbaric and uncultured; they are sex maniacs with a penchant for white slavery; and they revel in acts of terrorism" (*The TV Arab* 4). The second and fourth myth are definitely applicable to Muslims in contemporary pop culture as well.

The main cause of these stereotypes being allowed to be portrayed as such (which Shaheen refers to as "The Instant TV Arab Kit") in pop culture is often ignorance: the people in charge simply do not know much about Muslims/Arabs and the nation and/or culture they are from and simply rely upon negative messages in the media (*The TV Arab* 5). One of the root causes of this stereotyping is brought to light when Shaheen talks to Harve Bennett, who produced *Six Million Dollar Man* and *Bionic Woman*, who says the following: "I don't have any explanation for stereotyping other than it's easy" (5). Furthermore, Bennett states that by stereotyping it saves the writer "the ultimate discomfort of having to think. Sometimes, unthinkingly, and under pressure of getting material out in a medium that has no lead time, everybody tends to think in terms of quick solutions. I think the tendency to target Arabs for fun and anger is very easy and often done" (qtd. in *The TV Arab* 5). It is disturbing, to say the least, that the need to think is called an "ultimate discomfort" when not doing so leads to a minority group being targeted and discriminated against.

The easiness of targeting Arabs and/or Muslims is once again illustrated in a 1980 poll that asked Americans how they see Arabs, with some of the common answers being "anti-American, anti-Christian, cunning, unfriendly [and] warlike" (*The TV Arab* 7). The consequences of targeting these groups due to misunderstanding them are quite severe as argued by Meg Greenfield, editorial page editor of *The Washington Post*, who states that it leads to "an Arab caricature" (qtd. in *The TV Arab* 7). Moreover, she states that "[t]here is a dehumanizing, circular process at work here. The caricature dehumanizes. [It] is inspired and made acceptable by an earlier dehumanizing influence, namely an absence of feeling for who

the Arabs are and where they have been" (7). This vicious cycle is at the core of modern-day Islamophobia. Society and the TV and movie industry (as well as the news media) constantly influence each other, perpetuating these stereotypes that hurt Arabs, Muslims and those 'mistaken' for them, such as Sikhs.

As mentioned in the introductory section of this chapter, Muslims and Arabs are often seen as synonymous, which is not the case. This is underlined by Shaheen in his book *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs after 9/11*. He argues that this phenomenon of equating Muslims with Arabs has "two primary deficiencies," namely: 1) "it glosses over the religious diversity of Arabs themselves" and 2) "failure to present on movie screens Muslims of other ethnic extractions also makes it easier for producers to overlook Islam's universality, thereby simplifying its denigrations of Arabs" (xiii). As stated before, not all Arabs are Muslim, which is highlighted by Shaheen as he states that a large portion of the Arab population is secular and that there are also more than twenty million Arab Christians. By excluding these (non-)religious groups, Hollywood continues to project the image that all Arabs are Muslim, thus misleading its viewers (xiii). Furthermore, Shaheen makes an important statement: "The exclusion [of these groups] makes it much easier for directors to paint Arab Muslims as an alien "other," with no links to Western Christians" (xiii). By doing so, it will make it less likely that viewers will relate to the characters and therefore will be less likely to be appalled by the way these characters are portrayed.

These characterizations have become even more harmful since 9/11 and the 'war on terror' that followed, as during such times stereotyping becomes the path of least resistance, with Shaheen arguing that "its mendacity most convincingly masquerades as truth, and it is most vigorously defended and justified as truth" (xii). It has become unimaginable for non-Arabs/non-Muslims to see Arabs/Muslims as "real people" as they have been demonized to such an extent that they are only seen in terms such as 'terrorist', 'enemy', or simply 'the

Other' (xii). Once more a clarification of the term "Other" is given by Shaheen which links perfectly with the above mentioned argument:

> The "other" is always outside the circle of civilization, usually threateningly exotic or dark-looking. He speaks a different language, wears different clothing, and dwells in a primitive place such as Africa's jungles and Arabia's deserts - reel hostile environments with signposts. The "other" poses a threat - economic, religious, and sexual - to our way of life. . . . Incapable of democracy, the "other" is projected as a violent primitive mass opposing world peace and religious tolerance. (xii)

This clarification by Shaheen can be connected to Dyer's comments on stereotypes (all four subsections: an ordering process, a 'short cut', referring to 'the world', and expressing 'our' own values and beliefs) as well as Shaheen's other book that has been discussed, *The TV Arab*. Moreover, a link can and will be made between this clarification and the other texts that will be discussed, especially Said's *Orientalism*.

A vital observation made by Shaheen is that "[f]ilmmaking is political" (xviii). It is a vicious cycle whose parts continuously influence each other which is underscored by *Wall Street Journal* journalist Daniel Henniger's statement that "[i]t has been a truism for a century that media stereotypes set the tone of many public events" (qtd. in *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs after 9/11* xviii). Hollywood, politics and society are constantly influencing each other and their ideas/policies, leading to no real solution for the Islamophobic/Arabophobic problem. It is politics that has the most alarming influence according to *Los Angeles Times* critic Kenneth Turan. He states that while movies are "hard-wired into our psyches, shaping how we view the world, . . . [it is] when politics infiltrates entertainment that it is most subversive - and most effective. [Fiction films] change minds politically . . . Artful entertainment easily beats full-on propaganda" (qtd. in *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs after 9/11* xix). This point of view is underlined by film

historian Annette Insdorf, who states that "[o]ff all the art forms, . . . film is the one that gives the greatest illusion of authenticity, of truth" (qtd. in *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs after 9/11* xx). The choice to examine multiple movies to prove that they do incite Islamophobia is therefore a rational choice as it is a medium that reaches the masses, even those people that are not involved in politics directly or even interested in it.

The introductory chapter to the book *The Language and Politics of Exclusion: Others in Discourse* called "The Rhetoric of Othering" by Stephen Harold Riggins (who also edited the volume) explores the relationship between the Self and the Other in a more sociological and philosophical sense, relating it as far back as Plato. While Plato used it in a broader sense, "an observer (Self) and an observed (the Other)", in contemporary times it is used in a more "restricted sense" which Riggins clarifies as it "[referring] to all people the Self perceives as mildly or radically different" (3). This 'you vs. me' or 'us vs. them' mentality can be linked to the previously discussed theories by both Dyer and Shaheen, which provide the contemporary aspects related to stereotypes and Arabs and/or Muslims, as well as the introductory part of this chapter which provides three definitions of Islamophobia, laying the sociological groundwork.

In order to create a sense of who one is, a Self, Riggins argues that one "must generate discourses of both difference and similarity and must reject and embrace specific identities" (4). This should lead to the Other being seen as a variety of points of view within a "system of difference" (4). The Self and the Other are different concepts for every person and/or population group. There is no universal Self just as there is no universal Other. However, in recent years, especially since 9/11, the Muslim and/or Arab Other has been portrayed as the universal Other that threatens 'our' Western society. This portrayal is almost ubiquitous, it can be found in politics, media, Hollywood, and in the general society.

Riggins refers to a study done by Todorov on the Spanish conquest of Mexico in

which Todorov recognizes three different aspects of the relationship between the Self and the Other: "(a) value judgments (e.g. the Other may be deemed good or bad, equal or inferior to the Self), (b) social distance (the physical and psychological distance the Self maintains from the Other), and (c) knowledge (the extent to which the history and culture of the Other is known by the Self)" (5). These three aspects can all be found in the relationship between the Western world (the Self in this thesis) and Muslims/Arabs (the Other in this thesis). The Western world mostly deems Muslims/Arabs as bad and/or inferior to the Self, it maintains a large physical and psychological distance between itself and Muslims/Arabs as people often avoid Muslims/Arabs when coming across them in everyday life (physical) as well as not relating to them in a mental or emotional way (psychological), and the Western world often seems to lack the knowledge of the history and culture of Muslims/Arabs and tends to generalize (e.g. "all terrorists are Muslim").

All of the previously discussed literature and its purpose in regards to the theoretical framework of this thesis comes together in Said's *Orientalism*, which explains the underlying thought process and historical background that goes into notions such as stereotypes, the Self, and the Other. In order to employ the complete theoretical framework in an efficient manner, key points from *Orientalism* will be used. One of these key points that is made by Said is that Europeans and Americans will experience the Orient differently, which is why I, as a European writing about the United States, need to pay close attention while analyzing the case studies in order to accurately represent the American experience, and not the European one. Said explains the difference between both experiences as follows:

> The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea,

personality, experience. The Orient is an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture. (1-2)

Whereas Europe and the Orient are seemingly interconnected, the United States and the Orient are less so. To the United States, the Orient has mainly been associated with the 'Far East' (mainly Japan and China) and less so with the Middle East, making the experience "considerably less dense" according to Said (2). However, he does state that due to 'recent' (this edition of the book was published in 1995) voyages into Japan, Korea and South-East Asia, the American experience in relation to the Orient should be creating a "more sober, more realistic "Oriental" awareness" (2). Furthermore, he argues that due to the "vastly expanded American political and economic role in the Near East (the Middle East) . . . great claims [can be made] on the [American] understanding of that Orient" (2). However, in the years since 9/11 this understanding of the Middle Eastern Orient has deteriorated considerably. It is most commonly associated with Islam (in a negative light), terrorism, and the Other. While the United States' political role is still very much present (and did significantly expand during George W. Bush's presidency), it has not led to a greater understanding of the Middle Eastern Orient.

Orientalism can be defined in three separate ways according to Said, namely: 1) the academic tradition of Orientalism in which anyone that "teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient . . . is an Orientalist"; 2) as a "style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"; and 3) "Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (2-3). It is this third definition that will mainly be employed throughout this thesis and it is further expanded upon by Said when he states the following: "The relationship between the Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony . . ." (5).

This sense of hegemony has mainly been European, with the United States taking over after World War II, which is interesting as Said argues that his "real argument is that Orientalism is –and does not simply represent- a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with "our" world" (12). Said's argument that Orientalism has more to do with "our" world than the Orient itself is based in the argument of European/American hegemony over the centuries and how this hegemony has, in a way, created our sense of what is the Orient and what/who is included in it. This argument is supported by Said's statement that "the imaginative examination of things Oriental was based more or less exclusively upon a sovereign Western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality an Oriental world emerged" (8). This sense of hegemony has only increased more during the Digital Age as the stereotypes that are commonly used to view the Other, in this case the Orient, are spreading more and seem to be almost ubiquitous. Not only does Hollywood reinforce these stereotypes through its movies and TV shows, the news media (both television and printed media) does so too as they "have forced information into more and more standardized molds" as argued by Said (26). This standardization and stereotyping has affected the Middle Eastern Orient more than the Far Eastern Orient and Said argues that there are three aspects that are partly responsible for politicizing even the smallest mention or perception of Islam and Arabs to the extreme, namely: 1) "the history of popular anti-Arab and anti-Islamic prejudice in the West . . ."; 2) "the struggle between the Arabs and Israeli Zionism, and its effect upon American Jews as well as upon both the liberal culture and the population at large"; and 3) "the almost total absence of any cultural position making it possible either to identify with or dispassionately to discuss the Arabs or Islam" (26-27).

By combining the discussed literature on stereotypes, the Other and Orientalism a complex, nuanced and thorough theoretical framework has been created to examine and

analyze the three movies that will serve as case studies.

Methodology

By employing a mise-en-scène methodology in order to examine Islamophobia light will be shed on the practice of framing and positioning Muslims and Arabs in a certain way that often leads to not only a conscious, but also a subconscious, manner of discrimination. Through the use of such a methodology next to the more obvious linguistic aspects (derogatory language for example) the case studies will be examined more thoroughly and in a more nuanced manner.

As stated in the beginning of the theory section, the basis of the methodology will be the book *Mise-en-scène : film style and interpretation* by John Edward Gibbs as well as a section from the book *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials* by Gillian Rose. The choice to use these books in particular has been made because Gibbs states in the introduction of his book that "[a]n important role of this book . . . is identifying approaches that have already been developed and employed. [Gibbs'] task is less about saying something new, and more one of bringing together in the same place, some of the ways in which mise-en-scène has been thought about and put to use" (2). In other words, the book is a centralized spot in which mise-en-scène scholarship has been brought together and will thus offer a broad yet thorough look at mise-en-scène and how to employ it as a method for this thesis. Rose's book offers more in-depth information in regards to specific aspects of mise-en-scène and was therefore chosen.

Gibbs provides a workable definition of the term mise-en-scène: "the contents of the frame and the way that they are organised" (5). The contents, which Rose offers more in-depth information on, includes aspects such as lighting, camera positioning, costume, color,

props, and the actors themselves. By examining these factors through compositional interpretation we can gain a sense of what the effects are of a certain scene or of a film as a whole on the viewer.

The factor that especially needs to be elaborated upon further due to the jargon related to the term that will be used throughout this thesis is camera positioning (which includes shot distance, focus, and camera angles and movement). Rose explains how shot distance "refers to how much of a figure is shown by a particular shot," and elaborates on examples, ". . . a shot can be an *extreme long shot* (where the figure is in the far distance), *a long shot*, or a *full*, *three-quarters*, *medium*, *head and shoulders* or *close-up* shot" (69-70). The shot distance can influence the way the viewer interprets certain scenes and/or how they identify with the character(s) if they do so. Rose explains how a close-up, for example, can "produce a sense of claustrophobic intensity," whereas long shots "may imply alienation and emptiness" (70). It is important to note that such generalizations should not be made about every single frame that such a shot occurs in, and that each frame's context should be carefully examined. Gibbs explains the use of different kinds of shots even more in-depth with an example scene about two people walking along a river bank:

> It would be possible to film the event in long shot, perhaps from the other side of the river. This would literally, and perhaps emotionally, hold the audience at a certain distance. Or, one could track along in front of the characters giving the spectator an intimate and equal view of each. Or, one could have the camera tracking slightly to one side, thus favouring [*sic*] one of the characters . . . Or, one could shoot the sequence in a series of shots which alternate between a view of a character looking offscreen [*sic*] and a series of shots representing her optical point of view. A tracking point of view figure - other things being equal - is likely to encourage the audience to empathise [*sic*] with a character. (19)

These examples will come into play when examining the case studies and should allow for an interesting and nuanced examination of the characters on their own as well as interaction between different characters.

Camera angles is the other concept that needs to be discussed briefly. Camera angles will allow the viewer to understand the relationship between characters and should not be confused with camera shots, which establish aspects such as the theme(s), setting and characters. The different angles include: a bird's eye angle (used to establish a scene), high angle (look down on a character; used to make a character appear vulnerable or unimportant), eye-level angle (will allow the viewer to see the characters as equals), and low angle (look up at a character; used to make a character look powerful or respected) (Rose 70-71).

The last aspect that needs to be discussed in relation to camera positioning is camera movement, which is used to shape meaning in a film. Three types of camera movement that are most commonly used will be explored: 1) A tracking shot, in which the camera moves in a horizontal line, is used most often to explore a room, 2) a crane shot, in which the camera moves in a vertical line, is commonly used at the end of a scene or film to indicate its end, and 3) panning, in which the camera also moves along a horizontal line, used to give the viewer a panoramic view (for example along a horizon) (Rose 71).

Other factors to briefly elaborate upon are color and lighting. Colors are not as straightforward as they may seem, as there is a psychological basis to each one. Red, for example, is often associated with anger, passion or related emotions. White most often is associated with purity, innocence, protection and the like. Colors such as yellow and orange are associated with concepts such as happiness, wisdom, humor, and idealism; though yellow in particular can also represent negative aspects such as cowardice or deceit. Earthly colors like green and brown are associated with, among other things, calming, healing, reliability, perseverance, and pride; yet green is often also associated with the negative emotions of

jealousy and envy. Blue is seen as the color of faith, spirituality, loyalty, harmony and trust, among others; yet it is also the color that represents depression. Purple is connected to things as royalty, intimacy, mysteriousness and power whereas the closely related color pink is connected to aspects such as love, femininity, and innocence. Colors such as gold and silver are associated with wealth, extravagance and high-tech. Lastly, black is often associated with death, power, sophistication, fear, anger, sadness and other related negative emotions. It is important to research the use of color in the three case studies, especially in relation to Islamophobia, to see the underlying emotions/concepts the filmmakers want to connect to certain scenes and/or characters.

As far as lighting is concerned, the aspects that need to be paid attention to are the creation of shadows and highlighting certain parts of a scene. Whereas shadows will conceal certain aspects and thus create a feeling of fear or mystery, highlighting will call attention to aspects of the shot, whether that is an actor or a non-living aspect of the shot. Lighting will allow the audience to gain a better understanding of the story, a certain character or the mood and/or themes of said scene or the movie as a whole (Gibbs 8; Rose 73-74). Moreover, color and lighting often interact. The hue (actual color), saturation (purity of color; vivid colors have high purity, neutral colors have low purity), and value (lightness or darkness of a color) of colors is affected by the type of light that is shown on screen (e.g. daylight, artificial light, candle light) (Rose 59-60, 73-74).

All of these elements combined make up the spatial organization or composition of a frame and will allow for an elaborate and nuanced examination of Islamophobia in the three case studies, keeping in mind the theoretical framework that was created previously in this chapter. To reiterate, the research question that will guide this thesis is therefore: How is Islamophobia constructed cinematically in the Hollywood productions *The Hurt Locker*, *Zero Dark Thirty*, and *American Sniper*? The sub questions that will be answered throughout the

 chapters in order to answer the main research question are: 1) How are Muslims and Arabs demonized in these Hollywood productions? 2) Which ideological markers trigger Islamophobia in the case studies? And 3) How do several mise-en-scène elements portray Islamophobia in the case studies? In order to answer these questions the outline of the case study chapters will be as follows: at the beginning of each chapter a short summary will be given of the movie that will be discussed in order to give the reader an idea of what the subject of the movie is, which themes have a key role and who the main characters are. Subsequently, a number of scenes will be analyzed in depth according to the outlined theoretical framework and methodology. This analysis will be supported by the use of screenshots of the scenes that will be discussed, in order to give the reader a visual image. The methodological part of the analysis will use terms related to mise-en-scène topics as shot distance, camera angles and lighting as used by Rose and Gibbs. As this vocabulary will be used while discussing (almost) every scene, there will not be a constant reference towards either Rose or Gibbs as this will create a sense of repetitiveness and not a pleasant reading experience. There will be references in regards to the theoretical part of the analysis as this will not be the same for every scene, will thus not create a sense of repetitiveness and because the theoretical part will be a more in-depth discussion instead of only using certain terms. After the three case studies have been analyzed in separate chapters, a concluding chapter will follow which will consist of a discussion section in which the case studies will be compared and contrasted and a conclusion section in which the research question as well as the sub questions will be discussed and answered.

1. The Hurt Locker (2008)

Introduction

The Hurt Locker was directed by Kathryn Bigelow and won six Academy Awards, including those for Best Picture and Best Director. It is currently the only movie that was directed by a woman to have won the Academy Award in either of these categories. It follows the story of an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team that is stationed in Iraq during the Iraq War. The EOD team initially consists of the team leader Staff Sergeant Matthew Thompson (Guy Pearce), Sergeant J.T. Sanborn (played by Anthony Mackie), and Specialist Owen Eldridge (Brian Geraghty). Early on in the movie Staff Sergeant Thompson is killed in an explosion caused by an improvised explosive device (IED) and is subsequently replaced by Sergeant First Class William James (Jeremy Renner), who has formerly served in Afghanistan.

The EOD team deals with all kinds of situations, from IED's to ambushes and from booby traps to remote control detonations, yet these situations are made even more trying and difficult to the James' unconventional leadership style. He is portrayed as a thrill seeker who craves the thrill that dismantling a bomb provides without giving much thought to his own safety and sometimes even that of his teammates. James' style contrasts greatly with Sanborn's, which is strictly according to the rules and based on duty and trust, which in turn often leads to confrontation and friction between them. Eldridge's style on the other hand is again completely different, based on his own insecurity that due to one of his own actions a civilian or fellow soldier could die, yet he does value duty and trust. This leads to him often being metaphorically situated between James and Sanborn and having to keep the peace within the team.

The Hurt Locker follows the EOD team (called Bravo Company) for the last thirty-nine days of its current deployment and we are witness to the evolution of it and the

relationship between the team members. In the end James and Sanborn have learned to deal with each other's style and it could even be said that they have developed a fragile friendship, one based on the events that they have gone through as an EOD team. However, whereas Sanborn confesses he wants to go home and start a family, James cannot handle civilian life. After returning home he confesses to his infant son that there is only one thing he knows he loves and in the next scene we seem him in his army gear, starting another year-long tour of duty on an EOD team.

<div align="center">**Analysis**</div>

One of the topics as discussed by Dyer is stereotypes as an ordering process, and he refers to it as a manner through which societies "make sense of themselves, and hence actually make and reproduce themselves" (207). It are the two problems that follow the use of stereotypes as an ordering process that shine through in *The Hurt Locker*, namely: 'ordering' is always a historical product and thus needs to be seen and placed in the proper historical context while keeping the power relations of that time in mind as these influence the 'ordering', and 'ordering' can bring about "a belief in the absoluteness and certainty of any particular order" which is often accompanied by "a refusal to recognize its limitations and partiality [and] its relativity and changeability . . ." (207). The proper historical context of *The Hurt Locker* is that it takes place during the Iraq War, when the United States (and some coalition partners) invaded Iraq because it believed that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), an accusation that later proved to be false. The power relations are an example of Orientalism, with the United States portraying itself as being righteous in its reasoning, which links to the second problem of stereotypes as an ordering process, namely believing without a doubt that one is right and that the actions that have been taken are justifiable and without limitations.

Throughout the movie we are witness to an us vs. them mentality or, as referred to by

Riggins, a Self/Other mentality. Over time the relationship between the Self and the Other has become more restricted according to Riggins, who explains it is "[referring] to all people the Self perceives as mildly or radically different" in modern times (3). It is this restricted definition that can be seen throughout *The Hurt Locker* with characteristics such as shaky filming, close-ups, and scenes that look as though they have been filmed through the scope of a gun.

The first scene that will be discussed features two out of these three characteristics, as can be seen in the following screenshot:

The scene is filmed through the use of a head and shoulders shot, suggesting a slight sense of claustrophobia (Rose 70). Even though it is technically not a close-up shot, it feels more like one due to it seemingly being shot through the scope of a gun, which gives the shot a larger sense of claustrophobia. The use of the gun scope shot, as it will be referred to throughout this chapter, is a common occurrence in *The Hurt Locker*, which together with the shaky filming gives the movie a sense of unease, fear, and agitation, notions that are generally associated with war. Moreover, it portrays the characters viewed through it, Muslim men, as being

potentially dangerous which is detrimental as it makes it seem as though every Muslim man that happens to be in the vicinity of a (possible) attack is a terrorist. In the scene a low camera angle is employed, which would usually be used to make a character look powerful or respected as one will look up to that person, yet in this scene it has the opposite effect as we see the scene from the soldier's point of view through a gun scope (Rose 70-71). In the scene the team is attempting to disarm an IED and while Staff Sergeant Thompson is walking towards the IED in a special bomb suit, the other members of the team, Sanborn and Eldridge keep an eye on the surroundings in order to ensure the team's safety. This screenshot is part of that scene where Sanborn (in this case) looks up through the scope of his gun at these three presumably Muslim men. It is safe to assume that in this case Sanborn does not respect these three men but only sees them as possible enemies; while it does give these three men some sort of power over the American soldiers, it does not necessarily make them look powerful as they are leaning on their elbows on the balcony, which is not a threatening pose in the slightest.

  As far as shadows, highlighting, and color are concerned it is an interesting scene to dissect. These three factors often closely interact with each other as can be seen in this particular screenshot. It being a gun scope shot means that everything outside of the circle of the scope is shown as one large black shadow. Relating back to color theory and what the color black most often stands for (namely death and emotions such as anger, sadness, and fear) the blackness is reinforced by the fact that it is a gun scope which in turn reinforces two of the things the color black often represents: death and fear. Highlighting is not used and thus attention is not drawn to any specific aspect of the scene within the gun scope (excluding the black outline). This in itself draws even more attention to the blackness that has been created by using a gun scope shot and strengthens the themes that are present throughout the movie: war, death, and fear.

The sequence of scenes in which the EOD team tries to disarm an IED continues and four screenshots regarding a specific scene that is at the core of Islamophobia in this sequence. The first screenshot gives us a general overview of the scene and will be discussed first, followed by three close-ups.

The man in the scene was first seen a few minutes earlier in the movie when he broke through a human barricade formed by US soldiers and ran back to his butcher shop. This shop is also featured for a few seconds with some haunting sounds in the background, in a way already preparing the viewer that both the man and the butcher shop will play a role later on. This relates back to the principle of 'Chekhov's Gun' which in essence means that elements should not be introduced if they will not play a role later on in the movie. As we can see the man has a mobile phone in his hands which is often used to detonate bombs remotely. Seeing this, the EOD team immediately reacts, telling him to drop the phone, which does not happen.

The way in which the scene is cinematically constructed is reminiscent of the first scene. Once again a gun scope shot is used, reinforcing the sense of danger, fear, and unease the soldiers must feel in this particular situation (and one can assume also in general as it is an active war zone). The use of a gun scope shot once again portrays the character as being

potentially dangerous and while later on in the scene we see that this man was dangerous does not mean that every Muslim character viewed through a gun scope is, as witnessed in the previous screenshot, and it is thus still detrimental to the image of Muslims. An eye-level camera angle is used, which would normally allow the viewer to see the characters as equals according to Rose, yet in this scene the viewer does not experience it as such due to the fact that we once again view the scene from the soldier's point of view through a gun scope (70-71). By continuously constructing scenes through the use of a gun scope shot, Said's third definition of Orientalism, "Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient," is showcased on screen (2-3). The Iraq War is a recent example of the Western world dominating, restructuring (or trying to), and having authority over the Orient (the Middle East, and specifically Iraq, in this case). Pre-9/11 the case could be made that the United States had gained somewhat of an understanding of the Middle East due to the "vastly expanded American political and economic role in the Near East (the Middle East)" according to Said (2). However, post-9/11 the same cannot be said and this understanding has only deteriorated. The Middle East is now seen as the polar opposite of the Western world and its civilization and mainly associated with terrorism and Islam (in a negative light).

Whereas in the previous scene a head and shoulders shot was used which may give a slight sense of claustrophobia due to it being almost a close-up shot, in this scene a three-quarter shot is used which, as it is closely related to a long shot, can create the opposite effect according to Rose, who said it "may imply alienation and emptiness" (70). Even though it may seem that these two notions are on opposite ends of a spectrum they can be considered to be two sides of the same coin in a war situation, which can be connected to Riggins' theory of a Self and an Other. Riggins states that to establish who one is, a Self, one "must generate discourses of both difference and similarity and must reject and embrace specific identities"

(4). Furthermore, he argues that doing so should lead to the Other being seen as a variety of points of view within a "system of difference" (4). The Other can thus be cinematically constructed in such a way that it will either imply a sense of claustrophobia or alienation and emptiness, yet at the core it will still be the same notion, just constructed slightly differently within the "system of difference" yet in the end creating the same thing in these movies: Islamophobia.

In regards to the use of shadows, highlights, and color the scene is very similar to the previous scene thus creating a cinematic pattern. Due to the use of a gun scope shot the shadows are mainly present in the outer edges of the scene, creating a blackness that, together with the storyline of the movie, underlines the themes of death, fear, and war. Whereas the previous screenshot did not use highlights, this one does, though very sparingly. The man himself is not highlighted; the choice has been made to highlight aspects of the butcher shop such as the table with wares and equipment as well as the animal carcasses hanging in front of the man. A butcher shop is often associated with death, which the animal carcasses showcase. By highlighting these carcasses and giving them a more prominent place within the frame the theme of death is emphasized, as well as connecting the carcasses to the presumably Muslim man. Furthermore, it can even be argued that it was an act of foreshadowing when the man and the butcher shop were shown before the IED explosion due to the association with death.

The first screenshot gives a general overview of the scene but conceals the man's face, adding a sense of weariness and mystery. The following three close-up screenshots amplify this sense of weariness as well as the fear that the US soldiers must feel:
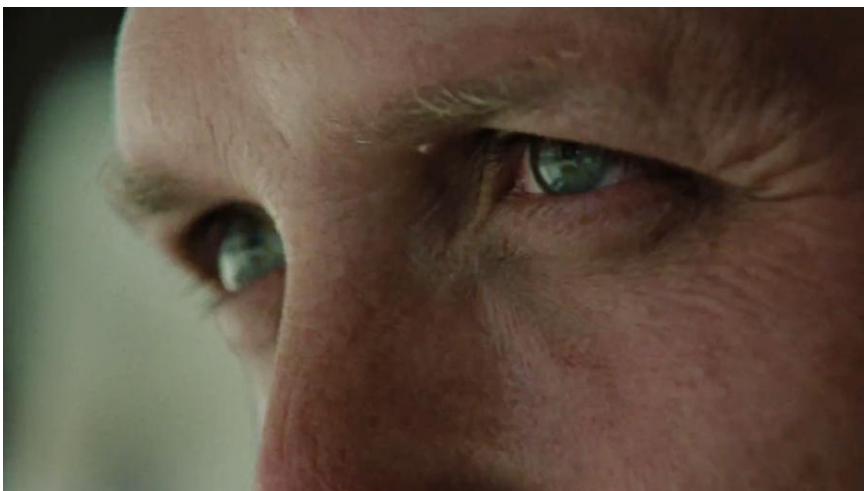
All three screenshots are extreme close-up shots, not even showing a full face or hand. These close-ups are the perfect example of Rose's argument, which stated that close-ups can "produce a sense of claustrophobic intensity" (70). Due to the earlier scenes in the sequence of scenes that lead up to the IED explosion we are already experiencing a sense of weariness and fear created by the cinematic construction of the scenes through the use of the gun scope shot, shadows, highlights, color, and careful positioning of props (the animal carcasses). An eye-level camera angle is used, which would normally allow the audience to connect with the character more, yet because the man is being portrayed as potentially dangerous the audience is unlikely to do so. Even though the first two screenshots discussed in this chapter do not show the US soldier directly, from whose point of view we see the other characters, the use of the gun scope shot does imply that there is a relationship between the characters even when we cannot see one of the sides thus allowing camera angles to be used in the analysis.

The choice has been made by director Kathryn Bigelow to not use highlights or obvious shadows in this scene. The man is not standing in direct sunlight, but in the shadows that the roof of the butcher shop provides yet there are no pronounced shadows present in the scene. The man not standing in direct sunlight does have an effect on the colors of the scene as it affects the hue (actual color) by decreasing the value of the colors through the lack of natural light thus darkening the scene (Rose 59-60, 73-74).

The following four screenshots depict a scene where Sergeant First Class William James walks towards another IED to examine and dismantle it. A taxi crashes through the barricade set up by other soldiers and stops right in front of James, which leads to a stand-off. Each screenshot will be discussed separately in order to examine them properly.

This screenshot depicts the beginning of the scene with the taxi having come to a stop right in front of James, who is wearing a special bomb suit, only after James aimed the gun at the taxi driver. It concerns a medium shot, as James is only shown from the waist up. These types of shots are often used in scenes in which the focus is on the interaction between different characters (verbal or non-verbal). In this case there is both verbal and non-verbal interaction, though the verbal part is one-sided, coming from James. Just before James starts talking to the taxi driver, asking him what he is doing and telling him to back up, another US soldier says the following about James aiming a gun at the driver: "EOD pulled a nine on this Haji in a car" ('to pull a nine' means to do something incredibly stupid). 'Haji' is offensive slang used to describe Arabs (especially those that are Muslim) that was first used by US soldiers during the Iraq War in 2003. Using this word that it is especially aimed at Muslim Arabs is Islamophobic at its core, as the choice could have also been made to refer to the man as 'Iraqi' which would merely indicate that he is from Iraq, instead of assuming that he is Muslim. This assumption is harmful to Muslims, as it is assumed that because it looks like the man has

harmful intentions he must be Muslim. Furthermore, it is also harmful to those that are 'mistaken' for Muslims as they will face the same Islamophobic treatment.

This argument is supported by Shaheen's statement on the phenomenon of equating Muslims with Arabs. He argues that it has "two primary deficiencies," namely: 1) "it glosses over the religious diversity of Arabs themselves" and 2) "failure to present on movie screens Muslims of other ethnic extractions also makes it easier for producers to overlook Islam's universality, thereby simplifying its denigrations of Arabs" (xiii). Both deficiencies apply to *The Hurt Locker*, as not all Arabs consider themselves to be Muslim (nor are all the people in Iraq Muslim) and neither are all Muslims Arabs as there are over 500,000 Afro-Iraqis, most of whom are Muslim. By only showing Arab Muslims on screen and portraying them as the Other, with according to Shaheen "no links to Western Christians", it is less likely that the audience will relate to these characters and will thus not be as easily appalled by the treatment of these characters (xiii).

In this screenshot a high camera angle is used with James looking down at the taxi driver. A high camera angle is often used to make a character look vulnerable or unimportant. Considering the previously discussed statement by the US soldier, it can be deduced that the taxi driver is seen as unimportant by most, he is 'merely' just another Haji. If needed, James will shoot him, as can be seen when he shoots at the ground next to the car and at the windshield of the car as a warning. This correlates with Shaheen's argument that the audience will be less likely to relate to these characters or be appalled by their treatment as they, the Muslim Arab, are cinematically portrayed in a way that makes them seem unimportant.

The creation of shadows and highlights in the screenshot is done in such a way that it amplifies the feelings of fear and weariness. The sunlight comes from behind, shining in James' face (which we do not see) and shrouding the taxi driver in shadows due to being covered by the car's roof. The purpose of shadows is to conceal parts of a scene to create a

feeling of fear or mystery and by setting up the scene with the sun in the back and thus shrouding the taxi driver in shadows this purpose is achieved. Moreover, highlights are used to emphasize certain aspects of a scene which in this particular scene can be seen at the top right corner of the taxi. Due to the bright glare of sunlight at the top right corner of the car it is even more difficult to see the taxi driver's face, adding another layer of fear (Gibbs 8; Rose 59-60, 73-74).

The second screenshot is a close-up of the taxi driver's face:

This screenshot once more reflects the "sense of claustrophobic intensity" that a close-up can produce (Rose 70). The rearview mirror being cracked adds to this intensity as we see the man's eye thrice in different pieces of the mirror, creating a feeling of being watched. An eye-level camera angle is used, which would normally allow the audience to connect with the character more, yet because the man is being portrayed as potentially dangerous the audience is unlikely to do so. As the man is shrouded in shadows because of the roof of the car shielding him from the natural sunlight, a sense of fear and mystery is created, which is emphasized not only because of the cracked mirror, but also because of the prayer beads hanging from the mirror. Even though many religions use prayer beads the audience is meant

to assume that it are Islamic prayer beads because the man is Arab, yet being Arab should not automatically be equated with being Muslim, as argued by Shaheen (xiii). Even if the man is Muslim and it are thus Islamic prayer beads, one should not automatically assume that this means that the man is a danger to Westerners. Many devout Muslims live peaceful lives and one should not automatically correlate Islam with violence, which is what this sequence of scenes tries to do by crafting it in such a cinematic way that the man comes across as a potential terrorist.

The third screenshot regarding this scene is filmed from what is roughly the taxi driver's point of view:

This part of the scene is filmed from behind the taxi driver, showing us only the back of his head, yet showing James from the knees up. This makes it an interesting shot as the forefront is shot as a close-up, whereas the background is a three-quarters shot. Knowing that James is a US soldier, a Western audience is more likely to either side or identify with him instead of with the taxi driver and will thus not feel threatened by his stance and the fact that he's holding a gun. The audience will most likely feel weary, frightened, or even threatened by how the taxi driver is portrayed in this screenshot. We do not see his face which together with

the low camera angle from which this part of the scene is filmed is reminiscent of Orientalism and is fundamentally Islamophobic. The low camera angle is used to make James look powerful and in charge, whereas filming the taxi driver from the back and thus not showing his face makes him look unimportant and one of many, not an individual worth mentioning. Moreover, the taxi driver is shrouded in shadows, allowing for a sense of fear and mystery to be attached to him, whereas James is standing in the sunlight which draws attention to him, and as both Gibbs and Rose have argued, will allow the audience to gain a better understanding of the story, James as a character or the mood and/or themes of the scene or the movie as a whole (Gibbs 8; Rose 73-74).

James being made to look powerful and the taxi driver as unimportant relates back to Dyer's theory on stereotypes and how the stereotypes are sometimes used as a reference to the world. The way in which the taxi driver is portrayed does not just fit into the stereotype category, but also in the broader category of which stereotypes are a subcategory: the type. It is argued by Dyer that "[t]he type is any character constructed through the use of a few immediately recognizable and defining traits, which do not change or 'develop' through the course of the narrative and which point to general, recurrent features of the human world" (208). The traits belonging to the type in *The Hurt Locker* are: Arab, 'appearing' to be Muslim, male, and hostile. James on the other hand is a perfect example of what Dyer describes as a novelistic character, which is the opposite of the type. A novelistic character is "defined by a multiplicity of traits that are . . . gradually revealed . . . [throughout] the narrative . . . which [hinges] on the growth or development of the character" and focuses on the character's "unique individuality, rather than pointing outwards to a world" (208). Throughout the movie we are a part of James' journey and witness the growth and development that he goes through. By portraying all non-Western and ('appearing' to be) Muslim characters as the type, and the main Western non-Muslim characters as the novelistic

character, an Orientalist and Islamophobic approach is used to construct the movie.

Lastly, the fourth screenshot shows James pressing a gun to the taxi driver's forehead, after shooting at the ground and at the windshield did not lead to the taxi driver backing up his

taxi.

It is a close-up shot of the taxi driver's face and James' hand that's holding the gun. Once more, the close-up, together with the narrative of the scene, creates an intense claustrophobic feeling. A high camera angle is used, as James looks down at and, it can be assumed, on the taxi driver, making the driver look intimidated and frightened. Even though one cannot see James' face, one can still deduce from the scene that James is in a position of power as he is holding a gun and is willing to shoot the Arab and presumably Muslim taxi driver, portraying that character as unimportant to James and his fellow soldiers. Half of the taxi driver's face is shrouded in dark shadows, referencing the color black and some of the notions it can stand for such as fear and anger, whereas the gun, which is also in the shadows and already references death, emphasizes this reference even more so by being black. James' hand holding the gun is highlighted, calling attention to it and the power he holds over the taxi driver's life. Considering that the man is portrayed as being Muslim, the fact that a white, presumably

Christian, Westerner has the power to end his life relates to Said's third definition of Orientalism: "Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (2-3). These notions, that the Western world has the right to dominate, restructure, and have authority over the Middle East (as this region is what is mainly considered 'the Orient' post-9/11 and in relation to this thesis) are problematic and damaging notions in regards to the lives of Muslims everywhere, as can be witnessed under the Trump administration. In addition, by putting political Islamophobic notions and messages in movies the sentiment is perpetuated throughout society as, according to *Los Angeles Times* critic Kenneth Turan movies are "hard-wired into our psyches, shaping how we view the world, . . . [and it is] when politics infiltrates entertainment that it is most subversive - and most effective" (qtd. in *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs after 9/11* xix).

Lastly, two screenshots will be discussed that are from a scene that depicts an attempted attack on a United Nations building through the use of a car bomb. It concerns two screenshots from the same sequence of scenes that are suggested to be related by one of the US soldiers as he states that the men on the minaret (second screenshot) are communicating with the cameraman (first screenshot).

 The first screenshot shows us the cameraman that is filming the EOD team as they are trying

to dismantle a car bomb at a United Nations building. It concerns another medium shot, as we

can only see the cameraman from the waist up. As mentioned, these types of shots are often

used in scenes in which the focus is on the interaction between different characters (verbal or

non-verbal). In this case there is only non-verbal interaction, which seems to be one-sided as

Eldridge waves his arm at the man yet the man continues filming the US soldiers stoically, not

responding to Eldridge's wave. The man not responding adds another layer of fear as the US

soldiers call him 'shady' and state that the man might be filming the possible explosion in

order to put it on YouTube to spread what the viewer is made to think will be terrorist

propaganda.

In this screenshot a gun scope shot it used again, which has proven to be a common

occurrence throughout *The Hurt Locker*. As can be seen, the screenshot is a bit blurry as

shaky filming was employed in order intensify the sense of unease and fear. The way in which

the gun scope shot is used to portray the presumably Muslim man as being potentially

dangerous yet turning out not to be is reminiscent of the very first screenshot that was

discussed. Using a gun scope shot in these cases in order to make it look as though every

Muslim man that happens to be in the vicinity of a (possible) attack is a terrorist is a case of tarring all Muslims with the same brush and will not help whatsoever in lessening the discrimination that Muslims and those 'mistaken' for Muslims face.

The use of shadows, highlights and color is reminiscent of the first two screenshots that were discussed in this chapter, thus continuing that cinematic pattern. This particular screenshot is a little darker than the other two that used a gun scope shot, which could be interpreted as an attempt to increase the sense of weariness and fear due to the amount of black used in the scene. The gun scope shot does represent the majority of the shadows in the scene, though there is another important one present, namely the left side (from the viewer's point of view) of the man. Because the man is half shrouded in shadows and half standing in the sunlight a sense of duality is created. Riggins' theory of a Self and an Other, which entails that a Self will see an Other as an array of points of view within what he referred to as a "system of difference" due to having generated "discourses of both difference and similarity and [having rejected and embraced] specific identities" can be linked to this (4). The part of the man that is standing in the sunlight, increasing the value of the colors and thus creating brighter colors that are not associated with fear and death, together with the reference to YouTube, the man wearing Western style clothing and a watch, and the fact that he is holding a video camera will allow for the audience to create a discourse of similarity. On the other hand, the side of the man that is shrouded in shadows, decreasing the value of the colors and thus creating darker colors that are associated with fear and death, allows for the audience to create a discourse of difference (Rose 59-60, 73-74). Even though this sense of duality is created through the use of shadows, highlights, and color, a discourse of difference still has the upper hand because of the threatening shadows created by the gun scope shot and the man being referred to as 'shady'.

This discourse of difference is intensified in the last screenshot, as the US soldiers

note that the men standing at the top of the minaret seem to be communicating with the cameraman.

Once again a medium shot is used, which references the non-verbal interaction used between the men on the minaret and the US soldiers as well as the non-verbal interaction between the men and the cameraman. A low camera angle is used in this screenshot to make the men look powerful as they might be involved in the car bomb plot. As soon as the soldiers spot the men on the minaret seemingly communicating with the cameraman, their weariness and sense of fear increases as they are already being watched by multiple people and filmed by one of them, on top of having to dismantle a car bomb and keeping their own team safe. This fear is intensified by the use of shadows and lighting in the scene. The bright sunlight shining in the men's faces together with them being high up on the minaret has the effect of not being able to clearly see their faces. The viewer can only identify them through the use of a few key markers: Arab, presumably Muslim, and dark facial hair. This means that they are typical examples of what Dyer referred to as the 'type': "any character constructed through the use of a few immediately recognizable and defining traits, which do not change or 'develop' through the course of the narrative . . ." (208). Because of the discourses of similarity and difference

that are created when one establishes a sense of Self and Other together with the deteriorated understanding of the Middle East post-9/11, characters constructed as such in movies that include themes such as fear, death, and war will only further harm Muslims throughout the world and perpetuate Islamophobia.

2. Zero Dark Thirty (2012)

Introduction

Zero Dark Thirty by director Kathryn Bigelow, Academy Award winning director and writer of *The Hurt Locker*, chronicles the hunt for Osama bin Laden, a hunt that lasted a decade. It follows CIA operative Maya (played by Jessica Chastain) who was recruited straight out of high school and has been focused solely on the Al-Qaeda case file ever since. In 2003 she is reassigned to work at the embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan where she works with another CIA operative named Dan (Jason Clarke) who leads an interrogation team at a black site. Here she witnesses extreme duress, or what might be referred to as torture, applied to detainees, examples being waterboarding, hooding, sleep deprivation, certain stress positions that take a huge toll on the human body, and humiliation. In the beginning she comes across as uncomfortable when it comes to these situations, though as the movie progresses she adopts a 'whatever is necessary' approach in order to capture bin Laden.

During the movie we witness a presidential transition in the United States, from President George W. Bush to President Barack Obama. Where in the past interrogation techniques such as waterboarding were seen as acceptable, the new administration sees them as torture, and those that had been involved in these interrogations might possibly be prosecuted for it. Nevertheless, these methods continue to be used at black sites in order to gain the upper hand in capturing bin Laden. She painstakingly combs through old CIA files for several years and ultimately finds out that a previous lead she had been chasing, bin Laden's courier Abu Ahmed al-Kuwaiti, might not be dead after all. It is this lead that in the end leads the CIA to what later becomes known as bin Laden's compound. The compound is surveilled heavily for several months and the CIA fails to gain photographic confirmation that bin Laden resides there. Ultimately, the raid is approved and carried out on May 2, 2011. The

raid is executed by a US Navy SEALs team called DEVRGU or SEAL Team 6 and the CIA's Special Activities Commission/Special Operations Group and they kill Osama bin Laden and multiple others during the raid. Bin Laden's body is transported to a US base in Jalalabad, Afghanistan where Maya identifies it. Afterwards, she boards a military plane back to the US, bringing her story arc to a close.

<div align="center">Analysis</div>

People often use religion, dogma, or community as an excuse to justify their own intolerance or phobia for something that does not fit into their conceived notions of identity (the concepts of a Self and Other as argued by Riggins). In *Zero Dark Thirty* this can be seen throughout the movie with pervading themes such as war, terrorism, and zealotry (on both sides). In the first scene that will be discussed these themes are ubiquitous even though we are deprived of our sense of sight in a way, as the entire scene is a black screen. Instead, we are forced to rely on our sense of hearing. In the scene we are presented with audio recordings of emergency phone calls made during the attack on the World Trade Center in New York City. It leaves one with a haunted feeling, even without seeing the images that usually accompany 9/11 related audio files when broadcasted on television. The purpose of focusing on the audio, hearing the fear and dread in the voices of these people, is to create a narrative of us vs. them or, as formulated by Riggins, a sense of Self and Other. It pushes the viewer to identify with the CIA operatives that are involved in the hunt for Osama bin Laden as well as creating a sense of anger towards the terrorists that committed these atrocities. Relating back to color theory and the psychological meaning colors can carry, black is most often associated with negative emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness, as well as with death itself. By blacking out the screen and solely focusing on the frightened voices of people the audience is almost placed within the same situation as the people to whom the voices belong, experiencing their fear and anxiety as far as that is possible, enforcing the narrative of us vs. them even more.

The audience identifying with the CIA and becoming angry at the terrorists seems to be a logical conclusion, yet it has far-reaching effects on one of the most vulnerable groups of the population of the United States. These perpetrators interpreted Islam in an extremist manner, which does not represent the vast majority of Muslims. The question that can then be asked is if we should consider these people Muslims or 'simply' extremists. If we consider them to be extremists and not Muslims and we continue to portray them in a manner that negatively portrays Muslims, it affects Muslims (or groups 'mistaken' for Muslims) in real life. This fits in with Klapp's differentiation between "social types" and stereotypes as quoted in Dyer's text. Klapp argued that social types are those "one expects, and is led to expect, to find in one's society", which would describe non-Muslims in Western countries, and "stereotypes are those who do not belong, who are outside of one's society", which would describe Muslims (or those 'mistaken' for them) in Western countries (qtd. in Dyer 209). By continuing this distinction of social types and stereotypes and especially the way in which we decide who belongs in which category, we keep in place the power structures that have been in place for a long time. If a majority of the population of Western societies would stand up against this prejudice, as ingrained in our minds and societies by the ones in power, the hierarchical power structure that currently dominates the Western world could be reinvented and there would be an opportunity to redefine social types and banish stereotypes. After all, the many should not be blamed for the acts of a few and by blaming Muslims in general, as so often happens, the Islamophobic sentiment continues to spread.

During the first roughly twenty minutes of the movie we witness several scenes at a CIA black site involving methods of extreme duress or torture being applied to detainees. Even though torture at black sites took place, and forms of torture as exhibited in *Zero Dark Thirty* most likely have taken place, this does not mean that these events as portrayed in the

movie do not contain Islamophobic cinematic aspects. Considering when the movie was made and which events lead up to it and created the narrative is of the utmost importance. The event that is the starting point for the narrative of this movie is 9/11. It could be argued that the decade long hunt for Osama bin Laden was followed closely by a majority of the people in the world, though especially by those from Western societies as these societies and their values were under attack. Knowing this, as well as the fact that Kathryn Bigelow is an American director, an Orientalist narrative is the conclusion and it shapes Zero Dark Thirty. Due to its importance in the movie, several key moments of this sequence early in the movie will be analyzed and this analysis will be supported by screenshots in order to provide a visual image for clarification.

The very first scene in the sequence introduces us to a detainee called Ammar, who is being interrogated by a CIA operative named Dan. The following two screenshots of the first ten seconds show how an Islamophobic, Orientalist narrative is set up:

You belong to me.
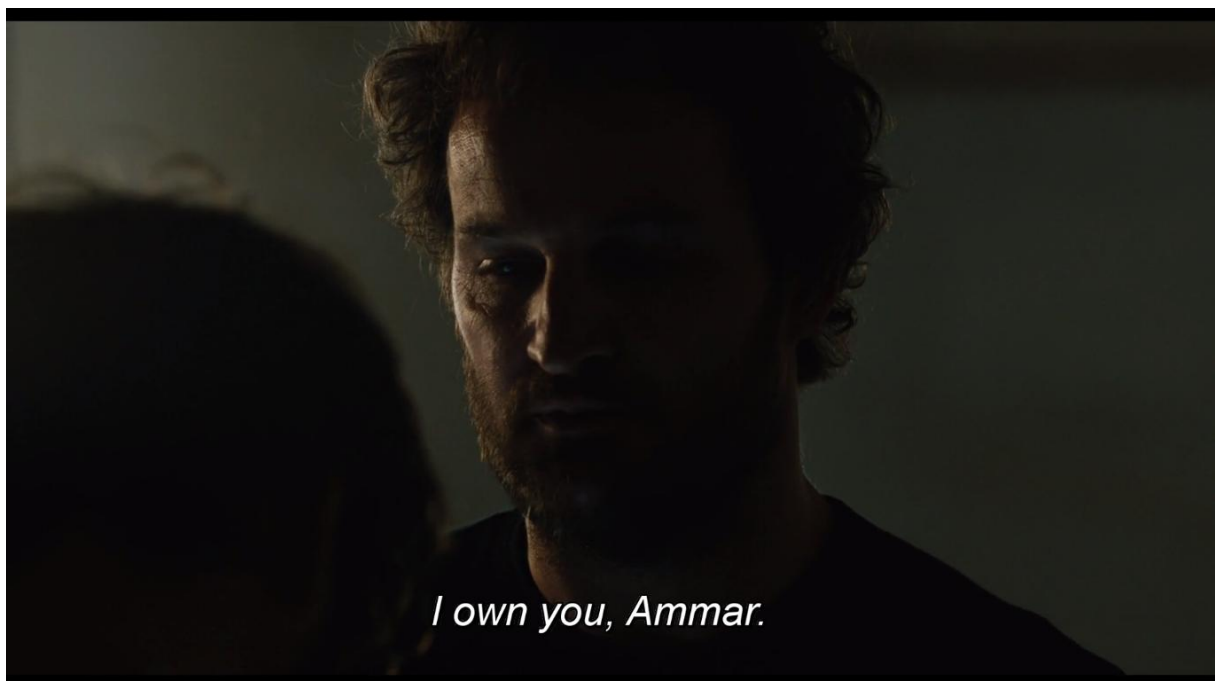
Starting with the obvious linguistic aspect of the scene, the language that is used by Dan is

derogatory and degrading at best, and Islamophobic and Orientalist at its worst. A Caucasian

American man, telling (what in the Western world would be considered) a brown-skinned

Muslim Pakistani man that he owns him is rooted in colonialism and by extension

Orientalism. There is a social value, or lack thereof, attached to skin color and this power

relation is exhibited in these screenshots. This links to Said's statement that the understanding

of the Middle East by the United States has decreased significantly since 9/11 as well as his

third definition of Orientalism which is stated as follows: "Orientalism as a Western style for

dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (2-3). He further expands this

definition by arguing that "[t]he relationship between the Occident and Orient is a relationship

of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony . . ." (5). This hegemony

is based more on our own Western imagining of the Orient and how it has been created to

contrast with what we consider to be 'our' world and has less to do with the actual Orient,

which reflects Dyer's theory of social types and stereotypes once again.

The cinematic aspects are less obvious to the untrained eye, yet are just as destructive, if not more, as the linguistic aspect. Both shots are close-up shots which as stated by Rose can "produce a sense of claustrophobic intensity" (70). This sense is intensified because of the way Dan is standing over Ammar in a looming way, creating a feeling of not being safe. Furthermore, in the first screenshot a low camera angle is used, making Dan look powerful and emphasizing that he is the one that is in charge, whereas in the second screenshot a high camera angle is used where we look down upon Ammar, making him look vulnerable with his visible wounds adding to this sense. The creation of shadows and highlighting in the scene further adds to the power relation that is visible in this scene. Dan is mostly shrouded in shadows, accentuating the fear that Ammar feels in this situation, while a tiny part of his face is highlighted by natural light, raising the value of the color a little, in order to make the scene a little less black. This use of daylight to highlight Dan's face and break through the blackness emphasizes that while the use of the color black is there to bring about a sense of fear and power, it should not be interpreted as the harbinger of death, as they need Ammar in order to gain information about bin Laden. The fact that the side of Ammar's face that is wounded is highlighted further emphasizes that he is powerless and vulnerable in this situation.

The second scene in the sequence shows Ammar being interrogated a second time. It is a longer scene and will be split up and discussed in pieces in order to properly address the Islamophobic cinematic aspects. In the first part of the scene we witness the following:

Ammar has been put in a stress position, a form of torture with most of the weight placed upon only a few muscles which leads to intense pain and failure of said muscles, with his arms up. Such a position will take a major toll on the body and is used to get information from the detainees. This scene starts out as a long shot, which as Rose said "may imply alienation and emptiness" (70). This sense of alienation lines up with the Islamophobic and Orientalist sentiment that is present throughout the sequence, especially in combination with the fact that the scene starts out with a low camera angle where we look up at Dan entering the room while Ammar is on the ground. In this part of the scene the combination of color and lighting once again plays a vital role. The bright 'white' daylight that shines behind Dan, almost like a halo, has the function of portraying him as the 'good guy', whereas Ammar is the darkest part of the scene with his body shrouded in shadow. The bright daylight shining through the door opening can also be interpreted as the metaphorical light at the end of the tunnel, which can only be reached by submitting to Dan and cooperating. The use of lighting and shadow paints a scene that makes one feel caged, which is emphasized in the rest of the scene when the door from which daylight comes is closed once again.

The next part of the scene is once again a close up that highlights the power relation between the two characters:

When you lie to me, I hurt you.

The linguistic aspect is again more obvious than the cinematic aspects are, with the line said by Dan building upon the first scene that was discussed, in which he said he owned Ammar. It is rooted in colonialism in which living property (the word slave does not apply to this particular situation) was not allowed to disobey their owners. Brown bodies are not equal to white bodies, nor are Muslim bodies equal to Christian bodies, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis. A connection can be made between this statement and a study done by Todorov that Riggins refers to in which three separate aspects of the relationship between the Self and the Other are discussed: "(a) value judgments (e.g. the Other may be deemed good or bad, equal or inferior to the Self), (b) social distance (the physical and psychological distance the Self maintains from the Other), and (c) knowledge (the extent to which the history and culture of the Other is known by the Self)" (5). Brown Muslim bodies (Ammar - the Other) are a) considered bad and inferior to the white Christian bodies (Dan - Self), b) whereas the physical distance might not always be as great, the psychological distance often could not be greater (which links to Said's statement that since 9/11 the understanding of the

 Middle East by the United States has decreased significantly), and c) Americans in general do not know a great deal about the history and culture of brown Muslim bodies. Due to the discourse as used in politics, the media and Hollywood brown Muslim bodies are regarded as second class or even lower. Little to no attention is paid to the history and culture as by doing so stereotypes might lose the hold they have over societies and societies would lose the way in which they, as stated by Dyer, "make sense of themselves, and hence actually make and reproduce themselves" (207).

The cinematic aspects that construct Islamophobia in this part of the scene are the creation of highlights and shadows in combination with the use of color; again Dan's face is shrouded in shadow while a small part is highlighted, creating a sense of fear and danger through the muted black tones but not one of death. While the camera angle is at eye-level, which would usually allow the viewer to see both characters as equal, it does not do so in this part of the scene due to the fact that we do not see both of their faces. We view the scene from behind Ammar's body, which allows the viewer to experience what Ammar is experiencing: the power that Dan holds over him. Furthermore, Dan is in focus, while Ammar is not. This draws more attention to Dan and what he is saying, portraying him as the more important character as he is the 'good guy' whereas Ammar, the Muslim, does not draw any attention whatsoever in this particular scene because of the cinematography: brown, Muslim bodies are simply not as important.

The third part of the scene takes place seconds after Dan has offered Ammar a chair and something to drink and eat, a 'kill them with kindness' situation, yet Ammar did not offer up any information which led to Dan threatening him with several methods of torture and kicking the chair out from under him.

It is shown through the use of another long shot, which portrays the alienation of Ammar and the emptiness he must feel at this point in time. The camera angle is at eye level, but again this does not translate into a sense of equality due to the fact that we can see Dan looking down at Ammar, creating a high angle within the shot itself, even though we do not see the scene from Dan's point of view. Dan's strong, grounded stance and the manner in which he looks down at Ammar, who is lying helplessly and defeated on the floor with his arms still tied up in a stress position, depicts how in Dan's eyes Ammar is unimportant and of little value as a person. As opposed to earlier screenshots of scenes where daylight was present, in this screenshot there is only artificial light. This lowers the value of the colors significantly compared to daylight and gives off a more foreboding sense, hinting to what is about to happen. Furthermore, it is crucial to note how the artificial light shines at the wall and floor on the opposite site of the room as where Ammar is, casting a shadow over Ammar and emphasizing the fear he must feel.

Throughout the scenes with Ammar and Dan, the third topic that Dyer expanded upon, stereotypes as a reference to the world, plays a large part. Dyer explained the difference

between the type and the novelistic character and how each is portrayed in media and fiction, the type being "any character constructed through the use of a few immediately recognizable and defining traits, which do not change or 'develop' through the course of the narrative and which point to general, recurrent features of the human world (208)", whereas the novelistic character is "defined by a multiplicity of traits that are . . . gradually revealed . . . [throughout] the narrative . . . which [hinges] on the growth or development of the character" and focuses on the character's "unique individuality, rather than pointing outwards to a world" (208). Ammar fits into the type category, as his character is defined only by a couple of traits, namely being Muslim and a terrorist. This characterization (or lack thereof) can be related back to Shaheen's list of typical stereotypes about Muslims/Arabs, in this case especially the ones related to being a terrorist and being uncultured and barbaric. Dan on the other hand would be closer to a novelistic character, although he is not the epitome of it as we do not see him enough throughout the movie, yet he is not a stagnant character that is only defined by a few traits.

This characterization continues throughout the third scene in the sequence which illustrates a different manner of Islamophobia through the use of humiliation as a torture method.

Dan dehumanizes Ammar by putting a dog collar around his neck, stating "You're my dog, I gotta walk you" and forces him to walk on his hands and knees to the middle of the room. As can be seen in the screenshot, this part of the scene is shown as a long shot, emphasizing the alienation and emptiness (although a couple of seconds before the scene did include vague close ups). Due to it being a wide shot, the focus is on the characters, yet it allows us to pay attention to certain details in the background such as the chair that was a part of the 'kill them with kindness' scenario that Dan tried, as well as the air mattress that Ammar was lying on while being waterboarded. It is the lighting and the use of shadows and highlights that is particularly interesting in how it constructs Islamophobia in this scene. The only light source is the lamp, an artificial light, which shines on the backs of both characters. The camera angle is at eye level, yet again a high angle is created within the shot itself with Dan looking down at Ammar. Due to the angle of the lamp this high angle is emphasized by the shadows that the light creates, increasing the level of vulnerability of Ammar and the sense of disdain Dan has for him.

The power relation between Dan and Ammar can once again be explained even further by using the study done by Todorov that Riggins references. The three different aspects of the

relationship between the Self (Dan) and the Other (Ammar) as discussed, namely: "(a) value judgments, (b) social distance, and (c) knowledge" are prevalent throughout the sequence of scenes (5). The first aspect is quite straightforward in this sequence of scenes, Ammar is deemed bad as well as inferior by Dan. The second aspect is more convoluted, physically Dan does not maintain a lot of distance from Ammar, often invading his personal space which in itself is an expression of the power he holds over Ammar, yet psychologically there is a great chasm between the two because Dan tortures Ammar in order to gain information. He does not relate to Ammar on a personal level, which is where the third aspect becomes an important factor, as it is difficult to relate to someone without some degree of shared history and culture. When one does not have knowledge about the history and culture of the Other, it is almost impossible to relate to them on a personal level and in such circumstances discrimination might seep into the situation quicker. Ammar is a means to an end for Dan and the CIA, a possibility of gaining information about bin Laden and his network, there is no need to have knowledge about the history and culture of his country as that serves no purpose in regards to the interrogations.

The movie cuts to the year 2005 and we witness another Al-Qaeda terrorist, Abu Faraj, being captured and interrogated at a black site. Three screenshots related to this particular character will be discussed. In the first screenshot, Dan is talking to Faraj while in the other two Maya interrogates Faraj and we thus see her take a more hands on approach instead of mostly observing.

What is interesting to note compared to the scenes with Ammar is that this scene is a medium

shot, whereas in the scenes with Ammar long shots and close-ups were used. It is a middle

ground between, as Rose illustrated, the claustrophobic intensity of a close-up and the

alienation and emptiness of a long shot. Medium shots are common in scenes that revolve

around dialogue and where the focus is on the interaction between the characters. There is not

much detail in the scene regarding the surroundings and where they are, as this has been

established earlier and thus the audience already is aware of this.

Once more a high angle within an eye-level angle is used, with Dan looking down at

Faraj, making him look vulnerable in the situation that he is in. This vulnerability is

emphasized by the nondescript clothing that Faraj is wearing. Nothing in regards to his

clothing indicates that he is a prisoner, and while one could argue that he is, he is technically

considered a detainee by the United States. Detainees are not protected under the Geneva

Convention because they do not meet the requirements that are set forth by the Convention

(such as having a chain of command, wearing a uniform, and abide by the rules of war). Faraj

wearing this nondescript clothing instead of, for example, the orange jumpsuit that is often

associated with prisoners, emphasizes that he is not protected by the Geneva Convention and

CIA operatives can do as they please in order to get the information that they need.

The use of lighting in this scene is intriguing, as Dan is in the shadows while an artificial light shines in Faraj's face. A few seconds earlier, Dan tells Faraj that he is "bad fucking news" and states "I'm not your friend. I'm not going to help you. I'm going to break you" which explains why he is shrouded in shadows. It is a good cop/bad cop scenario without the good cop present. He does not try the 'kill them with kindness' scenario that he tried with Ammar; Ammar was not in a position of much power within Al-Qaeda, Faraj on the other hand was Al-Qaeda's number three. As stated earlier in the movie, the ones lower on the ladder are not always as focused on the ideology as the higher ranking members are; Al-Qaeda can offer them a better life and their greed overtakes them. The lower ranking members are not always as loyal and thus more likely to give up information, whereas higher ranking members such as Faraj are more focused on the ideology and less likely to betray Al-Qaeda.

Next, we witness Maya interrogating Faraj while a guard is also present who physically assaults Faraj when Maya tells him to. During the interrogation Faraj does not give fulsome answers in Maya's opinion and as a result he is waterboarded.

Kathryn Bigelow uses a three-quarters shot in this scene, which allows you to focus on the characters while at the same time (partly) showing the characters in relation to their surroundings. A reoccurring cinematic theme in *Zero Dark Thirty* is the use of a high camera angle within an eye-level angle with the Caucasian American standing over the brown-skinned Muslim. In this particular scene we can also see two other brown-skinned (presumably Muslim as the scene takes place in Pakistan) men standing over Faraj, which could weaken the argument, yet in my opinion only strengthens it. Extremists that claim to represent Islam and commit terrorist acts in its name are at the core of the Islamophobic sentiment in the Western world. Due to them, Muslims and those that are 'mistaken' for Muslims bear the brunt and have their lives interrupted or ruined. One could argue that the two men partaking in the waterboarding of Faraj feel that their actions are justified, as men like Faraj are disfiguring their faith. As argued by Shaheen in *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs after 9/11*, "[t]he "other" poses a threat - economic, religious, and sexual - to our way of life. . . . Incapable of democracy, the "other" is projected as a violent primitive mass opposing world peace and religious tolerance" (xii). Al-Qaeda is the embodiment of this threat and it is thus effortless to see them as the Other, however, due to their actions 'regular' Muslims and those 'mistaken' for Muslims are also seen as the Other even though they do not embody this threat.

Whereas in the previous screenshot Faraj was wearing nondescript clothing that represented his status as a detainee, in this screenshot he is wearing orange prison garb. As stated, an orange jumpsuit is often associated with prison and it is thus ironic that he is wearing similar clothing because, as mentioned, he is a detainee and not a prisoner. The use of the color orange for prison clothing is ironic as well, as the color orange is mostly associated with positive and happy emotions and characteristics, which are generally not associated with prison.

The scene is shown from another angle and focuses on Maya.

It is a close-up shot that is similar to a previously discussed screenshot of Dan and Ammar. The lighting is slightly different in this screenshot though; Maya's face is not shrouded in shadows yet it is also not brightly highlighted, the amount of light present is similar to that of candle light. Even though the lighting is not the same, the message it conveys is similar: the muted black tones create a sense of fear and danger without referencing death itself. The fact that Faraj's face is not visible, as it is covered by a cloth used for waterboarding, reiterates the power relation that is prevalent in *Zero Dark Thirty*: brown Muslim bodies are powerless, vulnerable and not deserving of decent prisoner treatment. The fact that it is a close-up and a high camera angle reiterates that Faraj is powerless and vulnerable; Maya looks down at Faraj, and because of her facial expression - cold and one could almost say condescending - it can also be argued that she looks down on him. This relates back to Riggins' theory of a Self and an Other as her argued that in order to create a sense of who one is, a Self, one "must generate discourses of both difference and similarity and must reject and embrace specific identities" (4). Throughout *Zero Dark Thirty* these discourses are created and can be observed

in particular in the discussed scenes. Dan and Maya have embraced their identities that are linked to their sense of Self and have created and rejected other identities that they see as the Other, of which Ammar and Faraj are examples.

      Lastly, two screenshots from the last roughly thirty minutes during which the raid on bin Laden's compound takes place will be discussed.

While SEAL Team Six is carrying out the raid on bin Laden's compound, neighbors wake up and go out into the streets to check what exactly is creating the ruckus. These scenes are filmed through night vision, as the SEAL team was using it during the raid. This gives the scenes an eerie green glow; green is a color that is generally associated with healing and nature, yet due to the circumstances in the scene and the fact that we as viewers know that the night vision is casting the green glow makes it come across as eerie or haunting. The blurriness of the scenes adds to this feelings, makes it seem more menacing, contributing to the Islamophobic sentiment that these scenes attempt to portray.

The scenes are both long shots, which allows us to focus on the characters even though there are some details in the background. The characters are wearing what look to be simple white linen or cotton clothing with some of the men wearing more traditional clothing and headwear, as well as one man sporting a dark beard. This is significant as the only source of light, besides the light coming from the house in the background in the first screenshot, is the laser from the SEAL's gun. This laser, used to pinpoint your target, is aimed at one of the men wearing the traditional clothing and headwear, even though he is not at the front of the crowd. Some of the men are carrying what look to be sticks or something similar, not very deadly at all compared to the weapons of the SEALs, and thus pose no threat at all as they will not come close enough to reach the SEALs in case they do attack because they will be shot in that case. The man in the front, not dressed in traditional clothing and headwear, is also carrying a stick, yet that laser from the SEAL's gun is not aimed at him. This is an essential detail, a detail that is Islamophobic at its core, as those who are shown in a more traditional Muslim manner are considered to be more dangerous.

Islamophobia in cinematic aspects of movies is not always as obvious as one might think, it is subtle, under the radar, in order to not be detected as the propaganda that it is. As mentioned, *Los Angeles Times* critic Kenneth Turan argued that "[it is] when politics

infiltrates entertainment that it is most subversive - and most effective. [Fiction films] change minds politically . . . Artful entertainment easily beats full-on propaganda" (qtd. in *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs after 9/11* xix). *Zero Dark Thirty* is a shining example of such subversive artful entertainment. A more in-depth conclusion will follow, comparing and contrasting *Zero Dark Thirty* with the other two case studies.

3. American Sniper (2014)

Introduction

American Sniper was directed by acclaimed actor and filmmaker Clint Eastwood and is loosely based on the story of Navy SEAL sniper Chris Kyle as recounted in his memoir *American Sniper: The Autobiography of the Most Lethal Sniper in U.S. Military History* (2012). Kyle hails from Texas and for the first thirty years of his life he wanted to be a cowboy. After seeing a news report about terrorist attacks at the US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, Kyle decides he wants to do something more with his life, something where his talent, shooting, will be of use and he thus decides to join the military. During the period when he is being trained as a Navy SEAL, he meets his future wife Taya. Soon after, while being at her house, they witness the 9/11 attacks on television. He is deployed on his first tour to Iraq after the attacks where he earns the nickname 'Legend' because of his many kills as a sniper. The main mission that he receives is to hunt for Al-Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and he finds a lead to al-Zarqawi's second-in-command, "the Butcher", which he follows. Kyle is ultimately involved in a shootout while hunting for the Butcher, whom he helps kill.

In between the four tours that Kyle is deployed on, we witness scenes of him being home with his family. He has trouble adjusting to civilian life after having been through a tour in Iraq and becomes increasingly distant. During his second tour in Iraq, he ultimately helps with killing "the Butcher" and returns home afterwards. Even the births of his son and daughter do not help with him readjusting to civilian life and he is deployed on a third tour soon after. During the third tour, a Syrian sniper, who was introduced earlier in the movie and is only known by the name Mustafa and the fact that he is an Olympic medalist, shoots and injures one of Kyle's teammates during a mission. After having been forced to evacuate to get

the SEAL medical attention, the team decides to go back and finish the mission and it is then that another SEAL is killed in action.

Feeling guilty about his teammates being injured and dying, Kyle signs up for a fourth tour even though his wife tells him that she and the children might not be waiting for him when he comes back. Kyle, having become more distant and detached over the years during his phases of civilian life, chooses to go to Iraq anyway. During the fourth tour, Kyle kills Mustafa and his guilt is thus (partially) alleviated. After returning home, Kyle deals with issues related to PTSD and feels guilty over the men he could not save. The psychiatrist he went to see suggests that Kyle start working with wounded veterans at the local VA (Veteran Affairs). It is during this work that Kyle is ultimately killed by a veteran that he tried to help.

Analysis

An important element of the movie is that the audience sees Kyle witnessing the attacks on the US embassies and the 9/11 attacks on television, as witnessing this ultimately leads to his decision to join the military and 'kill some terrorists'. By doing so the movie tries to get the audience to identify with and support Kyle. Doing this allows for a more Islamophobic approach in the rest of the movie without upsetting the audience as it is made to look as a justified retaliation. *American Sniper* tries to humanize Kyle, even though he has reportedly killed over one-hundred-and-sixty people, by showing him having trouble with getting to terms with the reality of war and resettling into a civilian life every time he is home from a tour in Iraq. On the other hand, *American Sniper* dehumanizes almost all Muslims, portraying almost all Muslims that are present in the movie as terrorists, savages, evil, without humanity. This is not an accurate representation of Muslims (nor would it be of any other population group), and tars all Muslims with the same brush.

In *American Sniper*, Muslims are shown as what Dyer refers to as 'the type'. Whereas stereotypes, which are a subcategory of the type, are defined by their social function, types are

mainly defined by their aesthetic function, what Dyer calls states is "a mode of characterization in fiction" (208). To explain this further, Dyer expands upon it as follows: "The type is any character constructed through the use of a few immediately recognizable and defining traits, which do not change or 'develop' through the course of the narrative and which point to general, recurrent features of the human world" (208). In *American Sniper*, the aesthetic function of the Muslim characters is depicted according to the following traits: Muslims are seen as terrorists, savages, evil, and without humanity. This ties in with the social function of the Muslim characters, which is to make the viewer despise and blame Muslims while at the same time make them identify with Chris Kyle.

Whereas Muslim characters are portrayed as the type, Chris Kyle, as well as several other American characters, are portrayed as the opposite of the type which is the novelistic character. These sorts of characters are, according to Dyer, "defined by a multiplicity of traits that are . . . gradually revealed . . . [throughout] the narrative . . . which [hinges] on the growth or development of the character" and focuses on the character's "unique individuality, rather than pointing outwards to a world" (208). Chris Kyle and other American characters are on their own personal journey throughout the movie, which in Kyle's case revolves mainly around his state of mind when he is in the army and his state of mind when he is a civilian. Their characters have depth to them and are not based on stereotypical traits, whereas it is the other way around in regards to the Muslim characters. This creates a sense of Islamophobia that is not always easily picked up on by the viewer, thus being able to influence people without these people explicitly noticing it.

The first two screenshots that will be discussed are related to each other as they have been taken from the same scene. In this scene, US Marines are walking through a city in Iraq and Kyle is their 'overwatch', a sniper that is situated high up in/on a building as back-up to the troops on the ground. The city has been evacuated and he spots a man on top of a balcony

who is calling someone (screenshot one). Subsequently, a woman and young boy walk out of the building (screenshot two). The woman hands a Russian-made anti-tank grenade to the boy, instructing him to throw it at the US Marines. After Kyle shoots the boy, the woman picks up the grenade and attempts to throw it, but she is also shot by Kyle.

American Sniper also makes use of a gun scope shot when filming certain scenes, as can be seen in this particular screenshot. Employing the use of such camera shots in movies is a very deliberate choice, aiming to portray that characters that are viewed through it, Muslims, as being potentially dangerous. This makes it seem as though every Muslim that happens to be in the vicinity of a (possible) attack is dangerous. *American Sniper* is especially harmful towards Muslims as it portrays almost every Muslim as a terrorist and it does not leave any doubt in the viewer's mind about Muslims as a population group. This can not only create Islamophobia where it was not already present, it will also intensify it, leading to intense discrimination against Muslims in Western nations, as can be seen in the United States and Europe.

As far as camera shots and angles are concerned, a medium shot and eye-level camera angle are used. A medium shot is often used to display the interaction between characters,

whether it is verbal or non-verbal, yet in this scene there is no interaction as the man does not know he is being watched through the scope of a sniper rifle. An eye-level camera angle will allows the viewers to regard the characters as equals, however, this is not the case in this scene as there is clearly an imbalance in power as the man in the screenshot is being watched through the scope of a gun from Kyle's point of view (Rose 70-71). By using shots such as these, which allow the viewer to see the scene through Kyle's eyes, the viewer will likely identify (even more so) with Kyle as the Muslim characters are portrayed as savages and terrorists. This portrayal can be linked to Dyer's argument in regards to stereotypes as an expression of values, where he states that: "[t]he stereotype is taken to express a general agreement about a social group, as if that agreement arose before, and independently of, the stereotype. Yet for the most part it is from stereotypes that we get our ideas about social groups" (209). Stereotypes are a vicious circle; in the case of Muslims the general agreement is that they are dangerous, savages, and/or terrorists and the people that agree with this will argue that the portrayal of Muslims in movies as such is based on Muslims in real life. However, it are these stereotypes as portrayed in movies that often create the general agreement about a population group, further demonizing these groups. This in turn can be linked to a vital comment that Shaheen makes: "[e]thnic stereotypes and caricatures corrupt the imagination, narrow our vision and blur reality" (*The TV Arab* 3). These stereotypes of Muslims as portrayed in *American Sniper* will only create further distance between social groups whereas the majority of Muslims should not be demonized for the actions of extremists, who only make up a very small percentage of Muslims in the world.

The outer black rim of the scene representing that which the gun scope blocks out is that main shadow in the scene. Due to it being pitch black, it references death, fear, and possibly anger (sadness does not fit with this particular scene). The audience knows the scene is viewed through the scope of a gun as this is made abundantly clear and the blackness of the

outer edges therefore reinforce the themes of death and fear even more so. The fact that no specific part of the screenshot is highlighted means that the shadows are even more pronounced.

The second screenshot portrays the woman and child that try to attack the US Marines:
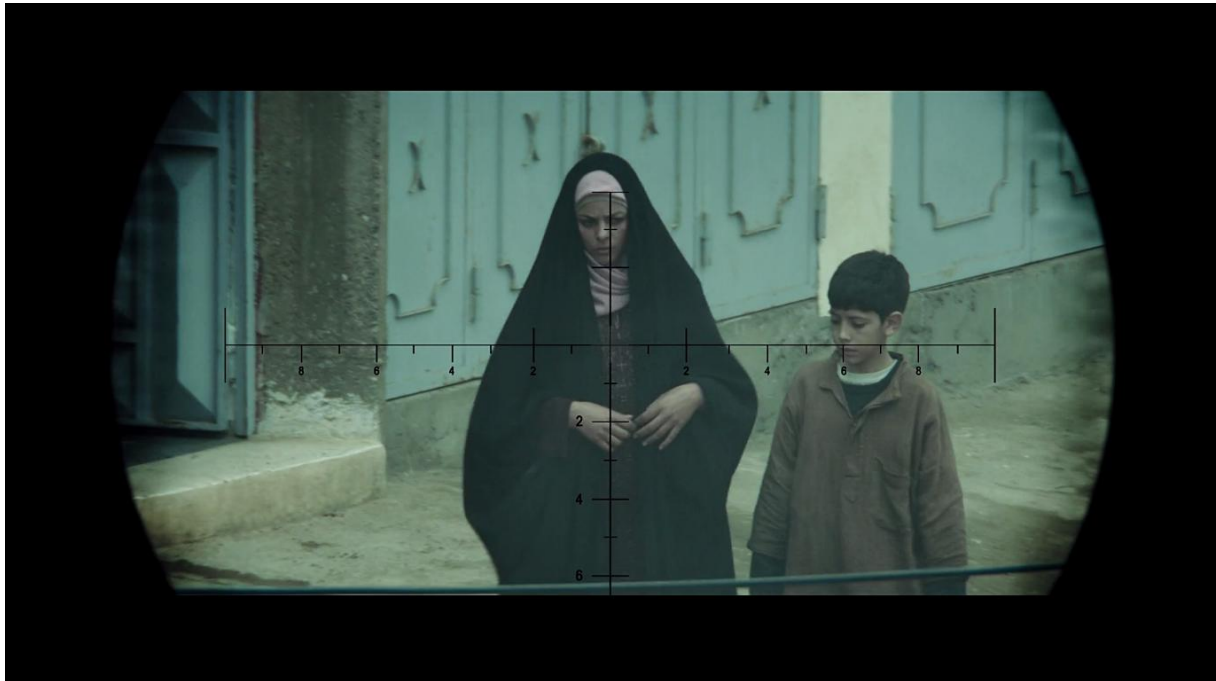
Another gun scope shot is used to construct the scene, allowing for further identifying with Kyle and demonizing of Muslims by the audience. The fact that these people actually do try to carry out an attack in *American Sniper* is irrelevant. What is relevant is that *American Sniper* portrays roughly ninety-five percent of all Muslims in the movie as terrorists, leading to an askew view of this social group. By portraying almost all Muslims as savages, terrorists, or people without humanity an injustice is done to Muslims. A question one can ask is what the reaction of the audience would be if, for example, all Jews or Christians were portrayed as such. A likely answer will be that it will lead to protests and boycotts of the movie yet this does not happen when it concerns Muslims, which is Islamophobic at its core and proofs how subversive politics in movies can be. This is elaborated upon by *Los Angeles Times* critic Kenneth Turan, who states that while movies are "hard-wired into our psyches, shaping how we view the world, . . . [it is] when politics infiltrates entertainment that it is most subversive - and most effective. [Fiction films] change minds politically . . . Artful entertainment easily

beats full-on propaganda" (qtd. in *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs after 9/11* xix).

The scene uses another medium shot, yet just as in the previous scene it is not used to display any direct interaction, whether that is verbal or non-verbal, between the woman and child and Kyle. The woman and child do not know they are being watched through the scope of a sniper rifle and thus interaction between them and Kyle is not taking place. In this particular screenshot a high camera angle is employed, which is typically used to make characters look vulnerable or unimportant. Considering how *American Sniper* portrays Muslim throughout the movie, the high angle is used in this scene to make the woman and child look unimportant - two of many (Rose 70-71). It is furthermore used to signify how Kyle looks down on these characters, which is reinforced by the fact that we see them through a gun scope from his point of view. Using Kyle's point of view can lead to the audience identifying with him even further, which in turn can contribute to the spreading of the Islamophobic sentiment as portrayed in *American Sniper*.

This screenshot follows the same theme as the first one as far as shadows, highlights and color are concerned. The outer black rim of the scene, due to it being a gun scope scene, functions as a pitch black shadow, referencing death, fear, and anger. There are not specific parts of the scene that are highlighted, thus making the shadows stand out more. The colors used in the scene are dark and muted, having a low purity (saturation) and low value (darker colors) (Rose 59-60, 73-74). It can be argued that the use of dark and muted colors references the themes of war, fear, and death as these are themes that are generally not referenced by bright and bold colors.

The next screenshot that will be discussed is from a scene that takes place a little further on in *American Sniper*, during another mission where Kyle serves as the overwatch sniper.

As can be seen, it depicts a man holding some sort of explosive device. We witness him digging a hole (on the left) to put it in, in order to create a roadside bomb that American troops might walk or drive over, thus killing them. A long shot it used to construct the scene, which may, according to Rose, "imply alienation and emptiness" (70). Alienation is created in two different ways: 1) the man itself is clearly alienated from the American troops and what they represent, as he wants to use the bomb to kill them, and 2) the audience is alienated in regards to the man in the scene; they will not (likely) be able to identify with him because he is depicted as a terrorist. The fact that he is Muslim and has brown skin should have nothing to do with the terrorist connotation, as there are also Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, and so on, terrorists. However, when a Christian white male commits a (domestic) terrorist attack, Dylann Roof for example who is the perpetrator of the Charleston church shooting in 2015, that person is often not referred to as a terrorist. It even goes so far as that some of these non-Muslim attackers are referred to as being 'mentally ill'. By continuing to make this distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim attackers an Islamophobic double standard is still used. Referring to the Muslim attackers as terrorists, regardless of whether or not they actually are, and not referring to non-Muslim attackers as such, Islamophobia continues to be a vicious

circle, as all attackers should be referred to in the same manner.

The way the rest of the scene is cinematically constructed further intensifies the Islamophobic sentiment. A high camera angle is used to make the man look unimportant, in a similar way as was done in the scene with the woman and child. The outer black rim of the scene, the part that is blocked out because it is a gun scope shot, is the main presence of shadow in the scene, reinforcing the sense of fear and death that is created by the gun scope itself. A cinematic pattern is created not only through the use of the gun scope shot, but also through the way in which shadows, highlights and color are used. As in the previous two screenshots, no specific parts are highlighted. The color scheme is dark and muted, it has low purity (saturation) and low value (darker colors), which references the themes of war, fear, and death that are present throughout *American Sniper* (Rose 59-60, 73-74).

The way in which Muslims are portrayed throughout *American Sniper* is not uncommon and Hollywood is not the only perpetrator. Hollywood, together with the news media "have forced information into more and more standardized molds" as argued by Said (26). Doing so has affected the Middle Eastern Orient more than the Far Eastern Orient. Said argues that there are three aspects in particular that are partly responsible for politicizing even the smallest mention or perception of Islam and Arabs to the extreme, namely: 1) "the history of popular anti-Arab and anti-Islamic prejudice in the West . . ."; 2) "the struggle between the Arabs and Israeli Zionism, and its effect upon American Jews as well as upon both the liberal culture and the population at large"; and 3) "the almost total absence of any cultural position making it possible either to identify with or dispassionately to discuss the Arabs or Islam" (26-27). Through the stereotyping of Islam, Muslims, and Arabs (not all Arabs are Muslim though they are often automatically regarded as such due to their Arab appearance) there is no room for a more nuanced portrayal of these population groups and it is nuance that is desperately needed to break through the vicious circle that is standardization and stereotyping.

The next screenshot shows the Mustafa character, the Syrian Olympic medalist sniper who kills US troops.

A head and shoulders shot is used to portray Mustafa in this scene, a shot type that is close to a close-up. Through the use of such a shot, "a sense of claustrophobic intensity" is created as argued by Rose (70). An eye-level camera angle is used, which would usually allow the viewer to connect with the character, but has the opposite effect due to how the character is presented: as the enemy. Camera angles should not be confused with camera shots, which establish aspects such as the theme(s), setting and characters, which in this case are themes such as war and death, a setting full of fear and nervousness, and the character Mustafa.

The way in which shadows, highlights, and color are shown in this scene fits with the cinematic pattern regarding these aspects that has been set up throughout the earlier scenes, though with a few minor differences. The color scheme is still dark and muted, has low purity (saturation) and low value (darker colors), referencing once more the themes of war, fear, and death (Rose 59-60, 73-74). This shot is not filmed through the use of a gun scope shot, yet the shadows have been constructed in a similar way on the other edges of the screen. Mustafa himself is also shrouded in shadows, intensifying the anxiety and fear that that the audience is

meant to feel when witnessing this scene. The scene being so dark, with Mustafa, the enemy sniper being shrouded in shadows while carrying a gun and wearing some sort of headscarf, together with small details such as the Oriental architecture of the window have the function of creating animosity by the audience against Mustafa. The fact that Mustafa is Muslim means that the vicious circle of Islamophobia that is present in *American Sniper* continues as almost all Muslim characters are constructed as what Dyer refers to as 'the type', which is ". . . any character constructed through the use of a few immediately recognizable and defining traits, which do not change or 'develop' through the course of the narrative and which point to general, recurrent features of the human world" (208). By continuously portraying Muslims as the type, instead of as novelistic characters, who are according to Dyer "defined by a multiplicity of traits that are . . . gradually revealed . . . [throughout] the narrative . . ." there is no nuance present whatsoever in regards to the portrayal of Muslim characters thus doing the Muslim characters an injustice and continuing the Islamophobic sentiment that is present throughout Hollywood and the media (208).

While on a mission to hunt for The main mission that he receives is to hunt for Al-Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and he finds a lead to al-Zarqawi's second-in-command, "the Butcher", which he follows. Kyle is ultimately involved in a shootout while hunting for the Butcher, whom he helps kill. Kyle and his team take over a building that looks out on the restaurant where the Butcher is and they set up camp in family's apartment. The family is still there and the father offers to cook them all dinner under the guise of 'my house is your house'. Kyle however notices suspicious marks on the man's elbows (which could have come from leaning down on one's elbows as a sniper would do) and looks around the house, finding a hole in the ground filled with weapons. He confronts the man, which is what is shown in the next two screenshots:

In both screenshots a head and shoulder shot is used, which is closely related to the close-up

shot, thus creating a slight sense of claustrophobia as discussed by Rose (70). Furthermore, an

eye-level camera angle is employed in both screenshots. Using such an angle would in regular

circumstances allow the viewer to see the characters as equals, however, as can be seen Kyle

and the man are not regarded as equals in the slightest. There is a power imbalance due to the

fact that Kyle is a US Navy SEAL who has undergone rigorous training and the man seems to have undergone no such training. Moreover, besides the physical power imbalance, there is a cultural/political one as well, which is proven by the language that Kyle uses. Kyle calls the man a 'muj' which is short for 'mujahideen'. This term is used to describe those that are engaged in Jihad, with it being mostly used to refer to Muslim fighters that are fighting non-Muslims. As the scene continues, the US troops force the man to knock on the door of the restaurant where the Butcher is at, in order to gain entrance to it without tipping the people inside off. Kyle's body language, the use of the word 'muj', and how the scene progresses further are reminiscent of Said's third definition of Orientalism: "Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (2-3). Kyle and his team claiming the man's apartment as a look-out post without having any regard for whether or not they are welcome is an example of Westerners dominating the Orient. They only care about getting the Butcher, thus restructuring society in that part of Iraq and consequently gaining authority over the way in which Iraqi society should be restructured in order to fit in with Western standards, which is Orientalist at its core.

The way in which shadows are constructed is interesting, and slightly different compared to the other screenshots. In the first screenshot, Kyle's face is shrouded in shadows, which together with the chokehold he has the man in, accentuate the fear that the man presumably feels in this situation. Kyle's arms however are the part of the scene that is highlighted thus raising the value of the colors used in the scene a little, making it less dark (Gibbs 8; Rose 59-60, 73-74). By doing so, the scene is not completely shrouded in shadows and while the darkness does emphasize the fear felt by the man and the power felt by Kyle, it should not be interpreted as the harbinger of death, as they need the man in order to gain access to the restaurant where the Butcher is. The fact that the man's face is highlighted further emphasizes that he is powerless and vulnerable in this situation. In the second

screenshot, both men's faces are shrouded in shadows, reinforcing the power relations that are present in the scene as well as the notion of fear. The way in which shadows are constructed in these screenshots can be linked to Riggins' theory of Self and Other. He argued that to establish who one is, a Self, one "must generate discourses of both different and similarity and must reject and embrace specific identities" (4). Doing so should lead to the Other being seen as a variety of points of view within a "system of difference"; there is not a universal Other (4). However, since 9/11 has taken place, the Muslim Other has almost become the universal Other in the media and Hollywood, and as a result in many parts of Western societies, perpetuating the Islamophobic sentiment that is established by this.

After the man has knocked on the door of the restaurant in order for the US troops to gain access to it, he tries to attack them and is subsequently shot. Afterwards, an angry mob is depicted carrying his body through the streets while shouting at the American troops, which is what the next two screenshots that will be discussed depict:

In the first screenshot another head and shoulders shot is used which, as it is closely related to the close-up shot, gives off "a sense of claustrophobic intensity" as argued by Rose (70). This mainly comes across as such because of two factors: 1) the man that is the closest to the camera is screaming angrily at the American troops in a language that most of the audience will not understand (and subtitles are not provided either) and 2) the rest of the angry mob of people that inch closer and closer towards the camera. An eye-level angle is used, which would normally allow the viewer to see the characters as equals, however in this case this does not have that effect as the presumably Muslim mob is portrayed as angry and primitive whereas the American troops are calm and collected (even though we do not see this in this particular screenshot as they are off-screen). In the second screenshot a medium shot is used, which is used to focus in on the interaction between different characters (verbal or non-verbal). A high angle is used in order to depict how this angry mob is looked down upon by the American troops, who consider them to be primitive and evil. The portrayal of Muslims in this scene as angry primitive people links to Shaheen's argument about the Other:

The "other" is always outside the circle of civilization, usually threateningly exotic or

dark-looking. He speaks a different language, wears different clothing, and dwells in a

 primitive place such as Africa's jungles and Arabia's deserts - reel hostile

environments with signposts. The "other" poses a threat - economic, religious, and

sexual - to our way of life. . . . Incapable of democracy, the "other" is projected as a

violent primitive mass opposing world peace and religious tolerance. (xii)

This in turn is supported by another of Shaheen's assertions, where he argues that the

"[e]thnic stereotypes and caricatures corrupt the imagination, narrow our vision and blur

reality" (*The TV Arab* 3). By continuing to portray Muslims in these stereotypical manners,

the Islamophobic sentiment that is spread throughout these movies is perpetuated, whereas the

opposite, namely educating people, should happen in order to decrease the amount of

discrimination that Muslims face.

The colors used in the scene are once again dark and muted, having a low purity

(saturation) and low value (darker colors) and continuing the cinematic pattern that has been

established (Rose 59-60, 73-74). The use of these sorts of colors reference the themes of not

just the scene, but the entire movie in general, namely: war, fear, anger, and death. The

shadows and highlights in this scene are impacted by the color scheme; different people cast

shadows over other people, creating a pattern, and in turn referencing the fact that these

people are merely identified by their common denominator: being Muslim. Their characters

are not developed throughout the movie, thus belonging to what Dyer called 'the type' and

not to the 'novelistic character' (208).

The last screenshot that will be discussed is the following:

[MAN SHOUTS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE]

It is part of the scene in which Kyle's team is on patrol and comes across a car containing four people that is coming towards them. It stops relatively close to them and the men inside scramble to get out and fire at Kyle's team. A medium shot is used which is used to focus in on the interaction between different characters (verbal or non-verbal). As can be seen in the screenshot due to the visible subtitles, the man is shouting in a foreign language. That fact that it merely states that and that no effort has been made to translate what he is saying, thus making it unable for (most of) the audience to understand him, distance is created between the man and the audience relating to the sense of Self and Other as explained by Riggins. This in turn proofs how Hollywood and news media have, according to Said, "forced information into more and more standardized molds" (26). Further adding to the Islamophobic sentiment, the eye-level camera angle that is used, which would normally allow the audience to connect with the character more, has the opposite effect due to how the character is presented: an evil terrorist. Pre-9/11 the American understanding of the Middle East had improved, yet post-9/11 it has completely turned around and the Middle East has become almost synonymous with terrorist, which Hollywood and the news media have taken advantage of ever since.

Conclusion

Discussion

The way in which the discussed screenshots from *The Hurt Locker*, *Zero Dark Thirty*, and *American Sniper* have been cinematically constructed and how this brings forth an Islamophobic sentiment will be compared and contrasted in order to see if these movies use different or similar methods. It is especially interesting to see the difference between *The Hurt Locker* and *Zero Dark Thirty* as they have the same director, namely Kathryn Bigelow. The different cinematic aspects will be discussed in two parts. First, the camera shots and camera angles used in all three movies will be compared and contrasted as these two aspects go hand in hand. Second, color and the creation of shadows and highlights will be discussed as these aspects can influence each other and thus go together.

One of the more obvious similarities between two of the movies, *The Hurt Locker* and *American Sniper* is that they both make use of the gun scope shot, which gives the viewer that sense that the characters that are being watched through it are potentially dangerous. As only those that are (presumably) Muslim are viewed through gun scopes, this immediately establishes an Islamophobic cinematic pattern. In regards to the types of camera shots that are used *The Hurt Locker* mainly uses close-ups and medium shots though does also make use of a head and shoulder shot as well as two three-quarter shots. The main use of close-up shots create a sense of claustrophobia and intensify the feeling of fear, whereas the medium shots are often used in scenes in which the focus is on the interaction between different characters (verbal or non-verbal). As *The Hurt Locker* revolves around an EOD team, it is thus not surprising that the choice has been made to use an extensive amount of close-up shots as the work they do comes with a level of danger and can make the audience feel fear. As far as camera angles are concerned, *The Hurt Locker* uses a mix of low, high, and eye-level angles, with eye-level angles predominating. The high angles are used to look down upon Muslim

90

characters and make them appear to be vulnerable or unimportant. The low angles are usually used to make characters look powerful or respected but the gun scope shot reverses this when we look up at Muslims characters, however it does makes the American characters look powerful and respected. Finally, the eye-level angles are used to let the viewer connect with the characters yet because the Muslim characters are portrayed as dangerous this is unlikely and they are used to let the viewer see characters as equals yet gun scope also reverses this effect.

Zero Dark Thirty uses a similar amount of close-up shots as *The Hurt Locker* as well as using a large number of long shots to cinematically construct the scenes. Whereas *The Hurt Locker* is Islamophobic through the use of close-ups because they were used to portray a sense of fear due to the (presumably) Muslim characters being depicted as potentially dangerous, *Zero Dark Thirty* uses the close-up shot in a different manner, though it is just as Islamophobic. *Zero Dark Thirty* portrayed its Muslim characters as being worthless and unimportant through the use of close-up shots. Whereas in *The Hurt Locker* the sense of claustrophobia that can be created by close-ups mainly had that effect on the audience, in *Zero Dark Thirty* it is focused on the Muslim characters. The long shots in *Zero Dark Thirty* create a sense of alienation and emptiness in regards to the Muslim characters which reflect the fact that they are being tortured. In regards to the camera angles that are used, the eye-level angles are predominant, though a few low angles and one high angle are also employed. The camera angles that are used in *Zero Dark Thirty* have a similar effect as the ones used in *The Hurt Locker*: the high angles are used to look down upon the Muslim characters and make them look vulnerable and unimportant, the low angles are used to make the American characters look powerful and respected, and the eye-level angles are used to let the viewer see the characters as equal yet the fact that one tortures the other negates this effect. A reoccurring cinematic theme in *Zero Dark Thirty* however is the use of a high camera angle within an eye-

level angle with the Caucasian American standing over the brown-skinned Muslim, which is not used throughout *The Hurt Locker*.

American Sniper's predominant camera shots are different from the ones used in the other two movies, which might point to the fact that the other two movies were both directed by Kathryn Bigelow, whereas *American Sniper* is directed by Clint Eastwood. *American Sniper* uses an equal amount of medium and head and shoulders shots as well as one long shot. The medium shots are used in scenes where the focus is on the interaction between characters (verbal or non-verbal) and the head and shoulders shots, which are closely related to the close-up shot, provide a small sense of claustrophobia. One similarity between *American Sniper* and *The Hurt Locker* is that the gun scope shot is also used in *American Sniper*, setting a similar tone as was done in *The Hurt Locker* through the use of this cinematic aspect. *American Sniper* predominantly uses eye-level angles as well as a few high angles, though low angles are not used in the discussed screenshots. Once again, the camera angles have a similar effect as in the previous two movies: eye-level angles are usually used to connect with the viewer, however this is unlikely as the Muslim characters are portrayed as dangerous, and to let the viewer see the characters as equals, though the gun scope shot reverses this effect; high angles are once more used to look down on the Muslim characters and make them look unimportant.

The use of shadows and colors in *The Hurt Locker*, *Zero Dark Thirty*, and *American Sniper* is quite similar, and while the purpose of the highlights in all three movies is similar, it is the amount of highlights that is used that is different in *Zero Dark Thirty* compared to the other two movies. In all three movies, the color scheme is quite dark and muted and together with the created shadows, reference the themes of war, fear, and death. This is intensified in *The Hurt Locker* and *American Sniper* through the use of the gun scope shot, which adds another dimension to these themes because of the large black shadow it creates around the

outer edges of the screen, as well as it being used to portray the Muslim characters that are watched through the gun scope as dangerous. Highlights are sparsely used throughout *The Hurt Locker* and *American Sniper*, yet when they are used they serve the purpose of drawing attention to certain aspects of the scene to intensify fear, examples being the bright glare of sunlight that further shrouds the taxi driver in *The Hurt Locker* in shadows and Kyle's arms that are holding the Muslim man in *American Sniper* in a chokehold. In *Zero Dark Thirty* highlights serve the same purpose. Contrary to the amount used in the other two movies, highlights are used more frequently in *Zero Dark Thirty*, especially in close-up scenes in which parts of faces are highlighted. By highlighting parts of character's faces, the blackness that has been created by the shadows the characters are often shrouded in is broken through, emphasizing that while the use of the dark shadows is there to bring about a sense of fear and power, it should not be interpreted as the harbinger of death, thus creating nuance.

Conclusion

In order to answer the main research question, 'How is Islamophobia constructed cinematically in the Hollywood productions *The Hurt Locker, Zero Dark Thirty*, and *American Sniper*?', the two sub questions will be answered. The sub questions are as follows: 1) Which ideological markers trigger Islamophobia in these Hollywood productions? and 2) How do mise-en-scène elements shape Islamophobia in the case studies? By answering these two sub questions a complete and thorough answer has been formed to answer the main question.

Muslims and Arabs are discriminated against throughout *The Hurt Locker, Zero Dark Thirty*, and *American Sniper* through the use of derogatory rhetoric and mise-en-scène aspects such as camera shot, camera angle, shadows, highlights, and color. The ideological markers that trigger Islamophobia are exhibited throughout the movies and are intensified by the choices that have been made by the movies' directors in regards to the shaping of mise-en-

scène elements. These triggers are related to the theories by Dyer, Shaheen, Riggins and Said that have been used as a theoretical basis. Considering the fact that these movies in particular were chosen because they focus on events that happened post-9/11, the ideological markers that trigger Islamophobia in these movies are thus related to the opinions on Islam that have become widespread throughout Hollywood and the media since. Muslims are seen as the universal Other, even though there is no universal Other as each person creates a sense of Self and Other that is unique. They are portrayed as non-compatible with Western societies, savages, evil, terrorists, and a threat to everything that Western societies hold dear. By tarring all Muslims with the same brush in such a manner, a whole population group is condemned. Should this have happened in the current day and age to a different population group, such as Jews or Asians, there would be widespread outrage. By not condemning the demonization of Muslims and Arabs because they are Muslim and Arab, Islamophobia is created and perpetuated.

Lastly, the mise-en-scène elements that further shape the Islamophobic sentiment in the three case studies will be discussed. The camera shot is primarily used to either create a sense of claustrophobia or a sense of alienation and emptiness, both creating 1) a sense of fear towards the Muslim characters, or 2) portraying the Muslim characters as being unimportant compared to Caucasian American characters. The camera angle in turn is used to either make the Muslim characters look vulnerable or unimportant (high angle) or to make the American characters look powerful and respected (low angle). A third option that is used throughout the movies is the eye-level angle, which is usually used to make the viewer identify with a character or see characters as equals, yet in these movies has the exact opposite effect due to a gun scope shot being used in *The Hurt Locker* and *American Sniper*, portraying the Muslim characters as dangerous, and the fact that the Muslim character in *Zero Dark Thirty* is being tortured. The dark and muted color scheme is used to reference the themes of war, fear, and

death, all of which are related to the notion of Islamophobia as these themes trigger it. The creation of shadows throughout the movies is used to either 1) make the Muslim characters look dangerous or 2) to make the American characters look powerful and superior. Together with the (sparse) use of highlights that emphasize the fear present in both options, they complete the way in which mise-en-scène elements shape Islamophobia in the case studies.

In the end, the conscious and subliminal sides of Islamophobia can only be overcome through 1) educating people in regards to these stereotypes and the harm they can do, and 2) Hollywood and the news media abandoning these harmful stereotypes and portraying Muslims in a way that is realistic instead of choosing to portray all of them as terrorists simply because it is 'easy'. Unfortunately, there has always been a social group that is stereotyped in news media and/or Hollywood, so even if the stereotyping of Muslims would abate, another group that is seen unfavorably at that time will take its place.

Appendices

A.

Start with 'terrorist safe havens': 12 countries; 496,436 nonimmigrant and 74,283 immigrant visas in 2015

B.

Add 'state sponsors of terror': 3 countries; 45,935 nonimmigrant and 10,722 immigrant visas in 2015
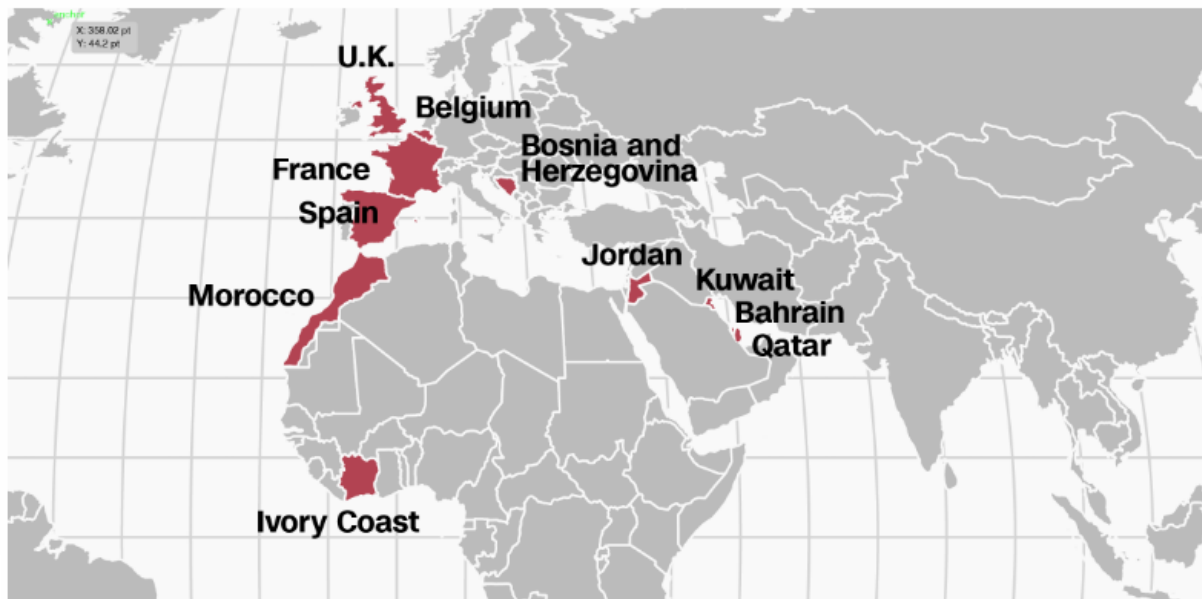
C.

Nations where terror networks are based and operate: 14 countries; 1,741,169 nonimmigrant and 63,106 immigrant visas in 2015

D.

Other countries with active terror cells: 11 countries; 295,695 nonimmigrant and 16,883 immigrant visas in 2015

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