

Discourses of Film Terrorism:

Hollywood representations of Arab terrorism and counter- terrorism, 1991–2011

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism by the modern definition has existed since the French Revolution and the academic study of terrorists has been in place for over thirty years, yet the subject is far from fully understood. The September 11, 2001 attacks (9/11), while not representing a new era of terrorism, ushered in a new chapter in the public's understanding of terrorism, and in the process elevated terrorism to a level of public and academic interest not previously seen. Given the power of mass media and entertainment platforms such as film to influence public opinion, it is important to consider the effects events such as 9/11 have on media objects such as Hollywood action films. Primarily utilising the Orientalist framework as outlined by Edward Said this thesis examines how discourses of Arab terrorism are created through the interplay between these media texts and how these representations respond to real world events. This paper will consider the onscreen representations of Arab terrorists and counter-terrorists in nine mainstream Hollywood action films released between 1991–2001 and 2001–2012, comparing and contrasting these two periods in order to determine the impact real world events such as 9/11 have on the screen mediations of Arab terrorism. In this study a number of discursive shifts can be observed; representations of Arab terrorists shift from comical pre-9/11 to serious post-9/11, with a framing of a personified Islam as the root cause motivation of terrorist attacks. Representations of female Arab terrorists only appear post-9/11, where their Arab upbringing and their femininity merge to establish them as a double threat to Western society. Finally, the figure of the Arab counter-terrorist is portrayed consistently pre- and post-9/11 and maintains strong Orientalist influences regardless of the time period, establishing these characters' Arab heritage and position in law enforcement as creating internal conflict. This thesis builds upon the existing understanding of Arab screen images, presenting new research outcomes which have previously not been considered in the field.

STATEMENT

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another author person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work embodied in this thesis has generated the following book reviews, conference presentations and invited talks:

Book Reviews

Reid, Jay (2013) “Review – Screening Torture: Media Representations of State Torture and Political Domination”. *Media International Australia* 147: 162-3.

Reid, Jay (2012) “Review – Soldiers’ Stories: Military Women in Cinema and Television since World War I by Yvonne Tasker. A ‘Toxic Genre’: The Iraq War Films by Martin Barker”. *Scope: An Online Journal of Film & TV Studies* 24.

Reid, Jay (2012) “Review – Hollywood 9/11: Superheroes, Supervillians, and Super Disasters”. *Media International Australia* 143: 182-3.

Conference Papers (Unrefereed)

“The Changing Face of Terrorism: Discourses of Representation of Middle Eastern Terrorists in Hollywood post-9/11”. *Australian and New Zealand Communications Association Conference*, University of South Australia, 4-6th July, 2012.

“Out With The Old; In With The New: Examining The Cinematic Arab Terrorist Before and After The September 11 Attacks”. *Cultural Studies Association of Australasia Conference*, University of South Australia, 23rd November, 2011.

“Yippee ki-yay, al-Qaeda! 9/11 and its effects on the Hollywood cinematic mediation of terrorism”. *Australian and New Zealand Communications Association Conference*, The University of Waikato, 7th July, 2011.

Invited Talks

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“You want to know what the business world thinks of you? We think one hundred years ago you were living out here in tents in the desert, chopping each other's heads off, and that's exactly where you're going to be in another hundred.”

Bryan Woodman (Matt Damon) articulating Western views of the Arab world in Syriana (2005, dir. Stephen Gaghan).

1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Following the attacks in North America on September 11, 2001 by the international terrorist group known as al-Qaeda – also known simply as the 9/11 attacks – terrorism has attained a new level of public awareness, media coverage and academic scrutiny. The events of that day were unlike anything contemporary Western society had witnessed; academics (i.e. Dixon, 2004a; Giroux, 2004; Young, 2007) have argued that the cultural impact of the attacks split the Western world into two very distinctive histories, a pre- and post-9/11 timeline, with the death and destruction of the attacks forever changing the course of Western history.

By their very nature the events of 9/11 instantly became a media spectacle. News broke within minutes of the American Airlines Flight 11 striking the North Tower of New York's World Trade Center on morning television across the United States. TV crews were quickly on the scene, and filmed live a second plane United Airlines Flight 175, crashing into the South Tower. This footage, together with the collapse of the towers and coverage of a third and fourth hijacked aircrafts – American Airlines 77 and United Airlines 93 – was quickly packaged and beamed live to television audiences around the world. Many associated what they were seeing with a Hollywood disaster film rather than news footage, such as the dramatic nature of the visual destruction that Hollywood films offered their closest point of reference (Aretxaga, 2001: 140; Dixon, 2004a: 9; Ewart & Rane, 2013: 143; Muntean, 2009; Rich, 2001). This strong linkage between cinema and the events of 9/11 has persisted beyond the initial aftermath of the attack and still shapes Western media and culture to this day.

This thesis will study cinematic mediations of terrorism in recent Hollywood action films and examine the extent to which terrorist activities, such as 9/11, have exerted influence on these productions and the Arab characters they contain. Comparing and contrasting cinematic representations through a close study of films released prior to and after the attacks, this thesis will investigate the popular notion that the 9/11 attacks constitute a change point in the onscreen mediations of Arab terrorism and counter-

terrorism in Hollywood productions. While this is true, this thesis will further examine the topic to demonstrate a second change point in representations of Hollywood terrorism which occurs just over half a decade after the 9/11 attacks in 2007, a change point which also sees the introduction of female Arab terrorists to the genre. Finally, this thesis will examine the character of the Arab counter-terrorist, and demonstrate that interestingly the events of 9/11 have had little influence on their onscreen characterisation. In doing so, this thesis will demonstrate how media images of Arab terrorism and counter-terrorism are tightly controlled and influenced by a number of dominant discourses, in particular Orientalism, resulting in these media images containing little variety outside a core set of characterisations and tropes which underpin their characterisation.

1.1 Why study Hollywood depictions of terrorism?

From the moment 9/11 occurred, American popular culture and mass media explored the attacks with regard to the implications for the future of Western society. As the attacks were considered to be such a visual spectacle of live and subsequently repeated news coverage, visual mediums such as film have been seen as the most appropriate platform through which to explore the impact of these events (Young, 2007: 31), with Hollywood described as “the locus for America’s negotiation of September 11 and its aftermath,” (Schoop & Hill, 2009: 13). The 9/11 attacks are seen to have uniquely affected Hollywood unlike any other event in human history, surpassing the influences of the Pearl Harbour bombings (Pollard, 2011: 2-3, 149, 180). Post-9/11 cinema is described as currently the dominant thematic style in Hollywood, and seen to represent an era of cinema that is expected to last some time (Cettl, 2009: 1; Pollard, 2011: 11, 180-3).

While audiences can draw upon media entities including newspapers or the internet to learn about trending topics such as terrorism, it is widely believed that popular culture – and films in particular – occupy an important position in people’s understanding of events (Altheide, 2006: 420; Schack, 2009:

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65-67). *The Peacemaker* (1997, dir. Mimi Leder), featuring Hollywood star George Clooney, had a cinematic audience larger than US news channels such as C-SPAN (Schollmeyer, 2005: 44), with films seen to educate and reaffirm public perceptions of events (Schoop & Hill, 2009: 16-27). Hollywood has become a key ground for the mediation of acts of terror and the social changes they bring about, and represents a cultural space in need of investigation in order to understand how events such as 9/11 shape images of terrorism.

The association between the attacks and cinematic acts of violence had an immediate impact on the entertainment industry. Films that were in production or near release were shelved, put on hold or re-edited (Dixon, 2004b; Erikson, 2007; Markovitz, 2004: 201; Pollard, 2011: 8-10, 149-50; Rich, 2001), with the World Trade Centre removed from upcoming film and television productions (Bell-Metereau, 2004: 145; Cettl, 2009: 14; Dixon, 2004a: 3). Hyper-violent films such as *Collateral Damage* (2002, dir. Andrew Davis) were pushed back from release while family films and those dealing with escapism or patriotism, such as *Black Hawk Down* (2001, dir. Ridley Scott) had their release brought forward (Ansen et al., 2001; Dixon, 2004a: 3; Markovitz, 2004: 201). The events of 9/11 were initially addressed only through analogy and were not directly referenced in motion pictures until 2006 with Paul Greengrass's *United 93* and Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* (Dodds, 2008; Pollard, 2011: x, 7-8; Sanchez-Escalonilla, 2010; Schoop & Hill, 2009: 13).

When terrorism did return to cinema audiences desired to see more realistic recreations of terrorist activities. They found themselves struggling to suspend their beliefs in pre-9/11 onscreen action that now appeared 'dated'; such films were seen as naive and optimistic in a global climate widely perceived as being dark, unstable and pessimistic (Cettl, 2009: 1; Markovitz, 2004: 201-3; Pollard, 2011: 162-3; Schollmeyer, 2005: 50). Villains of old were quickly replaced by new ones; Arabs usurped Germans and Russians (Ivory et al., 2007: 8), with terrorists quickly morphing from fascists and communists to religious fanatics (Boggs & Pollard, 2006: 337-8; Pollard, 2011: 38). Academics noted that it was not only the nationality and motives of these villains that changed, but also the power they

possessed and the manner in which they conducted attacks. Pollard (2011) states that post-9/11 terrorists are represented as more dangerous than those of pre-9/11 cinema, established as possessing greater power and posing a greater threat to Western society. Producers have been forced to rethink storylines and create ones that were more relevant to post-9/11 audiences as they flocked to cinematic depictions of terrorism rather than shy away from them, wanting to witness and share in the horrors of such incidents firsthand (Boggs & Pollard, 2006; Dixon, 2004a: 1; Erikson, 2007: 209; Hill, 2009: 127; McCormick, 2001: 42-43; Pollard, 2011: 5; Rocha, 2004). These audience numbers ensured that despite always being a popular genre, terrorist action films proliferated post-9/11 following a brief hiatus in the direct aftermath of the attacks (Boggs & Pollard, 2006: 335; Cettl, 2009: 1; Pollard, 2011: 107, 112, 149-50; Slocum, 2011: 181).

The events of 9/11 now occupy a pivotal place in world history, one that has forever changed the Western film industry. As films have the potential to inform and influence public opinion it is important to understand how 9/11 has changed the discourse of cinematic terrorism and the messages it carries. In order to frame my analysis of the studied films I will devote the remainder of this chapter to an exploration of the concept of onscreen terrorism in Hollywood, looking first at the real world phenomena before presenting an overview of its appearance in cinematic productions.

1.2 Defining terrorism

Despite years of study and research there currently exists no agreed upon definition of 'terrorism'. A number of reasons are cited for the difficulties in reaching a conclusive definition, with the events of September 11 being seen only to further complicate such work (Aretxaga, 2001: 139-149; Butko, 2006: 145; Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 26; Pollard, 2011: 107-8; Slocum, 2011: 181; Townshend, 2002: 3-5; Tuman, 2003: 1-15). Such is the trouble defining the term that researchers claim the subject "is difficult to research... [as it] seems to defy definition" (Wight, 2009: 99). Academics commonly state that

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no definition exists and leave the definition implicit rather than explicit, stating that we all simply ‘know’ what terrorism is and is not (ibid: 100). Terrorism is a subjective concept and defined as such by those who practice and oppose it rather than on the basis of the act itself, best typified in the maxim ‘one person’s terrorist really is another’s freedom fighter’ (Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 34). The widely varied motivations, methods and contexts of terrorist attacks and those who perpetrate them further muddy such a definition. Academics note that current trends of terrorism that focus on extermination rather than simple coercion may in fact not be terrorism at all (Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 34; Townshend, 2002: 98, 112). Defining terrorism in the modern age is a question well beyond the scope of this paper, with a study by Butko (2006) concluding that there presently exist over 100 definitions of the concept (145).

For the sake of this thesis I will draw upon Colin Wight’s definition and show how it is supported by a number of sources and stands up as a working definition of terrorism. Wight’s model for a definition purports four conditions that should be met in order for an event to be labelled an act of terrorism:

- it is a form of violent political communication;
- it is always illegitimate violence;
- it involves the deliberate targeting of non-state actions and institutions, and
- the victims are not the intended recipients of the political message.

This definition represents what he terms the “minimum necessary conditions that enable us to claim any act as an instance of terrorism” (2009: 102). Elements of this definition are supported by others in the field. The use of violence in order to leverage a political message with actions against innocent bystanders and non-state agents is seen as key to the modern definition of terrorist violence (Butko, 2006: 145-8; Townshend, 2002: 98). A further condition specified by Wight is the need for the target of such acts to be a sovereign state, one that holds hegemonic dominance over the perpetrators. This elaboration

on the previously mentioned ‘political communication’ asserts that such acts are conducted as a response or reaction to the claims of legitimacy excised by the state which falls victim to such attacks (Wight, 2009: 101). In order for an act to be classified as terrorism it must be seen as “counter-hegemonic political violence,” (Butko, 2006: 145), an act that communicates political opposition to a dominant state in a violent fashion against the populace of said state (Butko, 2006: 145-8). With this in mind I will define terrorism within the bounds of this thesis as violent actions against the non-agents of a sovereign state with the intention of bringing about political change or awareness. In addition to illuminating the complexities surrounding the study of terrorism, this definition will be drawn upon to form a minimum selection criterion used for the justification of the films studied in this thesis.

1.3 Brief history of terrorism

In order to study media representations of terrorism, the history of real world events should first be considered. While the notions of terrorism such as removing unjust leaders by force have been documented since the 3rd century BC through the works of Plato and Aristotle (Fine, 2008; Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 31), terrorism in the modern sense as defined above appeared during the French Revolution in the 18th century. Beginning in September 1793 and lasting twelve months, the ‘Reign of Terror’ is regarded as the first time in history that acts of intimidating violence were carried out with a deliberate strategy (Butko, 2006: 146; Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 33), with the era seen as “the beginning of modern, political, systematic terrorism,” (Fine, 2008). While the term terrorism had been used previously in history, this is considered the first time it was used to describe events that would also be perceived as terrorism by a contemporary audience.

According to ‘terrorist wave theory’ as proposed by Rapoport (2004), terrorism is not a static practice but rather evolves following a wave pattern; each wave is a discrete time and period and undergoes a process of slow building, leading to a peak before fading away (Kurtulus, 2011: 484).

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Rapoport identifies four distinct waves since the 1870s, all of which last approximately forty years (Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 30). While revolution and change is always the aim of terrorist groups (ibid: 49), each wave uses different methods to achieve their goals (Kurtulus, 2011: 485; Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 59; Rapoport, 2004: 47). The rise and fall of each wave is often accounted for by changes in world power, differing counter-terrorist policies and the rise of second generation fighters, who prefer to embrace newer methods of terrorism (Rapoport, 2004: 48). While each wave will be discussed, the general trend related to this thesis is that terrorism has moved from secular attacks on selected targets by hierarchical organizations to religiously-motivated indiscriminate attacks conducted by terrorists working with a cellular structure (Kurtulus, 2011: 477; 485), a shift that is commonly believed to be exemplified by the 9/11 attacks.

Rapoport is not the first academic to study the changes in terrorism over time (Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 23-3), however his work is the first to be supported by data from the ITERATE (International Terrorism: Attributes of Events) database, which contains 13,087 published print and electronic accounts of terrorist incidents including data on the mode of attack and casualties caused (Brandt & Sandler, 2010: 220; 263). At present his wave theory, based upon a study of the past 125 years of terrorist incidents (Rapoport, 2004: 46), is considered by academics to be the best model through which to explain the history of terrorism and has been supported by a number of subsequent studies (c.f. Brandt & Sandler, 2010; Enders & Sandler, 2005; Kurtulus, 2011; Rasler & Thompson, 2009). Rapoport's model helps to demonstrate that terrorism is in a state of flux, which I shall demonstrate, is reproduced in Hollywood representations.

1.3.1 First Wave

Rapoport's first wave of terrorists, which he terms 'Anarchists', were active from the 1870s to the 1910s and set about bringing democratic change in the face of government opposition with orchestrated violence (Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 36; Rapoport, 2004: 47-50; 65; Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 33; Townshend, 2002: 50-6). Their campaigns were supported by a rise of global trade that allowed for greater movement of personnel, materials and ideals between countries and states (Duyvesteyn, 2004: 449; Enders & Sandler, 2005: 261; Rapoport, 2004: 49-52). These groups were unlike anything that had been seen before, and their lack of adherence to the conventions of peaceful revolution called for a unique name – 'terrorists' (Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 33; Rapoport, 2004: 51). They employed a new invention: dynamite, which while often resulting in their own death demonstrated a greater level of commitment to their cause than those who had come before them (Rapoport, 2004: 50-1; Townsend, 2002: 25). Their *modus operandi* was the assassination of prominent political officers in order to further their cause, with bank robberies used to finance these operations (Rapoport, 2004: 47-51; Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 30). The Anarchist's reign of terror waned in the early 1900s as the atrocities of World War I are argued to have desensitised the public to violence and rendered such acts of terror ineffective (Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 36-7; Townshend, 2002: 60-1). Empirical studies reveal that nowadays this first wave of terrorism is all but nonexistent and is only a very minor concern to state security (Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 35).

1.3.2 Second Wave

Rapoport's second wave, termed 'Nationalists', were active between the 1920s and 1960s and sought to break up empires of defeated World War II nations and remove colonial rule from Europe (Fine, 2008; Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 55-57; Rapoport, 2004: 53; Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 30). They employed self-propaganda to position themselves as 'freedom fighters' to legitimise their cause against what they termed government 'terror' (Rapoport, 2004: 54). Increased globalization and the creation of

overseas diaspora groups allowed Nationalists to gain international financial support, removing the need to rob banks as Anarchist groups once had (Rapoport, 2004: 54-5). Assassinations of political figures were replaced by guerrilla attacks on security and military forces, the 'eyes and ears' of the government (Rapoport, 2004: 54; Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 31). The creation of supranational organisations such as the League of Nations and later the United Nations, who began to take an active role fighting this second wave, has been credited as a major cause for the decline of these groups (Rapoport, 2004: 55), with research showing that this particular wave of terrorism is currently no longer active (Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 35).

1.3.3 Third Wave

The third wave of terrorism, known as the 'Left/Marxist' wave, was active between the 1960s and 1980s. During this time the first notions of terrorist groups operating globally rather than simply nationally level appear; this is said to be the time when terrorism was internationalised (Fine, 2008; Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 57). Inspired by the victories of the Viet Cong against the technologically superior US forces, organisations of this wave believed that despite the overwhelming technological reach of governments, small groups fighting asymmetrically could bring about change (Rapoport, 2004: 56; Townshend, 2002: 61).

Third wave groups turned away from the techniques and methods of terrorism utilised by the previous generation, and for the most part revived techniques not seen since the Anarchist wave. Assassinations against political figures returned, this time as 'punishment' for individuals rather than for strategic objectives (Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 31; Rapoport, 2004: 57). The targeting of military and police assets declined, with 'theatrical' targets which garnered larger media coverage becoming the norm (Rapoport, 2004: 56-8). Despite the introduction of semtex, a more stable and readily available alternative to dynamite, suicide attacks ceased (Townshend, 2002: 28). Women, who'd previously been active in first

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wave groups and disappeared in the second wave made a comeback, filling active duty and leadership roles (ibid: 56). The term ‘freedom fighter’ was dropped in favour of self acknowledgment as ‘terrorists’ (ibid: 58-60). Hostage taking, especially in the form of aircraft hijackings, became common, with financial gain often taking precedence over the political leverage offered by the hostages (Fine, 2008; Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 31; Rapoport, 2004: 57; Townshend, 2002: 28). Groups ensured elaborate escape plans were in place, opening themselves up to the possibility of negotiations and rarely needing to abort missions (Brandt & Sandler, 2010: 217; Duyvesteyn, 2004: 445; Field, 2009: 197; Fine, 2008). Despite efforts to limit their levels of carnage and select only ‘legitimate’ targets such as government buildings and law enforcement infrastructure, third wave group’s revived commitment to their cause led to the alienation of their diaspora support networks, and the eventual collapse of many third wave groups (Brandt & Sandler, 2010: 217-21; Field, 2009: 199-200; Rapoport, 2004: 58), paving the way for the rise of what Rapoport terms fourth wave terrorist groups.

1.3.4 Fourth Wave

The fourth, and current, wave of terrorists as prescribed by Rapoport’s model is that of ‘Religious’ organisations. Whereas previous acts of terrorism had been carried out with political motivations, this era saw this focus switch to religion and faith, which went on to become the defining aspect of this decade’s terror acts (Townshend, 2002: 97). The rise of these groups has been phenomenal; from representing just two of the 64 active groups in 1980, religiously motivated terrorists now account for half of the 58 currently active groups worldwide (Enders & Sandler, 2005: 262). Despite popular belief, Islam is not the only religion represented by these fourth wave groups; fundamentalism of any religious doctrine is said to be the defining characteristic of this wave (Duyvesteyn, 2004: 443-6; Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 31; Townshend, 2002: 97), which while encompassing Islamic groups such as al-Qaeda also includes those based upon Judaism (Aum Shinriko, the Tokyo subway bombers) and

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Christianity (Oklahoma City bombing). Religious beliefs are mobilised by these groups after having often undergone radical interpretations to justify their aims and means (Field, 2009: 197; Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 33). As the fourth wave of terrorism is unlike anything ever witnessed, its perpetrators are often referred to as 'new' terrorists (Field, 2009: 196-7), despite debate about the confusing nature of such a term.

As with previous waves, religious groups have differing motivations, tactics and structures to those who came before them. Rather than focus on national or territorial concerns, these groups conduct campaigns on a truly global scale, looking to bring about drastic and worldwide social change (Duyvesteyn, 2004: 443; Rapoport, 2004: 62; Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 31-8). The hierarchical command structures of earlier groups is absent and replaced by a cellular structure, allowing groups to be more durable than those of previous waves (Duyvesteyn, 2004: 443; Rapoport, 2004: 63). Leaders of these organisations, such as Osama bin Laden, project themselves as individual figureheads of these groups, a practice previously unseen in terrorist organisations (Hoffman, 2002: 308; Townshend, 2002: 111). Women are again removed from direct action, with the exception of the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka (Rapoport, 2004: 49). Because their motives are not material, fourth wave groups are seen as being unable to be negotiated with and have been linked to the possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), devices previously only seen in the possession of elite nation states (Duyvesteyn, 2004: 443; Field, 2009: 199-200; Rapoport, 2004: 67; Townshend, 2002: 32).

The utilisation of suicide bombings or 'martyrdom operations' has become a hallmark of fourth wave groups. Logistically complex hostage takings have disappeared, replaced by attacks in which the terrorists give their own lives, mirroring the assassinations by explosives conducted by first wave groups (Fine, 2008; Hoffman, 2002: 304; Rapoport, 2004: 62-7; Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 31-4). Rather than limit the collateral damage of their attacks to avoid alienating supporters, groups of this Religious wave seek to inflict as much death and destruction as possible. The rising death toll of these attacks is designed to kill their enemies and extract revenge for past incidents rather than convert them to their ideologies

(Field, 2009: 199-200; Duyvesteyn, 2004: 446-9; Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 31-8; Townshend, 2002: 99-101). Whereas government, police or military installations were targets of previous waves, religious groups elect to attack unarmed civilians, preferring to strike out against buildings yet to be hardened by counter-terrorism measures (Brandt & Sandler, 2010: 218-24; Duyvesteyn, 2004: 448; Enders & Sandler, 2005: 261; Rapoport, 2004: 65). This move toward attacking civilians rather than those in a position of power shows a move from specific to indiscriminate targeting; with attacks made legitimate through fanatical readings of religious texts (Duyvesteyn, 2004: 443; Kurtulus, 2011: 486).

Over the past 125 years terrorism has undergone a continual evolution in regard to the methods and ideology employed by those who practice it. In adherence with Rapoport's theory, the fourth wave of religious terrorism is set to disappear by around 2025 (Rapoport, 2004: 47, 66; Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 32) with scholars hypothesising a less internationalised and more insular tribal-based terrorism as the next wave (cf. Kaplan, 2007; Weinberg & Eubank, 2010). Having briefly considered the history of global terrorism I shall now look specifically at the onscreen mediation of such events and examine the interplay and linkages between the reality of terrorism and its fictional Hollywood representations.

1.4 History of cinematic terrorism

The history of cinematic representations of terrorism is neither as clearly nor thoroughly researched as the history of its real world influences. While it would be near impossible to determine the first time terrorism was depicted onscreen – some claim it to be present in the organised political violence in *Birth of a Nation* (1915, dir. D.W. Griffith) – it is possible to chart influential films of the recent era. Robert Cettl, who has conducted a study of all Hollywood terrorist themed films released between 1960 and 2008, asserts that while Hitchcock's *Saboteur* (1936) is in fact the first film of the terrorist it is only in the 1960s that Hollywood moves into what is now traditionally recognised as the terrorist film (2009: 1-3). Two French films, *The Battle of Algiers* (1966, dir. Gillo Pontecorvo), which depicts the violent

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conflict between revolutionary fighters and the French Government in North Africa, and *The Day of the Jackal* (1973, dir. Fred Zinnemann), based on the novel of the same name about an attempt on the French President's life by a hired mercenary, were some of the first and most influential films to deal with aspects of terrorism such as guerrilla warfare and assassination (Cettl, 2009: 5, 40-1; 88-9), an interesting coincidence given that it was the French revolution from which modern terrorism is traced.

One of Hollywood's earliest entries to the terrorist sub-genre was *Black Sunday* (1977, dir. John Frankenheimer), which featured a Vietnam War veteran coerced by a Palestinian terrorist to fly an explosives laden blimp into the American Super Bowl finals, inspired by the real world attack at the Munich Olympics in 1972, said to be "one of the most infamous terrorist attacks in history" (Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 106). A string of popular terrorism films emerged around this time, including, *Rosebud* (1975, dir. Otto Preminger) which features the kidnapping of a group of girls by Palestinian terrorists, and *Rollercoaster* (1977, dir. James Goldstone), one of the first to have a terrorist motivated by financial gain and holding hostages for ransom. Terrorist incidents during this time, particularly related to the hijacking of aircraft, are seen to have greatly influenced the terrorist film subgenre, with "movies [being] fed off each new real terrorist incident," (Cettl, 2009: 6). The 1970s are as such considered to be the era of the Hollywood terrorist film, a genre that would be further developed throughout the subsequent decade.

While the 1970s are seen to have created the terrorist action film, it was during the 1980s the subgenre was refined and experienced strong growth. The impetus for films of this era grew out of the public backlash following Operation Eagle Claw, a failed military invention to free United States hostages from Iran in 1980 (Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 112-5). The failure of the mission showed the world that the US superpower was capable of being held successfully to ransom, a theme that would be utilised by subsequent filmmakers (Cettl, 2009: 7-8). Filling a void left behind by the Cold War action thrillers, terrorist films came into vogue and were seen as enticing fare for filmmakers (ibid, 14). While European terrorists flourished in films such as those belonging to the James Bond franchise, there is an

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observed prevalence of Middle Eastern terrorists onscreen, influenced by groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah who at this time came to public prominence (Boggs & Pollard, 2006: 338; Cettl, 2009: 11-2).

In 1988 *Die Hard* (dir. John McTiernan) was released, a film that changed the way terrorist films and action films in general were created. With its iconic hero John McClane fighting singlehandedly against a multinational team of terrorists holding his wife's office building to ransom – a breakout role for Bruce Willis, who was previously best known for his work on romantic comedy-drama detective TV series *Moonlighting* (1985-89, created by: Glenn Gordon Caron) – *Die Hard* featured sophisticated villains and a liberal use of stunts and special effects. The film has become one of the most influential in Hollywood cinema, the theatrical release grossed \$35 million, a significant figure at the time, and spawning a successful film franchise which would gross \$700 million (Boggs & Pollard, 2006: 340; Parshall, 1991). *Die Hard* is considered as the model for a majority of subsequent Hollywood terrorism films (Pollard, 2011: 109), and was so successful – described as a 'trend-setting blockbuster' (Cettl, 2009: 107) – that its structure was copied in some 16 films released between 1990 and 1996 (Stilwell, 1997: 551-4). The villainous character of Hans Gruber, played by UK actor Alan Rickman, became one of the most imitated in modern cinema, differentiated from previously one-dimensional terrorist antagonists (Cettl, 2009: 13; Stilwell, 1997: 551-4). The character of John McClane was said to have set “new standards for ultra-masculine heroism” (Boggs & Pollard, 2006: 338); such is the cultural significance of this film that McClane's iconic vest is on display in the Smithsonian Institute near Abraham Lincoln's famed top hat (Crawford, 2007: 44). The film was closely followed by two sequels released in 1990 (*Die Hard 2*, dir. Renny Harlin) and 1995 (*Die Hard with a Vengeance*, dir. John McTiernan), which featured terrorist groups respectively holding an airport and later the entirety of New York City to ransom. New life was breathed into the franchise in 2007 with the release the cyber-terrorist themed *Die Hard 4.0*, (dir. Len Wiseman, released in the United States as *Live Free or Die Hard*), with an additional two films, including *A Good Day to Die Hard* (2013, dir. John Moore) and a currently untitled sixth addition to the franchise, under a rumoured title of *Die Hardest*, said to be entering pre-production at the time of writing.

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As far as films of the terrorist sub-genre go, few can be seen to be as influential as those of the *Die Hard* franchise.

Through the history of cinematic representations of terrorism, real world events have been seen to influence onscreen depictions of terrorists and the attacks they carry out. Toward the end of the 1980s, acts of airplane terrorism made front-page news, and subsequently, were featured in Hollywood mediations of terrorism. The 1985 bombing of Air India Flight 182 and the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie (Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 121-126) saw Hollywood take up this contemporary trend in terrorism, and throughout the 1990s create *Passenger 57* (1992, dir. Kevin Hooks), *Executive Decision* (1996, dir. Stuart Baird) and *Air Force One* (1997, dir. Wolfgang Petersen), all of which saw terrorists taking control of aircraft to aid their political or personal motives. A second trend would later ensue, with acts of domestic terrorism appearing in *The Rock* (1996, dir. Michael Bay), *Broken Arrow* (1996, dir. John Woo), *Arlington Road* (1999, dir. Mark Pellington) and *Swordfish* (2001, dir. Dominic Sena). These films featured attacks on US soil by biological, nuclear, and cyber threats carried out by its own citizens and were inspired by such real world events as the Oklahoma City bombing, mimicking onscreen the global rise in incidents of domestic terrorism at this time (Boggs & Pollard, 2006: 340; Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 139-140). During this time significant groups such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) came to power and sought to remove English control from Ireland and established a united and free country through the use of bombings and assassinations (Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 88-9), with a number of films released during this time dealing with the threat posed by the IRA, including *Elephant* (1989, dir. Alan Clarke) and *In the Name of The Father* (1993, dir. Jim Sheridan). *Patriot Games* (1992, dir. Phillip Noyce) featured a breakaway splinter group within the IRA who conduct a personal vendetta against a CIA analyst after he kills one of their members during a failed attack on the British royal family. Efforts by the IRA to secure weapons or classified information appear in *The Devil's Own* (1997, dir. Alan J. Pakula) and *Ronin* (1998, dir. John Frankenheimer), with these films building upon the third wave characteristics of the organisation.

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One of the final major films of the pre-9/11 era was in fact released after the attacks, though created and filmed prior to September 11, 2001. *The Sum of All Fears* (2002, dir. Phil Alden Robinson) features Arab terrorists supplying neo-Nazis with nuclear weapons, allowing them to detonate the device on American soil in an attempt to assassinate the US president (Carson, 2002: 108-9; Edelstein, 2002: 42; Kauffmann, 2002: 26; Powers, 2002: 1728; Rozen, 2002: 37; Shaheen, 2001: 33; 2003a: 191; 2008: 72-3; 167; Travers, 2002: 89). While released *after* 9/11 the film is considered to have been so strongly influenced by the pre-9/11 style and is described as the bookend to “the entire American cinema of terrorism prior to 9/11,” (Cettl, 2009: 14), a fitting accolade considering the film’s plot of a bomb being detonated at an American sporting game closely mirrors that of *Black Sunday*, previously shown to be the start of the modern terrorist film era.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, when the hijacked aircraft hit the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, not only was the US public’s perception of terrorism forever changed, but the world of Hollywood terrorism underwent an almost instant metamorphosis. In a well-planned and well-executed effort, al-Qaeda hijackers crashed four planes in the United States, killing almost 3,000 people from 90 different countries in an attack that is said to be “the single most important and recognizable act of terrorism ever” (Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 140). Broadcast live around the globe, the most powerful nation in the world was momentarily crippled by a man who had allegedly spent most of his life living in a cave (ibid: 141). Associates of bin Laden would go on to carry out subsequent attacks around the globe, including the 2002 Bali nightclub bombing and the 2005 London subways attacks (ibid: 144-5). Germans, Communists, the IRA and domestic groups were instantly replaced onscreen with a new era of Middle Eastern terrorists. Depictions of terrorism were considered initially by many to be ‘off-topic’ until the release of *United 93* (2006, dir. Paul Greengrass) and *World Trade Centre* (2006, dir. Oliver Stone), two of the first Hollywood films to directly mediate terrorism from the viewpoint of passengers aboard the ill-fated flight and first responders at the Twin Towers (Barker, 2011: 7; Cettl, 2008: 52; Pollard, 2011: 18-20, 158). *Syriana* (2005, dir. Stephen Gaghan) broached the subject of terrorism cinematically shortly

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after the 9/11 attacks, looking at the convergent topic of oil politics in the Middle East, with much contention and controversy surrounding their release due to its mediation of terrorism so soon after the attacks. While Hollywood was initially slow to depict terrorism directly, a wave of films was released following 2007, half a decade after the attacks (Cettl, 2009: 15, 110). These films included three films closely studied in this research, *The Kingdom* (2007, dir. Peter Berg), *Rendition* (2007, dir. Gavin Hood) and *Body of Lies* (2008, dir. Ridley Scott). Each of these productions worked to further establish Middle Eastern Islamic terrorists as the central protagonists of the terrorist subgenre, a position they still occupy to this day.

As demonstrated, the 9/11 attacks by al-Qaeda do not represent a new wave of terrorism and are instead a continuation of terrorist trends that began in the 1980s. Contrary to popular belief, the 9/11 attacks themselves are not a change-point in the wave theory (Brandt & Sandler, 2010: 216) as such groups had existed for forty years prior, but rather they represented an incident that brought this wave to the public's attention. In spite of this, as I will argue, the 9/11 attacks do represent a change point in Hollywood representations of terrorism whereby the public's perceptions of the terrorism underwent a change. While Islam had long been linked in Hollywood to terrorism, the 9/11 attacks ushered in a new era of cinematic terrorism which saw the threat posed by Arab groups solidified; the light-hearted comedic and inept representations of pre-9/11 cinema gave way to darker and more violent representations which strongly linked the Middle East to violence and religious fanaticism, and introduced the concept of female terrorists to Hollywood audiences. While the character of the Arab counter-terrorist did not undergo such a change, they continued to be framed in the same contradictory fashion as was observed prior to the 9/11 attacks.

1.5 Thesis Structure

In Chapter One I have considered the importance of studying depictions of terrorism within Hollywood productions. I have offered a definition of terrorism, an often contentious term, under which this thesis will handle the topic. Having done this I have examined the history of terrorism, drawing upon the work of theorists and historians to outline the changing nature of real world terrorist trends, demonstrating that 9/11 was in fact not a change point in global trends in terrorist activity. I have furthermore provided a history of the depictions of terrorist acts in Hollywood action, demonstrating how these cultural productions are acted upon by real world events.

Chapter Two will provide an overview of the existing body of research into the representation of Arab terrorism and counter-terrorism in Western cultural productions and demonstrate the contribution to knowledge offered by this thesis. Previous studies within the field will be examined for their contribution and shortcomings, which will demonstrate the significance of this work in improving the current understanding of the topic. Having reviewed the existing literature I will provide an explanation of the theoretical framework within which this study will operate and will lay out the methodological approaches utilised in this study, providing justification for their selection.

Five films released between 2001 and 2011 will be examined in Chapter Three, focusing on the portrayal of male Arab terrorist characters by first presenting the overarching discourse of representation that guides the mediation of these characters before examining how this discourse has been acted upon by real world terrorist incidents. Drawing upon close readings of *Executive Decision* (1996, dir. Stuart Baird) and *Rendition* (2007, dir. Gavin Hood), I will demonstrate how a consistent and broad image of the Middle Eastern terrorist is generated through Hollywood film productions, presenting these characters as primitive, violent and addicted to religion. I will then examine *True Lies* (1994, dir. James Cameron), *Syriana* (2005, dir. Stephen Gaghan), and *Body of Lies* (2008, dir. Ridley Scott), three films that I argue are representative of discursive breaks in the mediation of onscreen terrorists. While the overarching

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discourses of mediation are unchanged with regards to characterisation, repeated images, narrative structure and onscreen tropes, each of these films demonstrates how an emphasis has been placed on different elements of representation during different time periods, in what I argue is a response to real world events, in this case the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This chapter will build upon the existing dominant argument of a pre- and post-9/11 split in Hollywood cinema, and propose a second discursive split which occurred following 2007.

Chapter Four will continue this study of the Arab terrorist character by focusing on the onscreen mediation of female Arab terrorists as featured in *Vantage Point* (2008, dir. Pete Travis) and *From Paris with Love* (2010, dir. Pierre Morel). As terrorism is a highly male gendered realm, women who partake such activities are constructed as transgressing traditional gender norms. In addition to being constructed through Orientalist notions of being violent, primitive and addicted to an anti-Western religion due to their Middle Eastern heritage, female Arab terrorists are further represented as irrational and emotional seductresses who have failed in their expected roles as nurturing mothers. Through a close reading of these two films I will demonstrate how these women are established as a double threat to society due to their involvement in Middle Eastern terrorism and through their usurping of gendered norms.

The figure of the Arab counter-terrorist, a unique individual who has been the focus of little academic study, will be examined in Chapter Five. Having demonstrated in the previous chapters the strong link between individuals of Arab descent and acts of terrorism it is not surprising that such characters are considered contradictory figures, forced to choose between loyalty to his country and the fulfilment of his law enforcement duties. Through a close study of counter-terrorist characters of Arab descent featured in *The Siege* (1998, Edward Zwick) and *The Kingdom* (2007, dir. Peter Berg) I will examine the ways in which the mediations of these individuals look to position them as 'boundary crossing' characters through their struggle to reconcile these two contradictory identities.

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Chapter Six will conclude the thesis, drawing together previous arguments in order to demonstrate the impact of real world events such as 9/11 on the Hollywood cinematic mediations of Arab terrorism and counter-terrorism, before providing future research trajectories and directions that have been uncovered through the course of this research.

2 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORETICAL & METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

Despite the significance of the 9/11 attacks in Western society, there is little research examining the effect of this event on the already established discourse of cinematic terrorism. In this chapter I will examine previous studies within the existing literature regarding the Arab cinematic terrorist and counter-terrorist, locating gaps within the current understanding of the topic before demonstrating how my research will help to address these shortcomings. Given the degree to which the 9/11 attacks have shaped Western society, never before has an understanding of Hollywood terrorism, in particular that focused on the Middle East, been so significant for not only academics, but everyday citizens. As will be seen, images of Middle Eastern terrorism are hardly varied and rather guided by dominant discourses and ideologies, resulting in cinematic representations of these phenomena having very little scope and room for wider characterisation.

Butko (2006) argues that while terrorism has been a field of academic study for some time, its popularity as a research topic has increased greatly post-9/11 (149). In light of this Wight (2009) states that while 9/11 brought terrorism from a fringe area of study to the forefront of academic consciousness, the large volume of research carried out over the last decade has not translated into a comprehensive understanding of the issues surrounding terrorism, with large gaps in our current understanding (99). This very criticism is a focus of my work, which will seek to chart new territory in the understanding of how real world events, in this case the 9/11 attacks, work to influence Hollywood action films and their representations of Middle Eastern terrorism.

2.1 Literature Review

As soon as the 9/11 attacks occurred, academics began to draw parallels between news coverage of the events and Hollywood blockbusters, and to imagine the effects that such an incident would have on the Western film industry. In one of the earliest texts to look at the connection between 9/11 and film, Aretxaga (2001) comments on the parallels between the news reporting of the event and Hollywood blockbusters, pre-9/11 terrorism films such as *Battle for Algiers*, predicting a number of common themes that would later appear in Hollywood such as the criminalisation of terrorists and ideas of the Middle East as a frontier conflict (138-50). Dixon's *Film and Television after 9/11* (2004a) and his later article (2004b) examine how the attacks were first mediated by Hollywood, often through analogical genres. His work represents some of the first studies to examine media responses to the event and serves as a good foundation for a study such as this, although it has been noted that more contemporary studies have "developed more of a critical distance from the events of 2001" (Slocum, 2011: 182) and opened up more clarity in their investigation of changing media images. Schollmeyer (2005) looks at early post-9/11 action films, noting that nuclear threats have been surpassed by those relating to biological weapons, and arguing that films play an important role in educating the public about such topics as terrorism (42-50).

As noted, the impacts of 9/11 on Western society were initially dealt with in film through analogical genres such as science-fiction, fantasy and horror, which allowed for the implications of the attacks to be mediated in a way sensitive to the experiences of those involved in the incident. Academics such as Webber (2005), Erickson (2007), Muntean (2009), Sánchez-Escalonilla (2010) and Stockwell (2011) study science fiction films including *Minority Report* (2002, dir. Steven Spielberg), *War of the Worlds* (2005, dir. Steven Spielberg), *Cloverfield* (2008, dir. J.J. Abrams), along with television series including *The X-Files* (1993-2002, created by Chris Carter) and *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009, developed by Ronald D. Moore), as well as productions belonging to disaster, supernatural and political-action genres. While this earlier body of work illuminates a number of trends and common themes

regarding the onscreen mediation of terrorism, I seek to examine direct mediations of Arab terrorism, thereby removing the need to first interpret the overriding layers of genre analogy before engaging with the subject matter. Regardless, these studies highlight the interplay between 9/11 and Hollywood, and have been influential in guiding later studies.

Outside of film productions, the impact of 9/11 on wider Western media industries has been examined by a number of academics. Altheide (2006) examines newspaper reporting of terrorism and notes a 1000% increase in the linking of terrorism and crime between pre- and post-9/11 stories, demonstrating that a criminal framing is a commonly used trope in the representation of these events in popular media (415-39). Andrejevic (2011) conducts a content analysis of the television program *Border Security* to explore the ways in which it reinforces Australian government stances toward post-9/11 security issues. O'Loughlin et al. (2011) conducted audience studies of UK citizens who were exposed to media reporting of the 7/7 London bombings, exploring the ways in which religious 'radicalisation' has been framed discursively (153-64). While beyond the scope of this thesis, research such as this is useful to keep in mind as it helps to unravel overarching trends in media representations, and while they are focused on differing media platforms, can help to guide and position research into Hollywood screen images.

Close studies of Hollywood action films post-9/11 are by no means a new methodological approach introduced in this thesis. Meeuf (2006) examines *Collateral Damage* (2002, dir. Andrew Davis) and traces Hollywood's transition from post-Cold War villains to those of Middle Eastern descent, including the evocation of 'Wild West' domains of conflicts and the binary opposites between the savage East and the righteous West. Dodds (2008) looks at *The Kingdom*, *Lions for Lambs* (2007, dir. Robert Redford), *In The Valley of Elah* (2007, dir. Paul Haggis) and *Rendition*, classing such films as 'light-allegory' for their exploration of US foreign policy and masculinity (1621-37), while Stewart (2009) conducts an analysis of five of the studied films, *Body of Lies*, *The Kingdom*, *Rendition*, *Syriana* and

Vantage Point, with a strong focus on these films' use of surveillance and digital monitoring (45-55).

While these studies certainly open up the field of study and demonstrate how methodological approaches can be used to interrogate post-9/11 cinema, they do not compare such productions to releases before the attacks, and often fall short of an in-depth interrogation of the media texts. As such I will look to study only a small number of films, just as these authors have done, yet seek to engage more closely with the films in order to examine how events such as 9/11 have brought about changes to representations of Arabs in contemporary cinema images.

Tom Pollard, across numerous books and articles (Boggs & Pollard, 2006; Pollard, 2009; Pollard, 2011) has developed a theory of 'the spectacle of terrorism' in Hollywood and has sought to understand the overarching discourses that have guided post-9/11 Western cinema. He notes that in the aftermath of the attacks, films have become more violent, dark and negative as inspired by real events, rather than seeking to comfort audiences (Reid, 2012a: 182-3). His work is noted as being "solid analysis... [and] a great source," (Smith, 2012), and can be seen to build upon the early work of authors such as Kirkland (2003), who examined this notion of media 'spectacles of terrorism' regarding representations of Irish groups such as the IRA in popular pre-9/11 films (77-90). This study owes much to his notions of guiding discourses that dictate onscreen Hollywood representations, and I look to further Pollard's work by confining myself to Hollywood action films, rather than the wide-ranging genres he engages with. This will allow for a closer study of these media texts while simultaneously contrasting these to pre-9/11 media images in order to understanding changing onscreen mediations of Arab terrorism and counter-terrorism.

More recently a number of texts have added to the field of knowledge related to images of terrorism in popular culture and Hollywood movie productions. Schopp & Hill's (2009) *The War on Terror and American Popular Culture* looks at a variety of texts including film, television, popular music, news reporting, documentaries, children's literature and comic books in order to examine how these

media artefacts engage both directly and indirectly with “persistent, especially mythological, themes in the study of the United States have been recast by the events of 2001” (Slocum, 2011: 186). Likewise, Kellner (2010) uses a similar methodology in *Cinema Wars* whereby he examines a wide range of post-9/11 media artefacts in order to study the changes exerted upon them by the attacks. Kellner’s particular focus is on political motivators for the genre and filmic changes which have occurred since 9/11. Whilst looking at genres mostly outside my scope of study such as documentaries, disaster films and science fiction, he examines *The Kingdom* in Chapter Five, material that I draw upon in this thesis. More recent studies such as Ewart & Rane (2013) note the continued research gaps in our understanding of the subject matter, and the lack of longitudinal studies in the field (139-40).

When considering the decades before and after the 9/11 attacks as discrete and contained units of time, it is possible to examine how these two eras have been studied both individually and in relation to one another, and begin to examine gaps in the existing research. Two studies have been carried out looking into how audience perceptions of terrorism can be influenced by film trailers (Ivory et al., 2007) and selected film segments (Hensley, 2010), and while these smaller units of films are easily controlled and studied, I believe a much larger study which looks at these films as a whole will generate more comprehensive results. Addressing these gaps in the current literature is a major objective of this thesis, which looks to examine the decades of cinematic terrorism pre- and post-9/11 in depth, drawing strong comparisons between them in a fashion not previously seen in studies of this topic.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Since its discovery by the West, the Eastern world of the ‘Orient’ has been constructed as a place of exotic wonder, and quite often, the fearful unknown. Outside scholars have constructed a discourse through which the region has come into being, contributing to a large body of work which sets about to define the area, often seeking to differentiate it from Western society in order to establish power relations between the two and legitimise political action (Gardaz, 2004: 93-4; Scott, 2008: 69). In order to study how Middle Eastern terrorism and counter-terrorism is depicted onscreen within the Hollywood action genre I will draw upon the work of Edward W. Said, and in particular his seminal piece *Orientalism*, published in 1978. Said’s work seeks to examine Western and Arab political and cultural establishments, with a particular focus on the often misleading representations and interactions between the two which were not reflective of what he had witnessed as an Arab (Ali, 2006: 4, 96). This discourse of Orientalism, which is examined in greater depth below, underpins the examination of Arab media images within Hollywood conducted within this thesis. In addition to Orientalism I will engage with three complimentary discourses which operate alongside Orientalism:

1. Jack G. Shaheen’s ‘Reel Bad Arab’ discourse for examining male Middle Eastern terrorists;
2. Amanda Third’s ‘Hyper-dangerous terrorist woman’ for examining imagery of female terrorists of Middle Eastern descent, and
3. Martin Barker’s ‘Anti-terrorist hero’ to allow for a study of Middle Eastern counter-terrorists.

As will be seen, these three complimentary discourses operate within Hollywood action films alongside an engagement of Orientalism, empowering its beliefs and notions and helping to lay the foundation for Hollywood images of Middle Eastern terrorism. By examining media images of Middle Eastern underneath this overarching Orientalist framing alongside each of these secondary discourses I

will demonstrate current and historic tropes of representation within these films, and examine the impact real world events such as the 9/11 attacks have on the screen mediations of these characters.

2.2.1 Said's 'Orientalism'

Said conducts his examination of Orientalism through a close study of historical texts, highlighting common themes and ideas that have been carried down through the ages. His notion of the Orient focuses primarily on the Middle East and South Asia, though also extending to India and North Africa (Ashcroft & Ahluwali, 2009: 49, Gardaz, 2004: 93). His methodology sees his study of these texts begin in contemporary times before moving back through the ages, drawing close links between the modern and historical representations of the discourse (Ali, 2006: 97; Kennedy, 2000: 112), with particular focus paid to media images, travel writing, scholarship, literature, anthropology, and especially 19th and 20th century canonical literary and art works (Kennedy, 2000). Through this study of historical texts he seeks to construct "the entire Western attitude toward the Orient" by considering cultural artefacts within their historical context and seeking to outline the links between literature, politics and culture (Ali, 2006: 103; Khawaja, 2007: 395-702; Kennedy, 2000). His work is seen to still shape our understanding of the representations of the Middle East and the Arab people in media and popular culture to this day (Semmerling, 2006: 5-6).

Before further considering Said's work it is necessary to consider his biggest influence, Michel Foucault, whose notions of discourse is strongly drawn upon in Said's work. According to Foucault, a discourse is created through the interconnecting relationship of statements and the exchange of ideas, rules, procedures, regulations and modes of organisation between different yet related texts (Danaher et al., 2000: x, 35; Smart, 1988: 37-9). These often unspoken assumptions or pieces of knowledge come together to form statements that influence one's understanding of a subject, and yet while they actively shape our perceptions, tend to operate on an unconscious level and are rarely considered. These

assumptions can be seen to regulate identity, physical bodies, behaviours and social hierarchies, filtering down through and acting upon all levels of society (Danaher et al., 2000: 32-3, 118, 123-4; Racevskis, 1983: 93-6; Smart, 1988: 37-9). Through the use of discourse, dominant ideas are established, influencing social, political and cultural thought and empowering those who create and support such discourses. According to Foucault, power is not a tangible asset and cannot be controlled or possessed. Rather power exists in the constantly changing relationships between statements and ideas and needs a discourse in order to be created, to operate, and to be disseminated, and has the potential to shape people's actions and attitudes and even legitimise a ruling power (Danaher et al., 2000; Racevskis, 1983). By using discourses to establish dominant beliefs or ideology, social and cultural institutions become empowered as their knowledge and stances seem justified, becoming accepted as social and cultural fact despite a lack of supporting evidence.

Said's work is strongly linked to that of Foucault, (Ali, 2006: 8; Ashcroft & Ahluwali, 2009: 65; Danaher et al., 2000: 3, 110; Kennedy, 2000: 3, 89-90; Said, 2003), who is seen as the "most important theoretical source for Said," (Kennedy, 2000: 25). Said uses what Foucault notion of a discourse to examine the links between literature and politics with regard to media images of the Middle East (Ashcroft & Ahluwali, 2009: 14;-15, 47-56, 60-2; Kennedy, 2000: 83, 92, 113, 138; Said, 2003: 24, 328). Foucault examines different unspoken trends and assumptions, particularly the ways in which discourses change and are used by ruling parties to ensure their dominance. He does this by consulting social and cultural documents or 'monuments' from throughout Western history (Horrocks & Jevtic, 1999: 87; Racevskis, 1983: 91), identifying a number of different time periods and discourses that have developed and changed throughout human history. To this end, Said himself also looks to investigate the creation of discourse and examine reasons for the constant reproduction of Orientalism as a specific and unified collection of ideas and statements.

Chapter Two: Literature Review, Theoretical & Methodological Frameworks

Said considers in his work how elements such as institutions, administrative procedures, a sense of discovery, scholarly discourses, texts, language, education, tradition and religion have all come together to create the Orientalist ‘myth’; a discourse that has lasted over two centuries and to this day not only influences how we perceive the Orient but also how it perceives itself (Ali, 2006; Ashcroft & Ahluwali, 2009; Kennedy, 2000; Said, 2003). Rather than creating their works from scratch he demonstrates how authors instead draw upon previously stated notions of the Orient (Ali, 2006; Kennedy, 2000; Said, 2003). The reader is not introduced so much to the Orient but rather to the existing discourse of the Orient that is repeated through the work of the author, with each subsequent text further building and reinforcing the discourse to the point that such observations of organic and natural occurrences are considered to be scientific fact (Kennedy, 2000: 28-30; Danaher et al., 2000: 22; Said, 2003: 32, 72, 93-4, 128-9, 149, 255, 321; Scott, 2008: 68, 75). The same practices can be detected within representations of terrorism featured in Hollywood action films.

A key element of Orientalism is the creation of imagery that positions the East (Orient) and the West (Occident) as polar opposites to one other, establishing an ‘us’ and ‘them’ through associating positive connotations with the West and negative connotations with the East (Kennedy, 2000: 17, 57; Said, 2003: 39, 46-7, 227, 229-300). The West is shown as modern, dominant, rich in culture and history, peaceful, pro-freedom, desirable, familiar and masculine, with the East represented as ancient, unintelligent, dominated, void of elegance, anti-democratic, undesirable, strange and feminine (Ashcroft & Ahluwali, 2009: 57; Danaher et al., 2000: 110-1; Kennedy, 2000: 26, 42, 57, 95; Said, 2003: 34-6, 44-6, 246-7, 269). While these binary images exist to define and control the Orient, they also serve, by juxtaposition, to define the West. If the Oriental ‘they’ are imagined as bad, ‘we’ by comparison are not bad, as we are not ‘them’ (Ashcroft & Ahluwali, 2009: 48; Kennedy, 2000: 30; Pomerance, 2009: 32; Said, 2003: 54, 227). These polar-opposites are not a natural phenomena but rather a construct (Ashcroft & Ahluwali, 2009: 71; Kennedy, 2000: 16; Scott, 2008: 65); as Said asserts, they are the product of man (2003: xii, 5, 54, 331-2). In the context of the films studied in this thesis, these notions of imagined

geographies and their associated beliefs will allow for the study of the characterisation and representation of the Arab world and its inhabitants, and how these constructions are established within the media images of the West.

The construction and reproduction of the Orient takes place as part of a conscious and motivated desire by Western countries to alienate the region from audiences and justify the conduct of political actions in the area. Orientalism is seen as “one of the most profound examples of the machinery of cultural domination,” (Ashcroft & Ahluwali, 2009: 51). These Oriental notions are not scientific fact nor do they exist in a vacuum, rather they are imaginative constructs created and perpetuated with intent by society and those who study the Orient in order to exert control over the region and justify actions and political initiatives. Bearing in mind the ability of the American media environment to influence public opinion (Kennedy, 2000: 56), it is interesting to note the level of prominence that Arab media images now occupy within the nation’s popular culture (Ashcroft & Ahluwali, 2009: 64), commonly thought to have been created with intent to allow for US control of the region in order to further political motives (Ashcroft & Ahluwali, 2009: 70; Kennedy, 2000: 59-60; Said, 2003: 273, 328). Since Napoleon’s conquest of Egypt, the Oriental discourse has sought to produce a body of work that dramatises the threat posed by the East to create an environment within which imperial colonisation could occur and be seen as not only morally sound but socially necessary (Ali, 2006: 8, 91; Kennedy, 2000: 20-4, 88; Said, 2003: 3, 36, 203, 214). Oriental discourses create the notion of the East as a site of primitive undemocratic depravity filled with sexual taboo and violent tendencies, with the West standing at the polar opposite. Through the creation of a negative ‘them’ and a positive ‘us’, a discourse is established which exerts influences on audiences to convince them that only through their own intervention can the violent, fanatical and primitive East be saved from itself and be brought into the peaceful and democratic realm the West supposedly enjoy.

The Orient is home to some of the most powerful and longest lived images of the ‘Other’, and such myths of the East can be found in the works of Homer, Dante and Shakespeare, constantly being recycled and reused by subsequent authors (Said, 2003: 1, 6, 31, 56, 68-9, 122). The images that make up the modern Oriental discourse have been virtually unchanged since the 17th and 18th centuries when the Middle East was first opened up through exploration, born out of the need to establish the region as a site in need of colonisation (Ashcroft & Ahluwali, 2009: 47; Kennedy, 2000: 2; Pomerance, 2009: 30; Said, 2003: 6, 113-5). Interest in the Orient, particularly in popular culture, has risen in the shadow of the Cold War. With the ‘defeat’ of Communism there has grown a need to create a new public villain, a void that was soon filled by Arab-Muslim figures (Mandal, 2001: 20; Said, 2003: 284, 291-2, 332, 347). Just as with communists and the Nazis before them, Arab-Muslims were established as polar opposites to US sensibilities, and set up as a threat to the country’s values (ibid: 26, 295, 348). Such interest would only spike further following the events of 9/11 (Khawaja, 2007: 689), and allow for what Said had earlier described as an “illegal and unsanctioned imperial invasion,” by the US and UK into the Middle East (Said, 2003: xiii). The ideals of Orientalism through repetition have been able to survive to this day, influencing public policy, entertainment and academia, allowing the West to exert control over the region (Scott, 2008: 69; Said, 2003: 2-3, 222). As Boggs and Pollard have argued, “the ‘Middle East’ now exists as a quasi-mystical category largely outside of time and space, a ready source of dark fears and threats” (2006: 336).

Despite having drawn much criticism over the past three decades (Ashcroft & Ahluwali, 2009: 47, 68, 71-80; Gardaz, 2004: 95; Kennedy, 2000: 6-7, 16, 102; Khawaja, 2007: 705; Scott, 2008: 64-75), Said’s Orientalism is now considered to have been a huge leap forward in Western understanding of the East, with the book *Orientalism* considered a modern classic. Said is renowned as one of the most influential figures in Eastern studies (Ali, 2006: 21; Ashcroft & Ahluwali, 2009: 81; Gardez, 2004: 93-5; Kennedy, 2000: 1, 11; Khawaja, 2007: 690-704; Said, 2003: xi). His focus on fields as varied as literature, politics, journalism, travel writing, religion, philosophy, music, history and economics has

spawned a vast academic tradition leading to the perceived gaps in the text being filled by later authors. He later published *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), which extended his ideas and applied them to other regions of the world (Ali, 2006: 9-10, 21; Gardaz, 2004: 93; Kennedy, 2000: 113, 140; Said, 2003: 23). His work is seen to be hugely significant to the field of postcolonial studies, a field of study he played “a key role in the development of” and in which his work continues to occupy a pre-eminent and central role (Danaher et al., 2000: 3; Gardaz, 2004: 93-4; Kennedy, 2000: 5-8, 12-6, 83, 113-4, 123-4, 145-7; Khawaja, 2007: 690-704). It is this research profile and critical acclaim, along with his focus on Oriental discourses, which has led to Said’s work being adopted as the primary framework for study within this thesis.

2.2.2 Shaheen’s ‘Reel Bad Arabs’ discourse

In his body of research Shaheen looks at over 1,000 onscreen appearances of Arab characters in Hollywood films dating back over a century in order to isolate characteristics and filmic tropes that are commonly repeated within these movie productions (Majaj, 2003: 38; Miller, 2008: 246; Pomerance, 2009: 32; Shaheen, 2001: 14, 2003a: 172-6, 2003b: 77, 2008: xi, 25; Stiffler, 2010: 118). His work demonstrates that such characters have a quite limited scope of characterisation and are shown primarily as terrorists, oil billionaires, religious fanatics, or veiled belly dancers (Galford, 2001: 88; Hussein, 2010: 118; Majaj, 2003: 38; Mandel, 2001: 19-20; Marrison, 2004: 14; Miller, 2008: 246; Shaheen, 1987: 149, 2001: 7, 2003a: 172, 2003b: 76), with such images forming the basis of his theory of the ‘Reel Bad Arab’. These onscreen individuals are positioned as violent, brutal, depraved, uncivilised and anti-Western (Majaj, 2003: 38; Shaheen, 2001: 2, 2003b: 76), with Shaheen arguing that Hollywood producers draw upon an ‘Arab Kit’ by continually reproducing existing images of the area and its people through such motifs as dark beards, traditional headwear, camels, oil wells and automatic weapons in their construction of onscreen Arab identity (Shaheen, 1987: 148-9, 2003a: 172). He notes that less than 5% of these Arab

characters can be considered ‘positive’ media images of the Middle East (Galford, 2001: 88; Shaheen, 2001: 11, 2003a: 171), and that images of Arab heroes are all but non-existent. Hollywood’s mediation of Arab identity, he argues, ignores the obvious ethnic and cultural diversity of the Middle East (Shaheen, 2008: xiii), with negatively-positioned Arab characters readily observed in films that have no direct connection to the region or its inhabitants (Hussein, 2010: 119; Majaj, 2003: 38; Miller, 2008: 246; Stiffler, 2010: 118).

Shaheen sorts these observed characters into five broad categories: Villains, Sheikhs, Maidens, Egyptians and Cameos (Majaj, 2003: 38; Shaheen, 2001: 13, 2003a: 176-87; 2008: 30-4; Stiffler, 2010: 118). Having identified these repeated images across his various publications, Shaheen’s work moves to his primary thesis: such images are consciously constructed and act to inform Western audience understandings of the Middle East. Shaheen notes that Hollywood produced images are exported to over 150 countries and are seen by young and old (Shaheen, 2001: 5, 11; 2003a: 174; 2008: xvi), with the US Federal Government acknowledging the power of these media images to influence public opinion as early as 1917 (Shaheen, 2001: 30). According to Shaheen, the Western audience learn through the consistent and continual repetition of these images (Hussein, 2010: 119; Majaj, 2003: 38; Shaheen, 2001: 15; 2003a: 171-2), learning not so much about the Middle East as rather the construction of the Middle East and the ‘Reel Bad Arab’ put forward by filmmakers.

Shaheen’s body of research, which he has built upon since first publishing on the ‘Reel Bad Arabs’ in 1987, has garnered much praise from academics. He has been described as “the world’s foremost authority on media images of Arab and Muslims” (Marrison, 2004: 14) and “one of the pioneer analysts of the media’s treatment of Arabs” (Stiffler, 2010: 118), with his work ‘fundamental’ to the study of Arab media images (Semmerling, 2006: 2-6). He states that his 2001 monograph *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* is the first book of its kind to examine such onscreen mediations, with Semmerling (2006) asserting that the text represents an “indispensable reference tool” (3). It is this

positioning as a ‘reference tool’ that establishes a need for a closer reading of texts, such as the one undertaken in this thesis. Shaheen’s work has been noted as providing only an introductory discussion of these films without much depth of study related to the wider socio-political factors that guided their creation (Majaj, 2003: 38-9). The alphabetical sorting of his observations lends more to the idea of a reference book than a discourse study as changes in onscreen mediations over time are hard to establish, with Shaheen’s writing described as ‘heavy handed’ with others in the field questioning his readings of films (Semmerling, 2006: 3; Stiffler, 2010: 119). This thesis acknowledges the contribution to the study of Arab media images offered by Shaheen, and seeks to provide a closer interrogation of the selected productions; one that both demonstrates discursive changes over time while engaging with the wider cultural and societal issues that have guided the formation of such media representations.

To some extent later authors have addressed Shaheen’s shortcomings, conducting studies that have more closely engaged with films that represent Arab characters onscreen. Tim Jon Semmerling’s (2006) book *“Evil” Arabs in American Popular Film* draws upon the writings of Shaheen and accepts his challenge of further investigation into the field of such media images (4-5). Semmerling follows Shaheen’s work with an examination of what he terms ‘Evil Arabs’ in Hollywood film productions. In his work Semmerling differentiates between film images and actuality through a close study of Hollywood movies to demonstrate how the repeated tropes of representation are self-interested constructions (1-2). He looks at six Western film productions released between 1973 and 2002, with his work being described as a “rich and detailed... insightful analysis of the visual tropes and narrative structures that illuminate how Arabs as portrayed” (Alsultany, 2007: 365). While none of the movies in his study are Hollywood action films featuring terrorism, his methodological approach to the close study of films within their wider political and social framing has greatly influenced this research.

From 2009 onward a number of studies were published which looked to chart the history of US cinematic terrorism. The first, *Firestorm: American Film in the Age of Terrorism* by Stephen Prince,

provides a high-level chronology of terrorist-themed film produced in the US, focusing not only on blockbusters but also documentary, particularly indie productions, along with television and telemovie productions. While the book's greatest contribution to the discourse is its engagement with documentaries, which Prince sees as the genre which has best handled discussion raised from 9/11 (Carruthers, 2010: 637), it also provides well researched linkages between historical events and the impacts they had on Hollywood mediations of terrorism. According to critics the book represents the "most systematic and comprehensive volume on the subject to date" (Sterritt, 2011: 72), with the chronology Prince constructs seen as a significant contribution to the field of study (Skrzypek, 2011: 46-7). Prince's book is of a similar approach to Shaheen's in that he provides detailed analysis of cinema productions dealing with terrorism, albeit not specifically focusing on Arab characters, but rather terrorism in a broader sense. The advantage of *Firestorm*, just as with Semmerling's book, is that such a study is conducted in a chronological fashion, enabling a demonstration of changes over time and an investigation of what brought them about. Prince engages with four of the films studied in this thesis, and provides valuable insights into the rarely studied representations of Arab counter-terrorists, helping to provide evidence for my analysis of such characters in Chapter Five.

A further significant contribution to the field of study is the monograph by Robert Cettl (2009), *Terrorism in American Cinema: An Analytical Filmography, 1960-2008*. While not focusing specifically on Arab terrorism but rather all forms of onscreen terrorism, Cettl's book, much like Shaheen's, stands as a valuable resource material and starting point, containing details and observations of a number of films included in this thesis. The book represents the first effort to chart all film instances of terrorism over such an extended time period (1) and provides a strong analysis for early films from the 1970s through to the 1990s, opening up a historical perspective on the changes to the subgenre brought about by the 9/11 attacks, identifying a number of trends in these cinematic representations. His work, however, is very much in the same vein as that of Shaheen's; films are analysed in alphabetical rather than chronological order

(Skrzypek, 2011: 47). This methodology positions the book closer to a reference guide than a close study of changing representations, and Cettl's work is treated in this thesis as such.

The Depiction of Terrorists in Blockbuster Hollywood Films, 1980-2001 by Helena Vanhala (2011) follows a similar methodology of close-reading a small number of films at a detailed level, considering the wider environment within which they were constructed. In an approach similar to the one taken in this thesis, Vanhala groups her studied films around common filmic tropes of representation and elements of characterisation or narrative of films which were released around a similar time frame (13-4). Acknowledging that a "cultural industry such as Hollywood and its cultural products are central in the creation of consensus and political mentality in society because they reach vast audiences (3), Vanhala demonstrates how real world terrorist events and foreign policy have shaped Hollywood's onscreen depictions of terrorism. I will look to expand upon her works, which covers a number of films studied in this thesis, by extending this analysis beyond the events of 9/11, an event her book uses as an endpoint.

2.2.3 Third's 'Hyper-dangerous terrorist woman'

There currently exists a gap within the field of understanding and knowledge concerning the media representation of female terrorists. Those working in the area reflect upon the current state of scarce research and little raw data related to the topic (Galvin, 1983: 19-20), with only a "limited body of literature dealing with the phenomenon of the female terrorist" (Pickering & Third, 2003: 9). These gaps are said to be in dire need of filling, with more study needed to enhance the understanding of the field (Kannan, 2011; Sjoberg, 2009: 73); present research is seen to create more questions than answers (O'Connor, 2001; Sternadori, 2007). A possible explanation for this gap in our understanding is that traditionally terrorism is male gendered, with female perpetrators seen not to fall within the boundaries of the field of terror studies (Sjoberg, 2009:69). As such, this thesis will draw on the limited body of research into representations of terrorist women, which to date has rarely considered the mediation of the

female Arab terrorist, and merge such a methodology with Said's 'Orientalism' to allow for a study of the screen images of Middle Eastern female terrorists in Hollywood productions.

One of the most prolific writers in the field of female terrorist mediations is Amanda Third, and while her work is centred on media coverage of Western terrorists such as Patty Hearst and Valerie Solanas, it is possible to draw upon her findings and construct a framework to study onscreen female Arab terrorists within Hollywood. Acknowledging that terrorism is considered a male domain, Third asserts that media images of terrorist women are strongly gendered, with their adherence or aversion to gender norms emphasised in discussions surrounding these women (Pickering & Third, 2003: 11). She puts forward a model for the 'hyper-dangerous terrorist woman', an individual who is seen as more radical, motivated, violent, untrustworthy, emotional and harder to catch than her male counterparts (Pickering & Third, 2003: 8-9). While these characteristics position her as a grave threat to society itself, Third further argues that the construction of these media actors serve to concurrently position them as a threat to gender and family norms. Given that terrorism is the realm of the male, any women who enters into this line of work is seen as deficient or lacking in her femininity, a parallel to the argument made by Yvonne Tasker in her examination of female soldiers (2011). These terrorist women reject "socially sanctioned female behaviour" (Pickering & Third, 2003: 9) and in doing so find themselves at odds with existing societal gender norms (Third, 2002: 85). No longer seen as caring or nurturing mothers, they are deemed what Third terms 'radical feminists' who seek to overthrow existing gender hierarchies and seize control of social institutions (2006: 108-110).

Third's model of the 'hyper-dangerous terrorist women' is supported by an existing body of work related to the imagery employed by newspapers in their reporting on terrorist incidents conducted by female belligerents. In one of the earliest studies into this field, Galvin (1983) demonstrates that media images of female terrorists place a focus on their physical appearance and sexuality over their intelligence or creativity, suggesting that such images position these woman as more dangerous and committed to

their cause than male perpetrators, simultaneously showing they have been seduced to their cause by a family member or love interest (21-9). Most importantly, Galvin's work acknowledges that female terrorists represent a unique area of study, and should be considered as a separate discipline to representations of male terrorists (20). Additional research prior to the 9/11 attacks is scant with the exception of a paper by Steel (1998), which looks at the imagery of female IRA members in literature, noting like Galvin that they are shown to be bolder and braver than men and linked to sexuality and seduction (274-6).

The character of the Arab terrorist woman does not so much represent an entirely new discursive area of study but rather a niche offshoot of the femme fatale character archetype. As defined by Doane (1991), "the femme fatale is a woman who lures men into danger, destruction, even death by means of her overwhelmingly seductive charms" (vii). Emerging in the 19th Century, these characters possess many of the same traits as observed in the Arab terrorist woman, specifically the threat they pose against males through their rejection of female norms; only through their death can the threatened male regain control and power over himself (ibid: 1-2). As Steel (1998) notes, media representations of terrorist woman – in the case of her study, female members of the IRA – draws close association to age-old imagery associated with vampires and their ability to seduce and kill men in a highly sexualised manner (279). Vampiric imagery such as this is a common element of the oft-told femme fatale trope. Further parallels can be drawn to the character of the female spy. White (2007) demonstrates that female spies in popular culture are violent individuals who reject the typical passivity of women (1-2), the hallmarks of the femme fatale. They likewise operate in male-dominated domains, and just like terrorism woman, are seen to be out of place in this realm. Strong linkage such as these position the Arab terrorist woman as an offshoot on the femme fatale character, making it important to keep this figure in mind when investigating screen representations of Arab terrorist women.

Following the attacks on the World Trade Centre there has been an increased output of scholarly work related to media images of female terrorists. In addition to the abovementioned work by Amanda Third, numerous authors in recent years have looked at these media images in an attempt to theorise and understand them. Newspaper and magazine coverage of terrorist attacks carried out by women have been the focus of work by Nacos (2005) and Sternadori (2007), who build upon earlier research and develop separate categories or frames of representation common to these media images. While both these models vary somewhat, a high degree of similarity is noted between them, especially with regards to discussions of sexualisation, physical toughness and naivety on the part of these women. The repetition of such noted elements in these and later academic studies has helped to frame the model of representation through which this thesis studies female terrorist characters found in Hollywood action films. Rana (2011) furthers this trend by again asserting that female terrorists deserve status as a special topic of study to that of 'regular' male terrorism, and that there are commonly repeated tropes of representation which parallel those uncovered by Nacos and Sternadori. Recent work by Brown (2011) and O'Connor (2011) has continued to build on these themes, demonstrating that connotations related to failed or overt sexuality, the seduction by or of men and heightened levels of violence are commonly attached to mediations of terrorist women.

While these studies suggest a strong body of work around media images of female terrorists, the theories above have only been directed toward appearances of these individuals in journalistic reporting and literature, with only Kannan (2011) applying the developed notions of commonly repeated images to film and cinema. While this model of the 'hyper-dangerous terrorist woman' serves as the foundation for my investigation into the onscreen mediation of female Arab terrorists, I will take such representations a step further by considering them within the Orientalist framework of Edward Said. Such a methodology will allow me to study the unique character of the female Arab terrorist within Hollywood film productions. The above theorists note that the repetition of these common media images generates discourses that guide and habitualise our understanding of female terrorism (Steel, 1998: 276; Sternadori,

2007), and with this in mind I will look to examine the ways in which female Arab terrorists are represented within Hollywood action films, with an emphasis on the changes brought about by real events such as the 9/11 attacks.

2.2.4 Barker's 'Anti-terrorist hero' model

When it comes to the counter-terrorist hero, very few studies have been conducted on the nature and depictions of such heroes before 9/11, and for the most part they are limited to the action heroes of successful franchises rather than individual films. As the lead character of the film franchise that is considered to have redefined the terrorist subgenre, John McClane – played by Bruce Willis – from *Die Hard* (1988, dir. John McTiernan) and its four sequels has garnered academic interest (Abele, 2003; Parshall, 1991; Stilwell, 1997). Research has primarily focused on his position as a forefather figure of modern action heroes and as a signifier for the American mythos. The Tom Clancey created hero Jack Ryan, played by Harrison Ford in *Patriot Games* (1992, dir. Phillip Noyce), and Ben Affleck in *The Sum of All Fears* (2002, dir. Phil Alden Robinson) have both been the focus of a number of papers (Delgado, 1996; Dixon, 2004a; Hill, 2009; Rich, 2001) with a particular emphasis on the characters' reliance on intelligence rather than brawn, a theme seen as reflective of the modernisation of the US military during the Gulf War. Denzel Washington's character from *The Siege* (1998, dir. Edward Zwick), FBI Assistant Special Agent in Charge Anthony Hubbard, has also been studied academically with regards to his unique positioning as a non-Caucasian lead within Hollywood cinema (Hall, 2001; Wilkins & Downing, 2002).

Post-9/11 there continues to be a gap in the literature regarding the counter-terrorist hero. While he features in a TV series rather than film, the Jack Bauer character played by Kiefer Sutherland in *24* (2001-2010, created by Joel Surnow & Robert Cochran) has been positioned within academia as a prototypical post-9/11 counter-terrorist (Danzig, 2012; Erickson, 2007; Nikolaidis, 2011; Schack, 2009; Schollmeyer, 2005). He is a man not afraid to use any means, including torture, for the greater good, and

interpreted as a representation of post-9/11 American foreign and domestic policy including the USA PATRIOT Act and Bush Doctrine. While some links are drawn between characters of pre- and post-9/11 heroes, they are based more on racial stereotyping more so than the morals, motives and actions of the hero (Dodds, 2008), and this is a gap this research seeks to address by directly comparing pre- and post-9/11 onscreen mediations of counter-terrorist heroes.

Within this existing body of research there is also lack of investigation into the ways in which counter-terrorists of Arab ethnicity are mediated onscreen. The above-mentioned characters who have been the focus of study are either Caucasian or African American, with very few studies examining heroes hailing from the Middle East. A rare exception is the work done by McClean (2011) which explores audience perceptions of the characters of the Australian crime drama *EastWest101* and the ways in which the Middle Eastern ethnicity of the characters is mediated alongside their identity as law enforcement officials (177-88). While McClean's work does bring forward a number of important points, its reliance on a single media text and emphasis on audience perceptions does not engage with the notions of overarching discourses of representation to which this thesis draws attention. While acknowledging the contribution to the field offered through McClean's research, this thesis further engages with these screen images by examining characters from both pre- and post-9/11 cinema in order to study the changes in characterisation that the 9/11 attacks may have contributed to.

To study the character of the Arab counter-terrorist I draw upon the framework outlined by Martin Barker with regards to the 'Post-9/11 Hero' and, by framing it within Orientalism theory, construct a methodology for the study of these unique characters. In his work, Barker (2011) seeks to study the discourses of what he terms 'post-9/11 cinema', a grouping of 23 films released between 2005 and 2008 dealing with modern conflicts in the Middle East that have been described by academics as representing a particular 'type' or 'sub-genre' (Barker, 2011: 112; Cettl, 2009: 8; Pollard, 2011: 179). In performing a close reading of these films, many of which fall within the boundaries of this thesis, Barker

highlights a number of motifs, themes, narrative conventions and stylistic tropes that are repeated, and while these elements “do not all necessarily appear in one film... they cohere quite well” (28), demonstrating a discursive space generated by these productions. Moving beyond the texts themselves, Barker engages with the wider political and social elements which shaped these films’ production, making note of data such as ticket sales and user comments of review sites such as IMDb to better gauge audience perceptions of these films (16). While he conducts a study on the entire film production process I wish to draw particularly on his work into the characterisation of the post-9/11 hero. After taking a historical perspective and examining the onscreen American soldier from WWI to the modern era, including a close study of the characters of Rambo, John McClane and what he terms ‘Vietnam Grunts’ (46-68), Barker lays out a model for addressing these films and the hero characters who reside within them. Within this framework Barker isolates three repeated media images (31-44):

1. the ‘Iraq war experience’ featuring the humanisation of soldiers who find conflict overwhelming and are unable to return home to normal life;
2. narrative structures which position officers and leaders as being untrustworthy and linked to backroom politics while soldiers question their orders, and
3. the idea of the ‘moral’ hero, a character often from a minority who experiences a values struggle during the conflict and bonds with their fellow soldiers.

By taking this model and utilising it within an Orientalist framework I analyse the onscreen character of the Arab counter-terrorist to determine the normative effects that real world events such as 9/11 have on the media discourse within which they exist.

Barker’s work is seen as being the first study of the Iraq War sub-genre and a valuable contribution to the field (Reid, 2012b). His work has been praised for delving deeper into the discourses generated by these films through consideration of the political and financial situation within which they were conceived; a methodology that is said to have created a more complex understanding of the roles

such films play in our understanding of modern terrorism and those who oppose it (Slocum, 2011: 192). It is for these reasons that I have elected to utilise this methodology as the basis for my study of the Arab counter-terrorist within Hollywood, which alongside the work of Said, will allow for a study of such characters in order to understand the changing nature of their onscreen imagery.

Cinematic representations of Arab terrorism and counter-terrorism within Hollywood is a field of study to which little literature currently belongs, despite its obvious importance as a medium capable of structuring individual's beliefs as to the nature of such world changing events. This thesis will draw upon the above-mentioned media theorists and screen studies approaches in order to develop a unique and innovative methodology that interfaces these different theories. This methodological approach will allow the changing nature of terrorism in the selected films to be studied with the hope this framework can be applied to other forms of media such as news coverage, literature, music, comic books, computer games and television series in the future.

2.3 Methodological Approach

As noted, this study will involve a close reading and examination of Hollywood motion pictures dealing with and depicting terrorism, released between September 1991 and September 2011, a period representing a decade before and after the World Trade Centre attacks. The selection of this period is arbitrary, though it has been noted in earlier studies that the further we move from the events of 9/11 the clearer they will be to study (Ivory et al., 2007). This two-decade timeframe allows for the significant 'head in' time of Hollywood productions to allow the events of 9/11 to be mediated in a timely fashion. The choice to select pre- and post-9/11 films was made in order to allow for a direct examination of the effects such real world events have on screen images, with Wight (2009) noting any study of Hollywood terrorism should consider the past and not become fixated on recent developments; doing this removes the

shock that events such as 9/11 have created (103). The nine films, detailed in Table 1 below, were chosen following searches carried out with the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), selecting only English language films containing a terrorism related plot and excluding documentary films, and from a review of existing literature that positioned them as important media artefacts within the discourse of Hollywood film terrorism. This approach of closely studying representative films has been utilised in previous studies on Hollywood terrorism (i.e. Prince, 2009; Semmerling, 2006; Vanhala, 2011) and avoids the research becoming simply a chronology of productions as noted previously. Close attention was paid to ensure the films deal with terrorism itself rather than the contemporary ‘War on Terror’, a genre more likened to war films than terrorist-action films. Each film was tested against the definition of terrorism as outlined in Chapter One, ensuring that each production depicted violent and illegitimate political communication by non-state entities against a civilian populace. This confirmed the films as belonging to the research boundaries of this thesis.

Despite the fact that terrorist events such as 9/11 have been mediated through other genres including science-fiction and superhero movies, this study is limited to the direct representation of terrorism in films of the action genre. This approach provides the most direct connection between real world events and their cinematic depiction without the need to mediate analogies other genres use in their discussion of such events. Finally, films show that directly mediated terrorist attacks, such as *Munich* (2005, dir. Steven Spielberg), *United 93* (2006, dir. Paul Greengrass) and *World Trade Centre* (2006, dir. Oliver Stone) have been avoided, as the focus of this research is on works of fiction. I would argue that the greater freedom of storytelling and possibility allowed by works of fiction better demonstrates the common tropes of representation to which this study seeks to locate.

The primary data for this research will be developed from a close reading of the nine films (listed in Table 2.1 below), during which they will be viewed in order to examine both their individual content and their wider contribution to the discourse and understanding of onscreen terrorism. As noted

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by Slocum (2011), the close examination of films is an important step in understanding how popular media shapes public perceptions (ibid: 181-2). Further related material such as DVD and Blu-ray special features will be considered for the data they can provide on the production of the film and the intentions of those involved in its creation. An effort will be made to engage with the film's release, and cast and audience responses, primarily to assist in the positioning of the chosen texts as important sites for the mediation of the identity of Arab terrorists and counter-terrorists within recent Hollywood productions.

Titles	Year	Director
<i>True Lies</i>	1994	James Cameron
<i>Executive Decision</i>	1996	Stuart Baird
<i>The Siege</i>	1998	Edward Zwick
<i>Syriana</i>	2005	Stephen Gaghan
<i>The Kingdom</i>	2007	Peter Berg
<i>Rendition</i>	2007	Gavin Hood
<i>Body of Lies</i>	2008	Ridley Scott
<i>Vantage Point</i>	2008	Pete Travis
<i>From Paris With Love</i>	2010	Pierre Morel

Table 2.1: List of films examined in this study; shaded films represent those released prior to the September 11, 2001 attacks.

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Representations of Arab characters in media texts are commonly guided by the discourse of Orientalism, which imbues characters with a series of negative tropes and connotations. The character of the Arab terrorist, featured through the two decades of films examined in this study, adheres to such imagery of the Orient and is consistently represented as lacking in intelligent, prone to violence and obsessed with anti-Western Islamic beliefs. While these three elements are observed across the 20 years of cinema studied here, these characteristics can be seen to shift slightly over time; each of these three elements is emphasised for a period of time before being replaced by a model of representation which emphasises a different element. For example, pre-9/11 films positioned Arab terrorists as bumbling fools who were easily outsmarted, while post-9/11 representations presented a more capable and dangerous foe. By examining five Hollywood action movies released between 1991 and 2011 I will demonstrate how film images work to create and uphold a unified discourse which guides representations of Islamic militancy whilst shifting emphasis over time in response to outside influences such as real world terrorist attacks. I will first examine two films *Executive Decision* (1996, dir. Stuart Baird) and *Rendition* (2007, dir. Gavin Hood), to demonstrate this overarching discourse of Arab film terrorists. I will then examine how three films from the studied period – *True Lies* (1994, dir. James Cameron), *Syriana* (2005, dir. Stephen Gaghan) and *Body of Lies* (2008, dir. Ridley Scott) – demonstrate how different elements of this discourse are emphasised at different points in history. Each of these differing representations, which I have termed as ‘movements’ to avoid confusion with Rapoport’s ‘waves’, operate within the bounds of the wider Arab terrorist discourse yet are vastly different from one another, a difference I will argue that is due to normative forces and outside events acting upon the discourse to create the various discursive disruptions.

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Previous academic studies have demonstrated the differing representations of Arab characters in Western cinema pre- and post-9/11, demonstrating that two distinct identities are played out in Hollywood cinema. In this chapter I will seek to build upon this work, and argue that there in fact exists three movements:

- pre-9/11 (1991–2001);
- a second movement in the immediate aftermath after the attack (2001–2007), and
- a third movement which appears some time after the attacks (2007–2011).

While prior studies have demonstrated that terrorism films have become more violent, realistic, and darker since the 9/11 attacks (c.f. Cettl, 2009; Pollard, 2009; Vanhala, 2007), this chapter seeks to be the first time that a second change point in representations, occurring in 2007 onward, has been put forward. Within this model, based strongly on the Orientalist discourses discussed in Chapter 2, three distinct ‘movements’ of representation are observed, each involving a slightly different mediation of cinematic terrorists. The first movement (1991–2001) positioned Arab terrorists as bumbling fools who are outsmarted by Western adversaries, and disappeared in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. While still positioned as religious fanatics who are prone to violence, these first movement Hollywood images of the Arab terrorist feature a strong emphasis on their intellectual shortcomings. Such representations were replaced by a second movement (2001–2007) that mediated Arab terrorists onscreen as innocent individuals seduced by a personified Islam, emphasising their religious beliefs while still positioning them as violent and unintelligent, albeit with a lesser focus. Such second movement representations have been replaced by a third movement (2007–2011), which while still establishing Arab terrorists onscreen as addicted to the Muslim faith and lacking in intelligence, places greater emphasis on their violent nature. While the same three elements of representation – primitiveness, religion and violence – shape the mediation of Hollywood’s Arab terrorists no matter what the time frame, within the bounds of this study there is an observed shift between emphasis of each movement, brought about as a result of real world events such as the 9/11 attacks.

3.1 Establishment of the Discourse

Before examining the three movements of representation outlined above I will lay the basis for the overarching discourse of Hollywood Arab terrorists that guides these onscreen images between 1991 and 2011. Three common images can be seen to form the foundation of this cinematic discourse:

- notions of the Arab world and its people being backward and primitive compared to the Western realm;
- a strong link between Islam, established onscreen as anti-Western, and the motivations of those who engage in terrorist activity, with such individuals ‘seduced’ by the teaching of the faith, and
- the belief that the Middle East is a site of perpetual violence, with this violence is ingrained into the mentality of those who were raised in the region.

Together, these three onscreen tropes of characterisation steer the cinematic representations of Arab terrorists in Hollywood action films. Through a close reading of *Executive Decision* and *Rendition* I will demonstrate how films reproduce and perpetuate this discourse, and the effect it has on the cinematic representations of these characters.

3.1.1 *Executive Decision* (1996) & *Rendition* (2007)

These three elements of Hollywood Arab terrorist discourse can be observed readily in *Executive Decision*. Led by the most feared terrorist in the world Nagi Hassan (David Suchet), a passenger plane en route to Washington is taken over by a cell of Islamic terrorists (Baron, 1996: 28; Clarke, 1996: 5; Parks, 1996: 1; Pollard, 2011: 110; Rozen, 1996: 19). A Special Forces team led by Lieutenant Colonel Austin Travis (Steven Seagal) and intelligence analyst Doctor David Grant (Kurt Russell) covertly enter the hijacked plane mid-flight in order to disarm the explosives devices and free the

hostages with the assistance of airhostess Jean (Halle Berry). Their dealings with the terrorists demonstrate the dominant Orientalist ideals that guide the onscreen representation of these Arab villains, positioning them as backwards and undeveloped, violent and holding fanatical Islamic beliefs. During the week of its release *Executive Decision* was the highest grossing film in the US and claimed \$56 million at the box office (Boggs & Pollard, 2006: 341; Vanhala, 2011, 242). While the film may seem dated to the modern post-9/11 audience, it was hailed as one of the first to re-imagine the 1970s sub-genre of aircraft hijackings (Cettl, 2009: 117; Pollard, 2011: 162; Shaheen, 2001: 189), and is considered by some to have pre-empted events of 9/11, particularly the call for President Bush to shoot down one of the hijacked planes, a decision posed to the film's unseen commander-in-chief (Prince, 2009: 18, 51). Details such as these position *Executive Decision* as an important film within the discourse of onscreen Arab terrorists, from which a great deal can be discovered regarding Hollywood's mediation of such characters.

A dichotomy of primitiveness and advancement is established onscreen between the terrorists and counter-terrorists respectively with visual cues working to support the Orientalist notion that the Middle East is a region stuck in a primal state of being, unable to modernise, change or develop. Technologically the two opposing groups could not be more different. The counter-terrorist team is equipped with an experimental stealth aircraft, specialised computers, night-vision goggles, fibre optic cameras and an array of advanced military technologies (Vanhala, 2009: 249), while the Arab terrorists have only hand-drawn maps and Soviet-era firearms. Despite being a trained pilot, the terrorist assigned to fly the aircraft following the hijacking is unable to read the instrument panel, allowing the counter-terrorist team to board undetected. It is explained by US Army intelligence that the terrorist's bomb has been built by a French Algerian, suggesting that the Arab group lacks the intelligence to build such a device. The terrorists' cell appears to have little idea how to conduct themselves; they are prone to panic and often lose control of the situation, with close-up shots showing them perspiring heavily and fidgeting. Their ineptitude leads to one terrorist shooting the wall of the aircraft by mistake during the film's climax, causing an explosive decompression which almost kills all on board. The film's establishing of Arab

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terrorists as possessing inferior intelligence is a common trait in Hollywood representations of such characters, especially in the decade prior to 9/11, and is reflected in other films released during this period such as *True Lies* and *The Siege*.

Executive Decision utilises an Oriental discourse to associate Islam with acts of anti-Western and anti-Christian violence. The film's terrorists describe themselves as 'the sword of Allah', 'the true soldiers of Islam', who have been chosen to 'strike death into the heart of the infidel' (Shaheen, 2001: 188; Vanhala, 2011: 245). Allah is said to have blessed them and to have assigned the task of attacking the US, with a great destiny awaiting them when they carry out the mission. Instruments of their faith are prominently shown, with the Qur'an and the observance of Muslim customs linked to the onscreen violence and acts of terrorism. This positioning of terrorist acts alongside articles of the Muslim faith has been criticised within the film industry (Baron, 1996: 28) and can be seen to exemplify the trend in Hollywood films released during this time which "...imply that the Islamic faith is closely tied with terrorists" (Deep, 2002: 58). Furthermore, Hassan's religious motivations are established as irrational and unpredictable, aligning him a greater threat to the Western world than those spurred on by what are seen to be more rational political motivations (Prince, 2009: 51-5). This imagery works to create the notion that Islam is a faith based upon anti-Western and anti-Christian sentiments, one that is seen as a violent, organised hypocrisy, standing in opposition to freedom and liberty (Said, 2003: 268, 278).

The third discursive element of the Hollywood Arab terrorist discourse – a strong linking of violence to those from the Middle East – is likewise observed in *Executive Decision*. Hassan's group is stated onscreen to have engaged in the 15 year reign of terror, demonstrated in an opening scene where an Arab man in a trench coat enters a crowded, ritzy London restaurant, yelling 'Listen to the sound of Al Tra'r!' (Doctor Grant translates this as Arabic for 'revenge') before detonating his suicide vest. The hijacking of the airliner is conducted in an extremely violent manner, with passengers screamed at and thrown out of the way. A blonde stewardess is attacked and killed in the galley, while a US senator is executed while conversing with the President in order to demonstrate the group's resolve. Hassan states

that he is prepared to kill hundreds of thousands of US citizens with the nerve gas hidden on the plane (Vanhala, 211: 245) by using it as a “poor man’s atomic bomb”. Hassan’s dying act during the retaking of the plane by the counter-terrorist team is to kill the pilots, dooming all on board to a fatal crash. This linkage of violence to those hailing from the Arab world is intertwined intimately with the film’s plot, and demonstrates the common features of representations found within the Hollywood Arab terrorist discourse. These violent tendencies, together with an obsession toward anti-Western religion and the possession of a primitive disposition, are the three key elements that steer such a discourse, and can likewise be examined in Gavid Hood’s *Rendition*, a film released some six years after the 9/11 attacks, demonstrating the timeless nature of such onscreen mediations.

In *Rendition*, wrongly accused terror suspect Anwar El-Ibrahimi (Omar Metwally) is abducted and tortured by the CIA in a North African country under the supervision of agent Douglas Freeman (Jake Gyllenhaal). While El-Ibrahimi is interrogated the audience is introduced to Khalid El-Emin (Moa Khouas), a poor teenager from the local slums who is enticed to terrorism at his local mosque, later carrying out an attack against the local chief of police who supports the CIA’s interrogation site (Ansen, 2007b: 60; Kauffmann, 2007: 33-4; McDonald, 2008b: 108-9; Prince, 2009: 297-8). While the film performed poorly at the box-office and was panned by critics (Barker, 2011: 106-8; Pollard, 2007: 28-9) it was the first of the terrorist sub-genre to cinematically explore the effect of the post-9/11 Bush Doctrine (Cettl, 2009: 224) and serves as a site wherein I will explore how, just as in *Executive Decision*, the Oriental association of primitiveness, religion and violence with Middle East terrorists is mediated onscreen.

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As observed in *Executive Decision*, the Arab terrorists of *Rendition* are presented onscreen as primitive compared to those in the West. Washington, DC is framed as a clean and ordered landscape, one lit with calming blue light and subtle autumnal colours. Anwar is shown to have achieved ‘the American dream’, living in a beautifully appointed suburban house with his loving wife and children. Juxtaposed to this are scenes of the Middle East, shown as loud, unkempt and chaotic. Bright lighting builds a stark, barren and harsh atmosphere, one overcrowded with garbage and slums such as that inhabited by Khalid. The unnamed country is established as stuck in an almost medieval time, with barbaric torture and illegal imprisonment in underground dungeons shown as the norm. As Said notes, the Arab world and those who inhabit it are positioned as a stuck in a primal and primitive state, unable to develop or change (ibid: 120, 300-1), imagery that is readily observed in *Rendition*.

The practice of the Muslim faith is likewise tied closely to acts of terrorism, a linkage which is demonstrated to form a foundation of the representation offered by this discourse. The terror plot in which this character is involved is based out of a militant mosque, hidden behind a heavy door down a maze of hidden alleys and side streets. When the audience is brought into this place of worship the first image encountered is that of an armed Arab man standing guard in the foyer. Terrorists brandishing AK-series rifles patrol the perimeter of the large prayer room as a cleric informs those present of their holy duty and that God has given them their bodies to be used as weapons against the Zionist crusaders. ‘Jihad [“Holy War”] is the only path forward,’ he declares. This imagery closely links the practice of the Muslim faith to the practice of terrorism, and perpetuates the notion that Islam stands in opposition to the West and Christianity (Said, 2003: 335), and that it is a violent religion which guides and controls those who inhabit the region.

The violent notions of Orientalism feature throughout the entirety of the film’s portrayal of its Arab antagonists. The character of Khalid is an individual willing to sacrifice himself in order to harm those from the West. He detonates a suicide vest in a crowded town square during peak hour, with the device packed full of shrapnel in order to ensure ‘maximum human damage’ as observed by the local

police chief. Nineteen people are left dead and dozens injured, with women and children among them; such is the level of carnage that the local hospital is overwhelmed. In the aftermath of the attack the CIA announces that ‘They got one of us, and that’s a victory for them’, a sentiment echoed by the terrorist leaders who declare to their followers that ‘The destruction of the infidel and hypocrite is your sacred duty’. Such dialogue links the Arab realm to acts of violence and reflects the same Orientalist notions as outlined by Edward Said (2003: 48-9; 150; 316; 347). Throughout the film the Middle East is established as a hive of terrorist activity (Dodds, 2008: 1633), with its people characterised as “[madmen] thirsty for unbounded vengeance” (Pomerance, 2009: 28). This repeated imagery of the Middle East as a site of primal, religious violence is found throughout other films studied in this research, including *Executive Decision*, and forms the basis of their mediated construction of the Orient.

As can be seen, Hollywood films dealing with themes of Middle Eastern terrorism before and after the 9/11 attacks carry a great deal of similarities in their characterisation and representation of Arab terrorists. Regardless of the film, such individuals are established onscreen as intellectually inept, carrying strong violent tendencies and fanatically controlled by the Islamic faith. The repetition of these discursive elements in Hollywood action films establishes that the notions and beliefs seen in these movies as ‘truth’, acting upon and influencing the surrounding social consciousness through the discourse’s construction and dissemination, even in the lack of actual evidence to support such claims (Mills, 2004: 30). The reproduction of these images and their associated assertions sees such beliefs become considered as a scientific ‘fact’; they can be seen to control the audiences’ understanding of Arab terrorism (Sheridan, 1980: 122; Smart, 1988: 38).

3.2 Disruptions of the Discourse

Through a repetition of representations, characterisations and narrative structures, a negative discourse concerning cinematic Arab terrorists has been formed in Hollywood action films. While this discourse remains stable and influences Hollywood mediations between 1991 and 2011, the 9/11 attacks have caused the focus of such representations to switch between the three main characteristics stated earlier. Periods of history within discursive formations such as these are what Foucault termed 'episteme', and through his work, he demonstrated that discourses often evolve and change in a quite random, sudden and disjointed fashion (Danaher et al., 2000: xi; 6, 15-6; Mills, 2004: 17; Nola, 1998: 118, 144). As will be shown, the discourse of representation governing the characterisation of Arab terrorists within Hollywood action films is segmented into three episteme, and while they all draw upon the same overarching discourse, each of the three movements places focus on a different element of the terrorists' characterisation.

Having established and outlined the Arab terrorist discourse I will examine the observed changes within the representations of Arab terrorists in Hollywood action films over time, and explore how such events as the 9/11 attacks act upon this cinematic discourses to bring about changes. I will demonstrate that in the decade prior to the 9/11 attacks the threat of Arab terrorists in film was often undone through comedic performance, lessening the perceived threat they posed to Western society. These first movement representations disappeared in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, when films moved to position Arab terrorists as a credible threat and placed the blame of Middle Eastern terrorism on a sheikh acting as a personified Islam, seducing innocent Muslims to conduct a war with the West. After 2007 these representations are replaced by imagery that establishes Arab terrorists as knowing participants in their acts of cinematic violence, removing the sympathy afforded to the 'innocent Arabs' of the second movement films. While these three movements of representation adhere to the overarching Hollywood discourse of Arab terrorist villains I will argue that different element of such characterisations

are emphasised during the three time unique periods as a result of real world events such as the 9/11 attacks.

3.2.1 *True Lies* (1994)

The first movement of representation observed within the Arab terrorist discourse, active in the decade before the 9/11 terrorist attacks between 1991 and 2001, is characterised by terrorists who pose a threat to America yet are undone by their foolish and fanatical behaviour. During this pre-9/11 period, terrorists are linked to attacks utilising aircraft hijackings or nuclear ordinance, with a precedent for their attacks to be carried out on United States soil (Shaheen: 2001: 17; 2003a: 179-87). While these pre-9/11 villains still uphold the norms of the Arab terrorist discourse in that they are established onscreen as addicted to both the Muslim faith and violence, an emphasis on their lack of intelligence and discipline is observed in their cinematic mediations. This first movement of representation is found in *True Lies* (1994, dir. James Cameron) where Arab terrorists smuggle nuclear weapons into the United States with the intention of holding the country to ransom (Kauffmann, 1994: 34-5; Klawans, 1994: 250-1; Hopkins, 1995: 41; Mandel, 2001: 2). Known as Crimson Jihad and led by Salim Abu Aziz (Art Malik), the group plans to detonate the weapons throughout major US cities until the country withdraws its troops from the Middle East. Opposing them is Harry Tasker (Arnold Schwarzenegger), a government agent from 'The Omega Sector', a secretive counter-terrorist agency. Despite the fearful depiction of Crimson Jihad as radical terrorists, their onscreen representations actively work to undermine the threat they possess through the utilisation of caricature or comic relief.

True Lies is a significant text within the discourse of Hollywood terrorist films. The film netted \$146 million at the box office, making it the 3rd highest grossing film of 1994 (Shaheen, 2001: 500, 503; Vanhala, 2001: 235) and won numerous industry awards, including those for special effects and a Golden Globe for Jamie Lee Curtis, who played Harry's wife. The film would even spawn a tie-in video game

launched across four popular platforms. While the film has been listed by Jack Shaheen as one of the worst in history for its portrayal of Middle Eastern individuals, *True Lies* was critically praised upon release (2001: 500-3). Prince (2009) argues that *True Lies* is seen to anticipate 9/11, and that this ‘predictive insight’ merits close academic attention (19, 51), while Boggs & Pollard term it the “quintessential 1990s Hollywood counterterrorism fare” (2006: 340). It is for these reasons of commercial success and academic contention that I will examine the onscreen representation of the Arab villains featured in *True Lies*, demonstrating their adherence to the first of my three movements of representation model for Hollywood’s Middle Eastern terrorists.

In line with the prescribed Hollywood Arab terrorist discourse, the villains of *True Lies* are represented onscreen as being highly violent and fuelled by religion. During a briefing, Aziz is described as being “really hardcore, highly fanatical, the man’s a real psycho”, with Harry later asking a Crimson Jihad associate “why are you helping these raving psychotics?” The audience is informed that Aziz is responsible for a series of deadly international bombings, and that he founded Crimson Jihad due to a belief that existing terrorist groups were not hardline enough for his blood lust. Aziz and his group are shown to fire indiscriminately into crowds and at news reporters, and are prepared to kill 2 million Miami residents as part of their plot. Scenes such as these present the characters as prone to violence, suggesting a common link between acts of murder and a Middle Eastern upbringing, with such violence established as a product of their religious beliefs. The group describes their nuclear arsenal as “a mighty sword” to smite their enemies with “a pillar of holy fire [that] will light up the skies”, invoking religious overtones. Members of Crimson Jihad state they are willing to die for their cause with Aziz himself is portrayed as especially fanatical in his devotion.

It is the third element of this discourse however, the notion of the Arab as being simple and primitive, that is most noticeable in *True Lies* and other films of the first movement. The Arab terrorists of *True Lies* conduct themselves in a variety of foolish, primitive and unprofessional ways which actively work to undermine the threat they pose to Western society. When Harry’s cover is blown early in the film

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Crimson Jihad makes a failed and comical attempt to assassinate him. Two terrorists, whom Harry nicknames Beavis and Butt-Head after the low-brow MTV comedy about two unintelligent and illiterate teenagers, follow too closely behind Harry's car and are spotted. They are lured into a nearby bathroom, and despite being unarmed, Harry quickly dispatches them and flushes their heads in the toilet, invoking the imagery of the 'cool' school jock bullying less popular students. Aziz later joins the battle and fares better; he is unable to shoot Harry or his partner despite the latter hiding behind a thin lamppost for cover. The only life Aziz claims is when he shoots a fellow terrorist, with this brief scene establishing early in the film the notion of the inept, dim-witted Arab terrorist, a common theme for such first movement Hollywood films.

Scenes such as these displaying the incompetence of the first movement terrorists are repeated through the film. Members of Crimson Jihad forget to recharge the battery of the camera they are using to shoot a propaganda film, blow themselves up with their own rocket launcher, are killed by a machinegun knocked down a flight of stairs, and outwitted by a teenage girl moments before their plan comes to fruition (Chidley, 1994: 58-9; Corliss & Ressler: 1994: 55-6; Simon, 1994: 64). Guards are fooled by fake accents or documents or dispatched outright with minimal fuss despite Harry taking a moment to explain to his foes the exact plan he is about to execute. When threatened, these first movement terrorists panic and cowardly yell "Yallah, Yallah! (Hurry, hurry!)" as they flee (Shaheen, 2001: 502), juxtaposed against Harry's cool demeanour as he politely asks bystanders to move out of the way (Vanhala, 2011: 237). First movement terrorists are inept with their weapons, unable to shoot Harry and his allies yet quite capable of killing or maiming one another.

A lack of forethought, skill and discipline is evident within these characters, with the film's creators inserting lens flares into a number of shots to give the impression of these terrorists as amateurs. The use of these lens flares create connotations that the environment within which the terrorist groups operate has been poorly planned out. These flares appear predominately during the scene at the Florida Keys hideout, where shots containing Crimson Jihad members are filmed in a shaky manner with frequent

and noticeable lens flaring. By comparison, despite being in the same room, shots of Harry and his wife are steady and better framed so as to avoid the flaring. When used in conjunction with the observed comic traits discussed above, these cinematic techniques gives the Arab villain an amateur appearance and actively work to minimise the threat they pose, constructing them as undisciplined, unintelligent and primitive.

Shaheen (2001) argues that the Arab terrorists of *True Lies* are represented “as blundering dunces” (501), which from the above analysis can be seen to hold true. Prince (2009) agrees with such an assessment, stating that such pre-9/11 terrorists are cartoonish characters and “a mostly daft lot – loonies, crackpots,” (50). Cettl (2008) states that such images are fuelled by Hollywood’s “desire to humiliate those it regards as unworthy” (266). Likewise, Vanhala (2011) believes that in *True Lies* the “antagonist [Aziz] is inferior to the protagonist [Harry] in every possible way,” (237) and that “despite his scary looks and threats, Aziz is a very inefficient terrorist,” (240). Commentary such as this best describes the film’s final scenes. Whilst making a last stand on an abandoned sky rise Aziz and Harry do battle on top of a fighter jet, the fight ending when Aziz becomes entangled in one of the plane’s missiles. Seeing that the remaining terrorists are about to escape, Harry arms the missile and fires at the helicopter, informing Aziz that “You’re fired”. The scene is a moment of pure comedy; the once fearsome Aziz is rendered a laughing stock by the Western hero and simultaneously positioned as not posing a threat to the Western world.

These comedic elements of *True Lies* are present in other first movement representations including *Executive Decision* and *The Siege*. Audiences are still presented with villains who panic and scream the moment a hero enters the frame, which is noted as a popular character trope for the period (Shaheen, 2003a: 176-7), demonstrating the long upheld belief of Oriental discourses that Arab characters are fools who act without thinking (Said, 2007: 40; 310; 320). While on the surface first movement cinematic terrorists are credited as a viable threat, these cinematic terrorists are at the same time disarmed and rendered ineffective through their bumbling and childlike actions. Vanhala (2011) states that jokes

and comedy in films such as *True Lies* undermines the threat posed by the onscreen terrorists (242), a trope I would extend to other films of these first movement representations. It is through these filmic elements that first movement representations work to lessen and dismiss the actual threat such groups pose to the Western world, a theme which I will now demonstrate disappeared in the immediate wake of the 9/11 attacks.

3.2.2 *Syriana* (2005)

Post-9/11 between, 2001 and 2007, a discursive change is observed in the Hollywood mediation of the Arab terrorist discourse, a shift which takes place after the attacks occurred. During this time representations of Arab terrorists in Hollywood action films move into a new episteme, a period during which a discourse undergoes changes in its representation and meaning (Danaher et al., 2000: x, 15-9). While Middle Eastern terrorists continue to be represented broadly as violent, primitive and religious, pre-9/11 representations which emphasised their lack of intelligence or discipline subside, and a framing focused on the religious drivers of Arab terrorism appears. In adherence to this second movement, Arab villains are established as innocent victims seduced to terrorism by Islam, often due to socio-political drivers beyond their control, such as poverty or lost of employment (Schack, 2009: 80-1). There is furthermore a shift in the geographical locality of these films; while attacks pre-9/11 were directed toward the United States itself, terrorist events now take part in the Middle East and Europe, spatially removed from what was then the recently attacked US. As I will argue, the location of these cinematic attacks was moved as a direct response to the 9/11 in an attempt to distance onscreen violence from what were then recent real world terrorist events.

The notion of the innocent Arab terrorist motivated by a personified Islam to conduct attacks clearly is observed in *Syriana* (2005, dir. Stephen Gaghan). The film features a number of parallel and interconnected plots regarding oil politics in the Middle East and a cavalcade of A-list Hollywood stars

including George Clooney, Matt Damon, Jeffrey Wright and Chris Cooper. I will rather focus on the plotline of the character Wasim (Mazhar Muni), an out of work Pakistani oil worker who is taken in by an Egyptian cleric under the guise of friendship and employment only to later be indoctrinated through extreme religious readings peppered with anti-American rhetoric, leading to him carry out a suicide attack against an American oil tanker (Ansen, 2005: 76-7; Blake, 2006: 31; Hamid, 2006: 54; Kellner, 2010: 170; Schack, 2009: 80; Shaheen, 2008: 170; Travers, 2005: 136). As a media text *Syriana* is significant for a number of reasons. As an economic product the film was quite successful; its star George Clooney won both an Academy Award and Golden Globe for his role, with the film returning \$94 million at the box office (Pollard, 2011: 115). Critically the film was praised for its non-stereotypical negotiation of character identity and its willingness to challenge the public's perceptions of the ongoing Middle Eastern conflicts (Pollard, 2011: 72; Pomerance, 2009: 43; Shaheen, 2008: 169-71). This combination of commercial and critical acclaim positions the text as an important site within the discourse of cinematic Arab terrorism, and as will be shown, the film works to reflect the changing nature of the discourses of representation during this period.

In adherence to this second movement of post-9/11 terrorism, Wasim is established as an innocent victim of the lands within which he was raised; his fall to terrorism is beyond his control. Second movement representations such as this built upon the overarching discourse that establishes the Middle East as a powder-keg of violence that is primal, barbaric, violent and unable to advance historically or socially. However, there is an underlying cultural statement that places the blame for these attacks on Islam itself, with the inhabitants of the region characterised as inherently innocent. This narrative framing is used to create the illusion that the unemployed Wasim has few options in life, forcing him to commit acts of terror in order to give his life purpose. Solitary figures wander vast and barren desert landscapes populated by minimal set decoration, creating for the audience a sense of emptiness and despair; this primal land is seen to offer very little to its inhabitants. Scenes occupied by other characters, such as Arab royalty, high profile consultants and intelligence operatives are presented in a bustling world

filled with movement, colour and noise. According to Pomerance (2009), the desert in *Syriana* is a locale without civilisation or form, a site to which troubled spirits are drawn (37). It is this sense of emptiness and destitution which paves the way for Wasim's recruitment into a terrorist organisation that takes advantage of his situation to mould the once innocent boy into a terrorist operative. He is presented to the audience "as a naïve, brainwashed victim," (Shaheen, 2008: 170), an individual driven by forces that are beyond his control into a life of religiously fuelled terrorism. Media images such as these, appearing shortly after the 9/11 attacks, position the perpetrators of the attacks as themselves innocent, only conducting their operations after being seduced by prophets of radical Islam. Despite these second movement terrorists carrying out attacks against innocent victims, the onscreen seduction of these characters allows for the perpetrators to be projected in a more positive, empathetic light than of Arab terrorist characters of the first movement.

Positioning the Muslim faith as a driver of post-9/11 Arab terror discourses is frequently observed during this second movement of representation, and works by establishing the personified Islam in the form of a terrorist sheikh as the motivator for attacks conducted by inherently innocent Muslim youth. Scenes of Muslim religious practice feature predominately in the films released during this era, and are linked to violence against the West under the leadership of terrorist clerics. *Syriana* features scenes of mosques and prayer, intercut with criticism of US foreign policy calling for 'No separation of religion and state'. Western characters visiting the region cannot help but notice the 'strangeness' of these practices, implying a fanatical and unhealthy devotion between these people and their chosen faith, one that stands in opposition to the sensibilities of Western culture and society. Despite being based on similar principles of peace as Christianity, onscreen Islam is consistently linked to violence and terror (Deep, 2002: 58). This establishment of the Middle East as a site of religious devotion, particularly to a religion that is seen to stand in opposition to Western values and sensibilities, is a continuation of the beliefs perpetuated by Orientalist discourses.

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Within this religiously-driven realm of violence the character of the sheikh features often, and is coded as a driving force behind cinematic acts of terrorism (Kellner, 2010: 169). Imagery of the sheikh has been extensively discussed by Shaheen, who notes that they are often portrayed as obsessed with outdated, primal religious practices, converting and indoctrinating youth to their cause (2001: 25; 2003a: 184-6). While onscreen sheikhs have been consistently established as anti-Western villains, specific details in their characterisation have changed over time. As a character, sheikhs have appeared in some 160 films, including the first film to be shot in Hollywood, *The Power of the Sultan* (1908, dir. Francis Boggs). The onscreen repertoire of images used to signify sheikhs however have evolved to reflect changing world trends and fears (Shaheen: 1997: 32-3; 165). According to Shaheen, sheikhs of earlier cinema were characterised as impotent, unattractive, hook-nosed, clumsy and oversexed slave traders, relaxing in throne rooms filled with a harem of maidens and pursuing Western women around their tiled courtyards (2003: 19; 180-2; 2008: 30-2). While once considered wise yet innocent leaders of the faith, recent cinema sees sheikhs reborn as terrorist leaders (Majaj, 2003: 38). These sheikhs are armed with nuclear weapons and surrounded by cash, luxury goods, sports cars, corrupt officials and most importantly oil, using religion to justify their ambition to war with the West (Majaj, 2003: 38; Shaheen, 1987: 148-51; 2003, 180-2; 2003b: 76). Inspired by the oil crisis of the 1970s, such characters were kept popular by a string of conflicts in the Arab peninsula during the 1980s and 1990s, and more recently (Said, 2005: 285-6; Shaheen: 2008: xiv, 14-5). While they can be observed in pre-9/11 films such as *True Lies* and *The Siege*, these characters are not pivotal to the film's plot, and are more simply devices used to give justification to the actions of the terrorists themselves. It is only in the wake of the 9/11 attacks during second movement representations that the Arab sheikh himself steps forward to become a more active onscreen antagonist, becoming the physical embodiment of the terrorist factions being battled by the West.

Over-the-top caricatures of the 1990s observed in the first movement were brought to an abrupt end when the Twin Towers fell, and America realised the threat of Arab terrorism was hardly a laughing

matter. Similar discursive shifts have been previously studied in media representations of female soldiers. Tasker (2011), whose work I will draw upon in Chapter Four, asserts that during the 1940s to 1980s female soldiers only featured in musicals or comedies. Such representations have disappeared in the past two decades as the role played by women in the military is no longer seen as a laughing matter (ibid: 189), a shift that can be seen as paralleled in second movement representations of Arab terrorists. Post-9/11, terrorism was seen as a too sensitive topic to mediate directly, and it was instead dealt with initially through analogical frameworks following the attacks (Pollard, 2011: 10-3; Slocum, 2011: 188). In light of this, audiences showed interest in the terrorist sub-genre, now demanding more ‘realistic’ depictions of terrorism (Markovitz, 2004: 201-3; Schollmeyer, 2005: 50). Rather than witnessing a knee-jerk reaction which vilified people of Middle Eastern descent, Hollywood productions such as *Syriana* and *Rendition* worked actively to create an enemy out of the Islamic faith itself in lieu of the Arab people. This reimagining of the Arab terrorist discourse very much reflects the changes in US-Middle Eastern foreign policy post-9/11, which saw the US government position Islam as “public enemy number one”, establishing the region as a threat to Western society which needed to be brought under control. While *Syriana* still present Arab terrorists as primitive and violent, its emphasis is to perpetuate the second movement discourse which renders the Arab people innocent partisans caught up in a violent and primitive faith, whose religious beliefs are used to seduce them to commit acts of terror against Western countries.

3.2.3 *Body of Lies* (2008)

The second movement of cinematic terrorism, represented as innocent civilians manipulated and converted to Islam by religious clerics to act as agents of terror, was soon surpassed by a third movement of representations. While previous research in the field of Hollywood terrorist representations has focused simply on the differences within pre- and post-9/11 production, the remainder of this chapter will argue in

favour of a second change point in such characterisations, one which took place around 2007. This third movement of Arab terrorist discourse sees the innocence removed from perpetrators, who are now shown to be actively aware of their decisions and choose to commit attacks on their own accord. These characters – as seen in *Body of Lies* (2008), directed by Ridley Scott who is best known for his work on *Alien* (1979) and *Blade Runner* (1982) – are still established as simple minded and influenced by Islam just as with all previous movements of the discourse, though this new epoch of representation places an emphasis on the violent nature of the Arab realm. These films, also including *The Kingdom* (2007, dir. Peter Berg), *Vantage Point* (2008, dir. Pete Travis) and *From Paris with Love* (2010, dir. Pierre Morel), feature Arab terrorists conducting attacks against Americans abroad. In none of these films are the perpetrators' motivations or backgrounds explored, rather they are simply introduced as anti-Western villains, intent on inflicting as pain much on their victims as possible.

In *Body of Lies*, representations of the Middle East as a site of untamed violence perpetrated by willing antagonists are readily observed, lacking the notions of innocence that appear in earlier films. Working on the ground in the Middle East, CIA case officer Roger Ferris (Leonard DiCaprio) and his US-based handler Ed Hoffman (Russell Crowe) track an Islamic terror cell across the Middle East, using a combination of advanced technology and local know-how in order to lure its leader Al-Saleem (Alon Abutbul) into a trap (Barker, 2011: 104-5; Cettl, 2008: 51-3; Corliss, 2008: 93-4; Pollard, 2011: 119-21; Rozen, 2008: 33; Thompson, 2008: 28-9). The film was inevitably compared to the string of terrorist-themed films released after the 9/11 attacks that had failed to make an impact at the box office (Barnes, 2008: 3; Corliss, 2008: 93-4; Douthat, 2008: 57) and while it initially only made \$39 million of its \$70 million production cost in cinemas, the film went to gross \$115 million by 2010 in rental markets (Barker, 2011: 4; Pollard, 2011: 121). Critics praised the film's engagement with the consequences of the war on terror as refreshing and relevant, noting that it was one of the few films dealing with Islamic militancy to be considered a commercial success (Cettl, 2008: 51; Clarke, 2008: 55; McDonald, 2008: 104; Pollard, 2011: 129). The film's director, Ridley Scott, and two lead actors DiCaprio and Crowe were considered at

the time of the film's opening to be household names and draw cards for the production (Barnes, 2008: 3), helping position the film as an important discursive site within Hollywood's cinematic mediation of Arab terrorism. The film was adapted from a novel by *The Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius (Barnes, 2008: 3; Clarke, 2008: 55; Travers, 2008: 82), and it is frequently read as a commentary about the divide that exists within the intelligence community between operatives in the field and analysts back home (Corliss, 2008: 93-4; Cettl, 2008: 51-3; Douthat, 2008: 57; Pollard, 2011: 120; Rozen, 2008; Scott, 2008; Thompson, 2008: 31). I will however examine it in a new light, investigating the discursive contribution that it makes to existing understandings of cinematic Arab terrorism, and how it operates as an example of third movement Arab terrorist representations, demonstrating a second previously unexplored change point in Hollywood mediations of terrorism which first appeared in 2007.

The Arab peninsula in *Body of Lies* is a hive of violence and terrorism; while this is by no means a new addition to the discourse, the removal of the sympathies previously afforded to the inhabitants of these lands is of interest. Onscreen Al-Saleem and his followers are shown to be responsible for string of attacks in England and Europe, including an attack in an Amsterdam flower market that kills 75 bystanders. Advisers at the CIA state that conflict fuels these individuals; a lengthy war strengthens their resolve rather than weakening it, tying back to the Orientalist notion of the Middle East as a site imbued with a violent nature. They are said to be unwilling to negotiate with the West, and calmly detonate suicide vests when they are about to be raided by an SAS team, demonstrating no hesitation to die for their cause. A CIA informant is shot by Ferris when it looks as though he is about to be captured by the enemy, signalling it is better to be killed by your own side than left in the hands of these violent militants who frequently record the torture of their captives. Al-Saleem states in a communiqué to his followers that:

“We will avenge the American war on the Muslim world. We will come at them everywhere. We will strike at random, across Europe, then America, continually. We have bled. Now they will bleed. And bleed. Until they are bled out.”

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The prevalence of violence in the Middle East is such that CIA profilers assert that all unmarried Arab men between 18 and 35 years old are terrorist suspects, even those who are successful and charitable businessmen. Despite the obvious diversity of individuals within the Middle East, films such as *Body of Lies* group and categorise them all as belonging to a coherent social group (Deep, 2002: 58-9), in this case, one that is obsessed with violence and terrorism. While the first and second movement respectively depicted Arab villains as bumbling fools or innocent individuals seduced into acts of terror by the evil Islamic faith, the third movement positions its antagonists as terrorists who actively conduct attacks without the empathetic audience approaches previously invoked. These changes, I argue, represent a change point in Hollywood representations of terrorism, one that is dissimilar to the second movement representations observed immediately after the 9/11 attacks.

These third movement images predominately feature sheikhs as villains just as in second movement films, though they work further to link such characters with real world terrorist leaders such as Osama bin Laden. According to Shaheen, while the word sheikh may be a respectful address to a wise and elderly man (Shaheen: 2001: 19; 2003a: 180), post-9/11 sheikhs are instead linked to terrorism and violence using their 'strange' religion to motivate terrorist attacks. The rise of the sheikh-terrorist-mastermind character should come as no surprise in the post-9/11 world. While he had officially declared war on the United States in 1996 and had been linked to terrorist activity in Egypt in 1997, Nairobi in 1998 and the attack on the *USS Cole* in 2001 (Pettiford & Harding, 2003: 130-40; Townshend, 2002: 111), the 9/11 attacks brought Osama bin Laden well and truly into the Western consciousness. Unlike previous terrorist leaders, bin Laden appeared to be the 'new' face of terrorism, a man motivated not by a desire for power or profit but rather religious ideology. His death following a US Navy SEAL raid in May 2011 was seen throughout the world as a huge blow to terrorist activities in the Middle East. Inspired by this positioning of bin Laden as the single cause and blame for the 9/11 attacks, Hollywood moved quickly to re-imagine the sheikh character of old, updating him for a new audience. As such there has been a trend toward repositioning sheikhs and religious leaders as terrorist masterminds in post-9/11

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cinema (Boggs & Pollard, 2003: 336; 2006: 336). In *Body of Lies* the character of Al-Saleem serves as an obvious stand in for Osama bin Laden. Critics and academics have described him as a ‘superjihadist’ and noted the parallels between his characterisation, with a strong focus on his global reach, and tropes of representation applied to real world terrorist leaders such as bin Laden and Saddam Hussien (Barnes, 2008: 3; Denby, 2008b: 151-3; Pollard, 2011: 119-20; Pomerance, 2009: 28; Scott, 2008: 10). Amid a sea of masked and robed assailants, Al-Saleem is the one face shown, positioning him as a terrorist mastermind and demonstrating the film’s charge that individuals such as these are the single root cause of acts of terrorism in the Middle East.

While the initial post-9/11 representation of second movement cinematic terrorists sought to imbue the audience with the belief that terrorism is the domain of the weak and misguided who are manipulated by religion, this third movement of Arab terrorist representations works actively to inform the audience that characters in fact knowingly chose their profession, fully aware of the consequences of their actions. Through the continual interplay of third movement images, representations of Arab terrorism in Hollywood action films are reshaped and redefined, removing their previously perceived innocence of the Middle Eastern villains. As half a decade had passed since the 9/11 attacks, the need to blame such incidents on religion had lessened, opening the doorway for producers to again assert that terrorists were willing participants in these attacks, rather than innocent ‘patsies’ seduced through religion. This discursive shift from blaming acts of terrorism on a corruptively constructed religion to it representing a conscious decision of those hailing from the Middle East can be explained due to the time that had passed since the 9/11 attacks. Films have a longer lead in time than other media, explaining the time delay between the collapse of the Twin Towers and the representation of Arab villains as conscious participants in terrorism and not innocent individuals seduced by Islam (Faludi, 1991: 140-1). By removing the seduction by Islam and instead repositioning the entire region as a hive of terrorism, these films create for the audience the belief that the area is inherently violent, demonstrating the presence of a third movement of Arab terrorism in Hollywood action films.

3.3 Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, there presently exist discourses within Hollywood films governing the onscreen representation of Arab terrorist characters. As Arab characters presently occupy an important position within American popular culture (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2009: 64), it is of interest to note how their media image and identity is portrayed. Over the past two decades there has existed an overarching discourse establishing these characters as primitive religious fanatics who are obsessed with violence. The above studied Hollywood productions operate in what Foucault terms a ‘surface of emergence’; where societal objects whose consumption and interaction creates fields of knowledge around a subject (Danaher et al., 2000: ix; Horrocks & Jevtic, 1999: 87; Sheridan, 1980: 131). In this case, the subjects are Middle Eastern terrorists and the knowledge produce implies that they are primitive, controlled by Islam and hold a strong disposition toward acts of violence. The continued repetition of such imagery in film and other media texts reinforce the Orientalist views that underpin this discourse of Hollywood Arab terrorism, and influence audiences understandings of the topic.

Within this overarching discourse, three distinct trends have risen and fallen due to the normative effects of outside stimuli such as real world attacks and changing public fears. The 9/11 attack and its aftermath had a strong and immediate impact on the onscreen mediation of Arab terrorism. Once considered a laughing matter befitting a comedy, first movement Middle Eastern groups quickly lost this playful innocence and were repositioned and posed as a genuine threat to the Western world in second movement films. Initially they were shown to be innocent partisans, seduced to a life of terrorism by the Islamic faith, thus focusing the blame of such acts on the disembodied religion. Over time however, this observed innocent is removed, with the perpetrators of such acts established as knowing participants in third movement productions, more than aware of the consequences of the acts they commit. This change in representation following 2007 is significant to note, and also coincides with the appearance of Arab terrorist women in Hollywood action films, which will now be examined.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: DISCOURSES OF ARAB TERRORIST WOMEN

Acts of terrorism committed by women are by no means a recent trend; female terrorists can be traced back through the 19th Century to the French Revolution (Sternadori, 2007), having operated in Europe, South America, Africa, the Asia-Pacific and the Middle East. Up to 50% of all suicide bombers are female, with women accounting for 20-30% of all terrorists worldwide; some as members of all-female groups including the Palestinian ‘Army of Roses’, and the ‘Black Widows’ in Chechnya (O’Connor, 2011; Nacos, 2005: 436; Rana, 2011; Sternadori, 2007). Despite this long history, there is a gap in the current understanding of media representations of terrorist women, particularly those of Arab heritage, as explored in Chapter Two. In light of this I will examine the figure of the Arab terrorist woman as mediated in Hollywood action films, and demonstrate how her characterisation is guided by two overlapping discourses of representation which simultaneously explore her unique positioning as both an Arab terrorist and a woman.

Onscreen representations of Arab terrorist women draw upon similar Orientalist discourses to those observed in male terrorists; however, there are noted differences. In order to examine such representations of Arab terrorist women I will conduct a close study of two films featuring Arab terrorist women, *Vantage Point* (2008, dir. Pete Travis) and *From Paris with Love* (2010, dir. Pierre Morel), and explore the representations of these characters with a focus on their femininity and the consequences this has for their onscreen characterisation. I will demonstrate how the Arab terrorist woman is constructed as a ‘dual threat’ due not only to the connotations of Orientalism that align her with primitive and violent religious terrorism, but also the characterisation of her feminine nature which positions her as an irrational sexual deviant. These two discourses operate alongside and empower one another, establishing the female terrorist as a dual threat to both Western society and masculinity.

Studies have demonstrated that the overwhelming majority of onscreen terrorists are male (Ivory et al., 2007), with Arab terrorist women not becoming prominent onscreen until half a decade after

the September 11, 2001 attacks, as demonstrated in the 2008 and 2010 release dates of *Vantage Point* and *From Paris with Love*. Research literature suggests that since a string of attacks in 2004, news coverage of attacks by Arab terrorist women has increased (Sternadori, 2007), leading to a heightened public and political awareness of terrorist attacks conducted by Arab women. Despite female terrorists having existed for generations, terrorism experts have only recently deemed them to pose a serious threat to security (Brown, 2011: 713). The release dates for this new ‘wave’ of films featuring Arab terrorist women aligns with the previously discussed third movement of terrorist representations which appeared in 2007 (see Chapter Three). This point in history marks a consensus by filmmakers and audiences that sufficient time has passed since the events of 9/11 to allow for a more realistic and direct onscreen representation of terrorist acts.

In the absence of an existing methodology for the study of Arab terrorist women in Hollywood productions I shall put forward a framework for the examination of these characters that draws upon work in the field of female terrorist representations and merges it with the discourse of Orientalism. This model will be applied to *Vantage Point* and *From Paris with Love* in order to demonstrate how these characters are constructed onscreen as a ‘dual threat’ to Western society and masculinity, and to enable a discussion of the consequences such media images have on the audience’s understanding of Arab terrorist women.

4.1 ‘Dual threat’ representations of the Arab Terrorist Woman

According to Jack Shaheen, Arab women have a long history of negative portrayals in Western films, having been “humiliated, demonized, and eroticized in more than 50 feature films,” (2001: 22) over the last century. Rather than creating unique characters, filmmakers draw upon existing notions of how an Arab woman should behave onscreen, with this continual repetition reproducing existing Oriental notions and exposing further audiences to the beliefs and notions upheld by the discourse. Shaheen’s research demonstrates three dominant images of Arab women found in Hollywood films; that of young veiled

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belly dancers with exposed midriffs, an Arabian Nights fantasy of sorts (Shaheen, 1987: 150; 2003: 182-3; 2008: 30); the silent and submissive Arab woman, clad from head to toe in black (ibid: 2001: 23; 2003: 183-4); and that of the female anti-Western terrorist bomber, an image that has survived since the 1920s (ibid: 1987: 150; 2001: 22-3; 2003: 184), which will be the focus of this chapter. This notion of the female Arab terrorist does not operate in isolation. While a male Hollywood Arab terrorist is considered an Arab first and all else second, the Arab terrorist woman is mediated onscreen simultaneously as an Arab *and* a woman first. Her gender is central to her characterisation, with attention constantly drawn to it. In order to study this imagery of the Arab terrorist woman I will consider not only the role Orientalist discourses play in her characterisation, but also the impact of a second set of discourses concerned with media portrayals of terrorist women and their femininity. The identity of the Arab terrorist woman is found at the intersection of these two overlapping discourses, which in tandem provides a methodology for the study of such character's representations in Hollywood action films.

The identity of the female Arab terrorist is guided just as much by the notions of the 'hyper-dangerous terrorist woman' discourse as by Orientalism. As outlined in Chapter Two, Third's theory states that female terrorists are portrayed in media texts as more violent, irrational and dangerous than their male counterparts, due in part to her rejection of traditional female roles and her potent sexuality through which she can control the males around her (Pickering & Third, 2003: 8-9). In the overlap of this discourse and Orientalism is the character of the Arab terrorist woman. Within Hollywood action films she is positioned as violent, irrational and highly sexual, with both discourses jointly empowering these traits to establish her as a dual threat to both Western society and masculinity. While research on real world female terrorists shows that there is little difference compared to their male counterparts with regards to their recruitment, ideology, motivation or role within a terrorist group (Galvin, 1983: 19; Nacos, 2005: 436), there are observable differences in these elements within Hollywood images of Arab terrorist women.

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Attacks carried out by terrorist women, be they in real life or fictional, garner a larger level of audience shock and horror than attacks conducted by male combatants (Nacos, 2005: 436). As a phenomenon terrorism is highly gendered, considered a male domain due to its strong associations with violence and control (Kannan, 2011; Nacos, 2005: 435, 444; Sjoberg, 2009: 69). The gender of the female perpetrator forms an additional layer of meaning within media representation which needs to be taken into consideration, making it important to recognise the role played by gender and femininity when discussing onscreen representations of terrorism. Women who partake in terrorist operations are represented as ‘strange’ (Brown, 2011: 710) or “‘exotic’ actors in the male-dominated sphere of terrorism,” (Kannan, 2011); they reject traditional female societal norms by undertaking acts of terrorism (Pickering & Third, 2003: 9; Third, 2002: 85). Such discourses imbue terrorist women with traits related to violence, irrationality and sexuality. These notions are built upon when an Orientalist discourse is engaged; the violent, irrational and sexualised nature of the terrorist woman is heightened when she is shown to have a Middle Eastern background.

The level of violence utilised by Arab terrorist woman in order to achieve their objective is a common theme that emerges in these Hollywood cinematic images. Terrorist women conform to the ‘the hyper-dangerous terrorist woman’ model (Pickering & Third, 2003: 8), where they are seen as “more fanatical, cruel, and deadly than male terrorists,” (Rana, 2011). Media depictions of terrorist women possess a more violent disposition than their male counterparts due to societal gender norms; as women they are seen as marginal to terrorist circles and viewed as inferior fighters, creating a perceived need to escalate their levels of violence and commitment in order to stand on equal grounding with male counterparts and gain ‘real’ power (Galvin, 1983: 23-9; Nacos, 2005: 444; Rana, 2011; Pickering & Third, 2003: 9). This imagery of the hyper-dangerous female terrorist is further compounded when taken into account alongside discourses of Orientalism. According to Said (2003), and as demonstrated in Chapter Three, individuals from the Arab peninsula are portrayed as violent savages (ibid: 308, 347), with conflict seen to be a key aspect of Middle Eastern society. Through the merger of these two discourses the

violent threat posed by the Arab terrorist woman is heightened, she is characterised as a dual threat unlike male terrorists or non-Arab women.

Media representations depicting the motivations of terrorism articulate a simple dichotomy of rational versus irrational drivers between male and female terrorists. Male terrorists, with their political and ideological motives, are seen to be guided by rational drivers, while the emotional motivations of female terrorists are represented as irrational (Brown, 2011: 707; Kannan, 2011; Sjoberg, 2009: 72; Third, 2006: 111). Such discourses create the notion of the female terrorist as apolitical, naive, bored, and clueless (Nacos, 2005: 445; O'Connor, 2011), motivated by their emotions or family connections rather than political or ideological beliefs. Despite empirical evidence that real world female terrorists do not possess different motivations to male terrorists (Brown, 2011: 710) such differentiations are readily visible in Hollywood action films. This irrationality is seen to make terrorist women more dangerous; they are more devoted to their causes through an emotional linkage and act with added boldness and fearlessness that a 'rational' male terrorist would stop short of using (Pickering & Third, 2003: 9; Steel, 1998: 276). Within the discourses of Orientalism, as explored in Chapter Three, those hailing from the Middle East are similarly said to be irrational individuals who are childlike and without discipline (Said, 2003: 40, 253). The common ground of irrationality within the discourses of both Orientalism and the 'hyper-dangerous terrorist woman' come together within the onscreen mediations of this character.

The characterisation of the Arab terrorist woman's sexuality and femininity sees such characters positioned as seductresses unable to start a family. They are presented as highly attractive deviants who leverage their sexuality to possess and manipulate the males that surround them. Studies into newspaper reports of attacks involving terrorist women reveal the existence of a preoccupation by journalists and editors concerning the sexuality of these women, with reporting often focused on establishing them as having a promiscuous past filled with sexual abandonment and personal issues (Brown, 2011: 712; Rana, 2001; Sternadori, 2007; Third, 2002: 83). When elements of sexuality are examined there is a noted fascination with her physical appearance and attire. This focus on the physical aspects of representation is

not a recent trend; it has existed in the reporting of female terrorists for 30 years (Nacos, 2005: 439) and is observed whether they are attired in a traditional burka or the latest high heels (Sternadori, 2007). Such a critique of outward appearances draws upon the concepts of fashion – “a prime signifier of the feminine,” (Bielby, 2005: 1) – which serves to further differentiate her from male terrorists. These elements are found in Hollywood images of the Arab terrorist woman, and form the basis of an identity that invites the possibility of the sexualised terrorist who seduces men to do her bidding (O’Connor, 2011; Steel, 1998: 279). These beliefs of overt sexuality are seconded by notions of Orientalist discourses, where media texts suggest the Middle East to be a pan-sexual arena within which anything goes (Said: 309). Such commentaries of Arab sexuality suggest strangeness in sexual practices unlike those seen in the more ‘sensible’ West (ibid: 190). These Orientalist representations build upon existing notions of female terrorists as sexual deviants, suggesting that their Arab upbringing has resulted in their sense of sexuality being corrupted or removed from Western standards. Such exotic ideals conjure up images of ‘palace harems’, such as those described by Shaheen (1987: 150; 2003: 182-3; 2008: 30), hinting to the seductive nature of such women over males who encounter them. Through the parallel operations of these two discourses—Orientalism and the ‘hyper-dangerous terrorist woman’—the sexuality of the Arab woman terrorist is seen to double its potency, furthering her position as a dual threat.

Repeated references to infertility of these characters and a rejection of ‘traditional’ family values are used to further frame Arab terrorist women as strange, unnatural and unfeminine. Images commonly make reference to the perpetrator’s motherhood status and family situation, highlighting that they are single, unmarried and without children (Brown, 2011: 709; Nacos, 2005: 440; Sternadori, 2007). This trope of a woman’s inability to raise a family is commonly associated with ‘unbalanced’ onscreen female characters (Faludi, 1991: 143), such as that of Alex Forrest (Glenn Close) in *Fatal Attraction* (1987, dir. Adrian Lyne). Media images often allude to terrorist women as being infertile, a lesbian or a sexual failure (Rana, 2011), and further this by explaining that her decision to pursue terrorism in lieu of starting a family makes her a threat to gender roles through her desire to be seen as a masculine

breadwinner (Bielby, 2005: 2). This invocation of the domestic sphere serves as a way to further highlight the ways in which gender plays into these representations (Pickering & Third, 2003: 8-15) and demonstrates how such women are not fulfilling their perceived societal roles. Orientalist discourses likewise claim that those from the Middle East are sexual failures, unable to consummate relationships (Said, 2003: 314). This overlap between discourses pertaining to representations of those from the Middle East and terrorist women form a unique space within which the identity of the Arab terrorist woman can be found. These traits of violence, irrationally and sexually are observed in both *Vantage Point* and *From Paris with Love*, both of which will allow for an investigation of these characters in order to demonstrate their framing as a dual threat to society and masculinity.

4.2 *Vantage Point* (2008)

The negative characterisation of the Arab terrorist woman is observed in the action-thriller *Vantage Point* (2008, dir. Pete Travis), starring Dennis Quaid, Matthew Fox, Forest Whitaker, and Sigourney Weaver, during which terrorists kidnap the US President during a historical counter-terrorist summit in Morocco using a series of double agents and sleeper cells (Cetl, 2009: 278-9; Denby, 2008: 88-9; Gelder, 2008: 2; Gliatto, 2008: 31; Pollard, 2011: 121-2, 204). Principal among the film's perpetrators is Veronica (Ayelet Zurer), a female terrorist of Arab descent whose construction and characterisation bears strong adherence to the abovementioned model of representation, which sees her established as a violent and irrational individual who uses her sexuality to facilitate terrorist activity.

As a media text for study, *Vantage Point* serves as an enlightening site for an examination of Hollywood mediation of Arab terrorist women. According to academics the film was "an accomplished thriller" (Cetl, 2009: 279) which garnered modest takings at the box office (Pollard, 2011: 122), with such success allowing the film's featured imagery of Arab terrorist women to engage with a wide audience and assert its place within the public consciousness. Close study of the film is yet to appear in

academic discussions of Arab media images within terrorist films; it represents a new and important site for research. Importantly, the film is one of the few released during the 1991 to 2011 time period to feature an Arab terrorist woman. This positioning of the text as one with wide public engagement and little academic research establishes *Vantage Point* as the ideal text to engage with Hollywood representations of female Arab terrorist, and demonstrate how their representation is strongly guided by notions of violence, irrationality and sexuality.

As noted, violence is central to the characterisation of the Arab terrorist woman, a discursive element embodied onscreen by Veronica. She is a member of an Arab terrorist group with nuclear capacities, whose leader Suarez (Saïd Taghmaoui) has previously operated in Darfur and Beirut, locales known for long standing conflict. Dialogue by reporters covering the President's speech states that Arab groups have been responsible for the deaths of 4,500 innocent lives since 9/11 as part of a 'rising tide of terrorism'. The film implies that groups such as Veronica's have contributed to a climate in which the US President needs to send a body double to attend conferences on his behalf, whereas previously he was only used for photo opportunities. Within the group, Veronica is shown to be extremely violent, more so than those around her. Suarez's target is, the US President, who could be argued as a 'legitimate' target, and is killed with a remote controlled sniper rifle to ensure precision. Veronica elects to plant a bomb at the conference on a delayed fuse, killing and maiming a large group of innocent bystanders. While the President simply drops to the floor when shot in an almost 'clean' killing, the scenes following Veronica's bomb blast are a montage of screaming and bloodied woman and children amongst twisted and smouldering rubble. "Smoke mercifully covers the human carnage," dictates a news anchor as he explains the aftermath of the attack. In scenes such as this Veronica demonstrates that as a terrorist woman she possess a greater threat than that of her male counterparts. As noted above, compared to images of terrorist men, terrorist women are represented as more radical and dedicated in their beliefs, and commonly described as sadistic.

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The level of violence stemming from her identity as a female terrorist is heightened through an evocation of an Orientalist discourse that draws upon Veronica's Arab background, and suggests her Middle Eastern heritage has imbued her with violent tendencies. Veronica uses the threat of violence against the brother of Javier (Édgar Ramírez), a fellow conspirator, in order to control him. According to director Pete Travis on the special features reel, Javier is an innocent man who is only partaking in the terrorist plot to save the life of his brother who is being held by the group. Javier is filmed in close-up when discussing his brother's detainment, clearly showing the fear in his facial expression to elicit sympathy from the audience. Veronica, rather, is appears in mid-shot during the same discussion, lessening this heightened level of emotions and making her appear detached and removing audience sympathy from her. "Can you live with that? Knowing that your brother died because of you," she calmly asks. Scenes such as this draw upon the Orientalist notions that those from the religion are prone to violence (Said, 2003: 308). Veronica is established onscreen as a wild predatory animal who indiscriminately kills every man standing in her path. This invocation of two discourses with a common theme of violence establishes her dual identity, and subsequent dual threat, as both a terrorist woman and an Arab.

An examination of the irrational motivations of the Arab terrorist woman is a common theme within the representation of these characters in Hollywood action films. Male terrorists are shown to conduct their attacks with the intention of spurring political change or eliciting financial reward; such drivers are seen as rational, and form a polar opposition to the irrational emotional drivers of female terrorists. In a discussion on the special features segment of the film's Blu-ray release, actress Ayelet Zurer who played Veronica notes that her character is given no back story. Veronica is not shown to be in anyway politically motivated, denying the character an engagement with rational drivers of terrorism. While an emotional prompt to carry out acts of violence is never established, the filmmaker's refusal to imbue her with a political agenda denies her rational motivations for conducting terrorist activities. According to Cettl (2009), Veronica's "ideology is irrelevant" (29), with this disengagement with rational

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motivations for terrorism suggesting irrationality on her behalf. This lack of rationality is furthered when Veronica is simultaneously considered as an Arab woman. Orientalist discourses propose that the Arab mind is simple and primitive (Said, 2003: 310), unable to operate at the same levels of intelligence as the West. Within the film, the attack is coordinated virtually by terrorist leader Suarez via his mobile phone, through which he controls actions of all in the group, with Veronica simply doing what she is told without question or hesitation. In the moments after the President's shooting the conference erupts into chaos as people attempt to flee. Veronica instead moves swiftly through the crowd toward her target, demonstrating a single-minded desire to complete her mission amid the chaos unfolding around her. By also being an Arab, Veronica is granted a lack of intelligence that allows her to be easily controlled, resulting in a lack of forethought and rationality.

Veronica's sexuality is also handled onscreen through a clear adherence to the discourse of the Arab terrorist woman, whereby she is represented as a highly sexual character that uses her body to enable her terrorist plots. She enters into a false relationship with her police officer lover Enrique (Eduardo Noriega), manipulating him to unknowingly smuggle a bomb into the Presidential conference. The filmmaker uses camera angles and soundtrack to reveal Veronica's deceptive nature with regards to her relationship with Enrique. When she is first approached by him and first seen by the audience, low camera angles establish her supposed submissiveness to Enrique, upholding the notion of her as a faithful and loving partner. As she takes the bag from him containing the bomb the camera angle between the two begins to shift, first becoming level before moving to position her in a high angle shot. This shift reflects the power shift that occurs; now in possession of her explosives she has no further use for Enrique and no longer needs to play the role of loyal and submissive girlfriend. Veronica has seduced and manipulated Enrique to do her bidding, engaging the previously noted discourse of the sexy female terrorist who seduces men in order to fulfil her violent objectives (O'Connor, 2011; Steel, 1998: 279). This revelation of her true nature is accompanied by a shift in the film's score; when Veronica is still in her guise as girlfriend we hear a "...romantic heartfelt flamenco guitar melody... [and] this passionate 'du Duo' tango

between Enrique and Veronica,” according to musical composer Atli Örvarsson in a behind the scenes featurette on the film’s Blu-ray release. After taking her bag from Enrique these romantic overtones disappear and are replaced with dark, dramatic music, pre-empting the explosion. Enrique is seen to be a patsy, duped by the woman he loves; he would never have questioned her and it is his undoing. Actor Eduardo Noriega states in a Blu-ray featurette that Enrique believes he is in love and does not realise he is being used. Orientalist discourses add to this power of seduction and her establishment as a dual threat. According to Said, the Middle East is presented in media texts as a pansexual arena of perversion, void of Western sensibilities (2003: 188-90, 309). Veronica fits this mould; she is an exotic, passionate and mysterious individual with whom Enrique is hopelessly in love. This foreign charm empowers her as an Arab seductress, allowing her further sexual power over Enrique than could be offered by a non-Arab woman. Enrique has fallen victim to Veronica’s seduction, enabled through her positioning as a sexy terrorist woman and a mysterious sexualised Arab woman, demonstrating the unique danger posed by the dual threat of the Arab terrorist women.

In addition to being a highly sexualised woman, Veronica is also depicted as a failed mother figure. As Third (2002) asserts, “[within] Western culture the nuclear family is understood as fundamental to the stability of both society and the state,” (2002: 85), a stability undermined by the presence of the female terrorists who serves to highlight anxiety about the breakdown of the family and subsequently society itself (2002: 96). Veronica has no family, and rather than act as a nurturing and loving mother is a violent and manipulative terrorist. Male members of her terrorist group are shown to have families; Javier has a brother whom Veronica uses to control him while Filipe (Guillermo Ivan) takes a final look at a photo of his wife and daughter before detonating a suicide vest. Both these family connections elicit sympathy from the audience, while the childless Veronica receives none. Orientalist discourses work to reinforce this perception. Those hailing from the Middle East are said to engage a different or strange form of sexuality far removed from that of the West, commonly resulting in a failure to produce a normal and healthy family (Said, 2003: 314). The same exotic ethnic sexuality that allows Veronica to so

successfully seduce Enrique also prohibits her from producing a family. She is positioned not as a real woman but as a failed mother, a notion that draws upon established Western cultural and gender norms in order to represent her as a greater threat than a real woman who would not seek to conduct such acts of terrorism (Nacos, 2005: 445; Rana, 2011; Sternadori, 2007). Female terrorists go against the “current idealized notions of women and femininity,” (Sjoberg, 2009: 69) whereby they are seen as standing in opposition to traditional social norms and views; nurturing women are seen as resolving and preventing violence, rather than the instigators of such acts (Brown, 2011: 705-12; Kannan, 2011; Nacos, 2005: 446; Rana, 2011; Sjoberg, 2009: 72; Sternadori, 2007).

Vantage Point firmly adheres to the previously presented model of representations of female Arab terrorists. Veronica is a violent and irrational individual, committing acts of terrorism against representatives of the West in an animalistic and emotional fashion. Her inability to raise a family is positioned as a sign of her failure as a woman and motherly figure; with her instead focusing on her profession of terrorism and going against established gender norms and expectations. She is presented as a sexual deviant, a woman who willingly uses her body and sexuality to manipulate and control the men around her in order to achieve her ends. Both her femininity and Middle Eastern background are drawn upon in order to create these connotations, the result of which presents her as a dual threat to both masculinity and society as a whole.

4.3 *From Paris with Love* (2010)

Imagery of the Arab terrorist woman is further observed in *From Paris with Love* (2010, dir. Pierre Morel), where two CIA operatives pursue Middle Eastern terrorists across Paris intent on disrupting drug rings that are used to launder terrorist funds (Harris, 2010: 55-6; Jones, 2010: 35). James Reese (Jonathan Rhys Meyers), a junior agent assigned to the US embassy, undertakes his first field assignment when teamed up with covert operations veteran Charlie Wax (John Travolta). The pair track

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the terrorist cell to Reese's own home, where his Middle Eastern fiancée Caroline (Kasia Smutniak) is implicated in a terrorist plot to assassinate visiting US dignitaries. As shall be demonstrated, throughout the film Caroline is characterised in a fashion similar to that of Veronica in *Vantage Point*. Caroline's dual identity as a female terrorist and an Arab sees her represented as highly violent, motivated by irrational drivers and possessing a sexuality that allows her to control the men around her. Such representations adhere to the prescribed discourse of Arab terrorist woman, and positions Caroline as a dual threat to both Western society and masculinity.

From Paris with Love provides another unique platform through which to study Hollywood imagery of Arab terrorist women. Just as with *Vantage Point*, the film is one of the few productions released during the 2001-2011 period of study which presents the audience with female Arab villain. Within a genre renowned for low profits (Barker, 2011: 1-4), *From Paris with Love* was able to return its budget and gross a further \$11 million in DVD and Blu-ray sales, making it the third biggest selling DVD during the week of its release. The film's two stars are well known actors; Travolta's career has spanned three decades and included acclaimed films such as *Saturday Night Fever* (1977, dir. John Badham) and *Grease* (1978, dir. Randal Kleiser), while Rhys-Meyers won a Golden Globe for the mini-series *Elvis* (2005, dir. James Steven Sadwith) and starred in the critically acclaimed TV series *The Tudors* (2007-2010, creator: Michael Hirst). Favourable profit returns and the high profile of its stars positions the film well within the public consciousness, suggesting it forms a key text within the small discursive field of productions dealing with Arab terrorist women. Furthermore, the recent release date has resulted in little academic research being conducted into the film, a research gap this chapter looks to address.

Caroline's onscreen portrayal closely follows that observed in the characterisation of Veronica in *Vantage Point* with regard to her violent nature. Until the film's climax, Caroline is shown onscreen as a loving and caring partner to Reese; upon being revealed as a terrorist by Wax, Caroline undergoes an immediate transformation. No longer playing the part of loving fiancé, Caroline retrieves a hidden weapon and attacks Reese, wounding him before escaping to reunite with her terrorist allies and carry out

her attack. Just as in *Vantage Point*, Caroline works under the leadership of a male terrorist. Both plan to conduct suicide attacks against the visiting US dignitaries; Caroline adorns a suicide vest and enters a crowded museum the dignitaries are about to speak at while her male counterpart drives an explosive laden car toward the dignitaries' convoy. While Reese and Wax foil both attempts, the disparity in their scale is noticeable. The male terrorist's target is specific and legitimate, a convoy carrying Western dignitaries on an empty freeway. Caroline targets the same dignitaries, though electing to detonate her bomb inside a building crowded with innocent bystanders; her targets are illegitimate and unspecific. This disparity in the scale of attacks by male and female Arab terrorists parallels that observed in *Vantage Point*, and engages the discursive notions that female terrorists possess a greater threat than their male counterparts (Galvin, 1983: 23-9, Rana, 2011). Caroline's acts of violence are portrayed as almost primal in nature. She demonstrates little regard for her own life, and moves toward her target with a single purpose. Her Islamic beliefs are said to be her motivation; Caroline explains to Reese that her faith has given her a 'purpose' in life. She is 'addicted' to and motivated by the Muslim faith, what is seen as an irrational motivation for terrorism in line with the discourses of the Arab terrorism woman. When questioned about her faith, Caroline explains that:

"Six years ago, I met a man who opened my eyes to his faith. And finally, for the first time in my life, everything made sense. I knew I had a purpose... to serve my cause."

Her motives are emotional and irrational; she has no political aims and is instead engaging in violent acts as a means to come to terms with and explore her own self-identity. By drawing upon irrational motivations for terrorism, Caroline adheres to the model of the female terrorist as one without political ambition or wider thinking, she is simply a follower who has been brainwashed and seduced by her faith (Brown, 2011: 711; Galvin, 1983: 24; O'Connor, 2011; Rana, 2011; Sternadori, 2007).

Caroline's Muslim faith has driven her to commit acts of terrorism, invoking Orientalist images of Islam as upholding evil and violent connotations (Said, 2003: 268). Her willingness to sacrifice herself as part of a suicide bombing reiterates the notion that followers of Islam are fanatical believers. This addiction to

what is depicted as an arcane and mythic religion has long been established and propagated in texts that draw upon Oriental discourses (ibid: 125, 253, 279, 318). As her motivations for conducting acts of terrorism cannot be rationally explained and are not directly political in nature, Caroline's emotional attachment to her cause is represented as posing a greater threat than her male counterparts.

In line with the discourses of the Arab terrorist woman, Caroline is portrayed in *From Paris with Love* as a woman in possession of a potent sexuality which allows her to control the men around her, her Arab heritage and femininity both working in tandem to create this dual threat. When she and Reese are together she takes the lead and demonstrates her dominance and power over him through the use of her sexuality. She organises a surprise romantic dinner on the rooftop of their apartment and presents him with a ring which once belonged to her father, symbolically taking his hand in marriage and disturbing the traditional notion of the male controlling the romantic pace of the relationship. To the tune of seductive jazz music she undresses in front of him and slides into a revealing dress, stating that her attire will ensure that he will think of her "every second of the day". Upon her discovery as a sleeper agent and flight from Reese's apartment, CIA technicians conduct a sweep of the dwelling and locate video and audio recording devices in every room of the house, including the bedroom. "I hope you've got some moves on you buddy boy when they get on YouTube" Wax informs Reese, opening up discourses of filmed voyeurism and the recording of sexual acts, coding Caroline as a highly sexualised, again affirming the notion of Oriental women possessing a 'strange' sexuality that has the ability to corrupt the Western male-female power balance. Her positioning as a 'sexy terrorist' likewise plays into discourse of female terrorism, who when described in news reports these women are never represented as being unattractive (Nacos, 2005: 439), reinforcing the idea that "[i]n the media female terrorists are almost always described as being attractive and it is very rare to find a description of a female terrorists who is not pretty," (Rana, 2011). By engaging both discourses of Orientalism and the 'hyper-dangerous terrorist woman', *From Paris with Love* reinforces the notion that Arab terrorist women are in possession of a

heightened sexuality which they are able to use to manipulate men in order to facilitate their terrorist activities.

A second aspect of Caroline's sexuality, specifically her refusal to produce a family, is also observed in *From Paris with Love* and adheres to the discourses of the Arab terrorist woman. Just as in the characterisation of Veronica in *Vantage Point*, Caroline's refusal to have children and enact gendered norms places her outside the traditional realms of idealised femininity, characterising her as a threat not only as a terrorist but as a possible disruption to the nuclear family. She is without children, signalling her failure as a mother, and usurps Reese's traditional male within the household. She cannot cook and relies on takeaway, asks for Reese's hand in marriage and belittles him over the phone, going so far as to mock him about his job with the CIA. Elements of characterisation such as this position her as not fulfilling the roles of the nurturing household normally associated with women. Her failure to raise a family has left her lost, confused and unfulfilled, leading to her taking to Islam and terrorist activities in order to find herself. She is portrayed as ambitious and assertive, traits that are the antithesis of the ideal nurturing mother who stays at home to raise her family (Faludi, 1991: 149-50; 159). Gendered norms typically position females as being peaceful, caring and nurturing, when constructed as terrorists, these women break away from these cultural norms, and reject their femininity and challenge male hegemony and social order (Pickering & Third, 2003: 9; Rana, 2011; Third, 2006: 110). Her rejection of the role as caregiver and nurturer in favour of her career as a female terrorist sees her as an 'unnatural' member of the household, whose presence disrupts the natural order (Faludi, 1991: 143). According to Amanda Third (2002), such images have become "an important site for the reproduction of dominant social formation," (ibid: 97) whereby cultural narratives of gender hierarchy can be observed (ibid: 85-8). Female terrorists are seen to lead an assault on the traditional domestic situation, considered to be the foundation of modern society (Third, 2002: 93-6). Her representation through an Orientalist discourse further adds to her failure to fill the role of nurturing homemaker and to disrupt the assumed status quo of their household situation; as argued above, individuals from the Middle East as seen to be sexual failures who are unable to produce offspring

(Said, 2003: 314). Through the mediation of her sexuality, both its ability to exert control over men and its failings to produce a family, Caroline firmly fits into the established discourses of the Arab terrorist woman.

From Paris with Love works to uphold discourses related to the representation of female Arab terrorist through a reproduction of imagery which draws upon the overlapping discourses of Orientalism and the ‘hyper-dangerous terrorist woman’. As observed with Veronica in *Vantage Point*, Caroline is a violent woman whose actions are motivated by passion, emotion and a desire to find her place in the world, she is an ‘irrational’ antagonist due to her lack of engagement with politics. Her actions actively usurp gender roles and norms; she controls Reese through the deployment of her overt sexuality and rejects the traditional position of the woman without the house. These discursive elements position Caroline as a dual-threat to society and masculinity due to her identity as both an Arab woman and a female terrorist, suggesting that she, and women like her, pose a greater threat than a male Arab terrorist or a non-Arab female terrorist.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that there exists, within Hollywood action films released during the 1991–2011 period, a consistent and constructed image for the representation of Arab terrorist woman. These characters are only observed in post-9/11 cinema, and only appear in productions more than half a decade after the attacks occurred, their rise within Hollywood action films lining up with the rise of third movement terrorist imagery as examine in Chapter Three. These women are established onscreen as violent and irrational individuals, who utilise their sexuality to control men around them – particularly law enforcement officials – and who reject idealised Western notions of femininity. Over time this imagery of the female terrorist “become[s] habitualized and institutionalized” (Sternadori, 2007), to the point that their characterisation is considered scientific fact rather than public opinion. Notions of Arab

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terrorist woman move into what Foucault calls ‘truths’ and ‘knowledge’ which are in fact societal constructs (Kannan, 2011). Through this continual reproduction of images, public knowledge of the Arab terrorist woman can be shaped into a single tokenistic representation. The decision to evoke discourses is often politically motivated (Steele, 1998: 273-6), and in this case it can show the perceived increased threat presented by Arab terrorist women since 2004 has inspired their appearance in post-9/11 cinema. These representations appear in Hollywood action films at the same time as the third wave of Arab terrorism in Hollywood discussed in Chapter Three, demonstrating that 2007 onward marked a shift in cinematic discourses of Arab terrorism.

Parallels between the positioning of female Arab terrorists as characters who in two differing yet complementary frames of reference – that of Orientalism, and that of the ‘hyper-dangerous female terrorist’ – can also be observed in the similar dual-identity characters of the Arab counter-terrorist, which will be the focus of Chapter Five.

5 CHAPTER FIVE: REPRESENTATIONS OF ARAB COUNTER-TERRORISTS

While there exists a significant body of research looking into the Arab terrorist—a personification of the East—and the counter-terrorist hero—a personification of the West—the figure of the Middle Eastern counter-terrorist remains a character about which little scholarly work exists. A majority of research into the character of the counter-terrorist is directed at male Western characters such as Jack Ryan (Harrison Ford, *Patriot Games*, *Clear and Present Danger*), John McClane (Bruce Willis, *Die Hard*) or Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland, *24*), with some research into the female counter-terrorist character of Janet Mayes (Jennifer Garner, *The Kingdom*). It has been noted that post-9/11 terrorist films focus on the American rather than the foreign experience (Barker, 2011: 27), offering an explanation for the lack of research into non-Western counter-terrorist characters.

The objective of this chapter will be to fill this research gap by drawing upon existing models for representing both counter-terrorists and Arab media figures, and devising a framework for considering the hybrid ‘boundary crossing’ characters which fall into both these categories, by drawing upon Barker’s (2011) framework for the representation of post-9/11 heroes, outlined in Chapter Two, and merge it with notions of Orientalist discourse. This new framework will allow me to examine the ways in which Arab counter-terrorists are mediated onscreen pre- and post-9/11, to both comment on their discursive representation and investigate whether real world events such as the 9/11 attacks have had an impact on this imagery, facilitated through a close reading of two films: *The Siege* (1998, dir. Edward Zwick) and *The Kingdom* (2007, dir. Peter Berg). Both films have a similar ensemble of characters; African American male assisted by a white female and an Arab male (Cetl, 2009: 168; Kellner, 2010: 21) and both use the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia as plot inspiration. By examining these two films – one released before 9/11 and one released after – it will be possible to study the possible effects the 9/11

attacks have had on the cinematic mediation of Arab counter-terrorists and to understand how Hollywood produces images of these unique characters.

5.1 The ‘Boundary Crossing’ Discourse of Arab Heroes

In *A ‘Toxic Genre’: The Iraq War Films* (2011), Martin Barker outlines and discusses nine narrative and characterisation elements common to 23 films he terms as constituting the ‘Iraq War sub-genre’. I will borrow three film elements Barker identifies as forming the foundation for the Iraq war hero and construct a methodology for examining the figure of the Arab counter terrorist which takes these elements into consideration alongside an Orientalist reading. Two of Barker’s elements for the representation of his post-9/11 ‘moral hero’ are an observed bonding on the mission between soldiers and the ethnic identity of the hero often belonging to a minority (2011: 43-4). This onscreen bonding occurs between soldiers as a consequence of their situation. Faced with a violent arena of combat, incompetence from their leaders and the threat of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), soldiers grow to respect and care for one another, often acting as a support after their families at home fail to comprehend what they have been through (164-5). In both *The Siege* and *The Kingdom* this bonding occurs, which sees the Arab counter-terrorist forming close friendships with the Western characters to which they were initially confrontational. Within Barker’s model, Iraq War film soldiers are often coded as Latino and are as such “marked and charged in a special way,” (145). Similarly, the figure of the Arab counter-terrorist is strongly coded onscreen through drawing attention to their racial background in juxtaposition to that of the Western characters they work alongside. These two elements of Barker’s post-9/11 Iraq War hero can thus be seen as present in cinematic mediations of the Arab counter-terrorist, both prior to and after the 9/11 attacks.

It is the third element of Barker’s model, the notion of a values struggle being undertaken by the hero as they question their own belief in the battlefield, which will be the primary focus of this chapter. In

the 23 films examined by Barker he notes the common presence of characterisation which depicts the hero as “struggling to hold on to [their] values in the face of all that happens around them” (2011: 43). It is this notion – that of the hero having to mediate their identity in the war against terrorism – which is so readily observed in *The Siege* and *The Kingdom*. These films work to establish Arab counter-terrorist’s dual identities as hero-law enforcer and as an Arab in openly opposition to one another, requiring these characters to explore and confront their identity in order to fight terrorism. Commonly these individuals are given a choice and must decide if their loyalties belong to their chosen profession or their homeland, the two of which depicted as mutually exclusive. In her work on media images of female soldiers, Yvonne Tasker uses the term ‘boundary crossing’ to describe how female soldiers are represented in a similar fashion; as combat is represented as the domain of men, women employed in the military either maintain their feminine identity and are branded as ineffective soldiers, or reject this identity and ‘free’ themselves to become equals with their male counterparts (2011: 5). I argue that the character of the Arab counter-terrorist is mediated in a way that is not dissimilar, and hence borrow the term ‘boundary crossing figures’. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, the Hollywood Arab terrorist discourse established the villains of this sub-genre as being polarised anti-Western. The Arab counter-terrorist is born into this world and imbued with the same onscreen characteristics of a primitive, violent, religiously fanatical nature. However, their work alongside Western policing forces requires that they must either reject this Arab identity or work to actively mediate it. It is here, in this space of conflicting Eastern and Western identities, that the boundary crossing nature of the Arab counter-terrorist will is found.

5.2 *The Siege* (1998)

Despite much controversy and criticism surrounding its production and release, *The Siege* has earned praise from critics who saw it as a genre re-defining film. Zwick’s movie is said to be ‘intelligent’ and ‘well informed’, and unlike previous onscreen mediations of terrorism, was described as ‘darker’,

‘honest’ and ‘contemporary’ in its handling of the subject matter (Boggs & Pollard, 2006: 343; Kellner, 2010: 21; Prince, 2011: 59; Rozen, 1998: 31). The film’s inclusion of an Arab counter-terrorist hero and its exploration of the emotional after-effects of terrorism – two topics often omitted from Hollywood productions – were highly praised (Hall, 2001: 407; Vanhala, 2008). The onscreen events of *The Siege* have been described as ‘prophetic’ of the 9/11 attacks, albeit with only one quarter of the death toll (Barker, 2011: 6; Hall, 2001: 401; Kellner, 2010: 18; Pollard, 2011: 111; Vanhala, 2008), and while *The Siege* did poorly at the box office it saw renewed rental interest following 9/11 (Hall, 2001: 401; Vanhala, 2008; Vanhala, 2011: 260-1). This intellectual consideration of terrorism and recent resurgence in popularity positions *The Siege* as an important site in the mediation of onscreen terrorism, particularly with regards to the identity of the Arab counter-terrorist.

The film opens with footage of the 1996 Khobar Tower bombings in Saudi Arabia and 1983 bombing of a US Marine barracks in Beirut with a newscaster voiceover stating that these attacks are the work of the fictional Sheik Akhmed bin Talal (Ahmed Ben Larby), the leader of the terrorist organisation who is positioned as an Osama bin Laden-esque figure (Cettl, 2009: 235; Jones, 1998: 17; Kellner, 2010: 18; Pryce, 1998: 23; Hall, 2001: 404; Johnson, 1998: 91; Kellner, 2010: 18; Vanhala, 2008). Following the sheik’s capture by the US military, an Islamic terrorist group conducts a series of retaliatory attacks in New York City, spreading fear throughout the populace despite the efforts of law enforcement agencies. Suicide bombings are conducted across the city, targeting buses, a primary school, a Broadway theatre and the FBI headquarters, affecting all levels of social strata including children, the elderly and the social elite (Klinghoffer, 1998: 38; Pollard, 2011: 111; Rozen, 1998: 31; Schickel, 1998: 116; Simon, 1998: 68; Vanhala, 2008; Williams & Downing, 2002: 422). Leading the FBI/NYPD anti-terrorism task force team is Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge Anthony Hubbard (Denzel Washington) who works closely with CIA officer Sharon Bridger (Annette Bening) and FBI Special Agent Frank Haddad (Tony Shalhoub), an Arab-American hailing from Lebanon who will be the focus of this chapter. Together with the assistance

of the CIA and later the US Army, the FBI/NYPD team tracks the local terrorist cells across New York City in an attempt to halt the escalating violence they are perpetuating and bring their terror to an end.

Through his work on the post-9/11 hero – which I argue can be applied to counter-terrorists prior to this date – Barker notes a recurring filmic element; the values struggle undertaken by the hero during their resolution of the terrorist threat (2011, 43-4), which is observed in the characterisation of Haddad within *The Siege*. Haddad has been described both by academics and the actor who played him as a complex character, one who has to actively balance his allegiance between his Muslim heritage and his adopted homeland of America (Boyd, 1994: 4; Cettl, 2009: 99). It is within this values struggle between his two loyalties — established as being oppositional to one another — where Haddad becomes a ‘boundary crossing’ figure. Throughout the film he is established as a patriotic American, a good family man who is devoted to his friends, family and his job (Kellner, 2010: 21-2; Prince, 2009: 63; Simon, 1998: 68; Sterrit, 1998; Williams & Downing, 2002: 424). He is shown to have taken up a position within mainstream Western society; he plays football and despite the teachings of his religion, drinks alcohol. According to Vanhala (2011) “he has adapted to the West” (262). Yet at the same time, Haddad is not without flaw, and despite being a counter-terrorist hero, is often imbued with the same Orientalist characteristics of a primitive and violent nature controlled by religion that is applied to the terrorists he pursues.

A number of scenes within *The Siege* depict Haddad as a less-than-model agent. He is shown as volatile and prone to losing his cool under pressure; he strikes a witness who calls him a woman, citing injustices against his home-land. Haddad engages tropes of the ‘crooked cop’, tampering with evidence in order to secure a conviction of a suspect who should have been allowed to go free. He curses and loses his nerve during a car chase while Hubbard, the embodiment of the West, retains his composure (Hall, 2001; 407-8; Williams & Downing, 2002: 425), upholding the belief of Orientalism that the East is a site of primitive emotional aggression, while the West handles situations with reason and logic. “Back home the secret service guys would be up his ass with a poker. What do we do? We let him go”, he exclaims,

demonstrating that the use of violence is normalised in Eastern cultures. While his violent and primitive nature does not reach the extent embodied in the villains he pursues, Haddad's characterisation depicts such personality traits as being inherent of his Middle Eastern upbringing, traits which are incompatible with his employment as a Western law enforcement official.

The Siege furthermore places an emphasis on the struggle Haddad undergoes to mediate his boundary crossing identity both as an FBI agent and a Muslim, which serves only to further reinforce rather than dispel notions of Orientalism discourse. While he is a practicing Muslim, his devotion is rarely seen onscreen and represented as more measured and rational than that practiced by the terrorist cells. According to Vanhala (2011) Frank barely practices his religion and as he is not what Bridger terms a 'true believer' of Islam, he is to be trusted by his colleagues (262-5). The only scene of his religious alignment is a very brief cut-away to him attending a mosque with his smiling wife and son; he is not constructed as a fanatical devotee and is seen as a trustworthy character (Cettl, 2009: 236; Vanhala, 2008). Academics have noted that Haddad is the only Muslim character who is characterised as being entirely good, and that his Anglicised name suggests he is 'Christian friendly' (Hall, 2001: 408; Williams & Downing, 2002: 425). This characterisation is established in dichotomy with that of the film's antagonists, who are shown as obsessed with the Islamic faith. Muslim prayer and religious observation are connected to violence by being intercut with scenes of the preparation and carrying out of attacks across New York City (Boyd, 1998: 4; Ijaz & Hajj, 1998: 9). The rituals of purification, including the washing of the terrorist's body and the adornment of a funeral shroud, are seen as preambles to these attacks and provide an audience sign-post to the forthcoming scenes featuring such acts of terrorism. The film positions "radical interpretations of Islam as the terrorist's motivation," (Vanhala, 2011: 265), and strongly links the practicing of this faith to terrorism.

This linkage between ritual Islamic dressing and acts of terrorism has been observed half a decade before the film's release in *Delta Force 3: The Killing Game* (1991, dir. Sam Firstenberg) and half a decade after in *The Hamburg Cell* (2004, dir. Antonia Bird), both of which use the trope to link Islam

with acts of terrorism (Cettl, 2009: 141). The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee commented following the release of *The Siege* that it unfairly unifies all Arabs and Muslims and charges them as terrorists without exception (Goodale, 1998). This close positioning of Islamic faith and violence is a long-standing belief of Orientalist discourses, and by distancing Haddad from this he is established as occupying a unique middle ground. As a practicing Muslim, though not to the extent of the film's terrorists, Haddad can be seen to sit on the cusp of what is constructed as Western sensibility and Eastern religious fanaticism as a boundary crossing figure.

Predictably, Haddad is soon put into a position that will force him to choose between the two, and thus engaging the values struggle encountered by the Middle Eastern counter-terrorist as he tries to mediate his responsibilities both to his people and his profession, both of which are shown to often be mutually exclusive. When the FBI and CIA are deemed to be unable to stop the terrorist plot the US Army is summoned under the leadership of General Devereaux (Bruce Willis) to round up and detain all Arab men. Martial law is instated in New York City and those fitting the description are detained in a sports stadium converted into an internment camp (Hall, 2001: 406; Johnson, 1998: 91; Peretz, 1998: 62). It is at this point Haddad undergoes the values struggle which is so central to the character of the Arab counter-terrorist. Haddad's son Frank Junior, who fits the profile compiled by the US Army, is amongst those detained (Kellner, 2010: 19-20; Peretz, 1998: 62). Haddad is shown running the perimeter of the internment camp, throwing himself against the fence and calling out his son's name in panic as he searches for him among the crowd of detainees. He explains that soldiers came into his house, struck his wife and took his son away despite his continued service to US law enforcement. "How many times did I put it on the line?" he asks Hubbard, removing his FBI badge in disgust and stating that he is leaving the Bureau. "Besides, this is where I belong... Tell them [the FBI] I'm not their sand-nigger anymore," he declares before storming off to continue the search for his son. After 10 years of service to US law enforcement he is forced to make a choice between his adopted country or his family and his religion; his

beliefs and ethnicity led to his son's imprisonment (Hall, 2001: 407-8; Schnickel, 1998: 116; Williams & Downing, 2002: 425).

While Haddad returns to the service of the FBI moments before the film's climax and is instrumental in bringing down the terrorist plot (Vanhala, 2008), the damage has already been done; he has been shown as unable to remain loyal to his position as a Western law enforcement official when faced to choose between it and the Eastern realm. Throughout the film he played the role of a boundary crossing figure, struggling to perform an identity that complemented by his Eastern identity and his Western employment. While, with minor incidents, he managed to walk to narrow line, in the end he was forced to face the moral questioning and values judgement that is so intrinsic to the character of the Arab counter-terrorist.

5.3 *The Kingdom* (2007)

Like *The Siege*, *The Kingdom* is seen to hold a significant place within the discourse of Arab film terrorism. The film was one of the first released post-9/11 to deal directly with Islamic militancy (Pollard, 2011: 112-3); until this point such mediations of terrorism had been conducted through an analogical framework in genres such as science-fiction. The film is seen as a relative success within a subgenre that has otherwise been plagued by poor box office returns (Prince, 2011: 4, 293; Shaheen, 2007: 71; 2008: 128), to the extent that Barker (2011) has noted that post-9/11 terrorist films represent a 'toxic genre' in regards to revenue streams (69). Such is the impact of the film on the discourse of Arab terrorism that *The Kingdom* was described as genre re-defining, and a direct inspiration for latter films including *Rendition* and *Body of Lies* (Cettl, 2009: 225; Prince, 2011: 293). This combination of profitable returns indicating the film enjoyed strong audience number, along with a discursive impact on later films, positions *The Kingdom* as a significant text within the Hollywood Arab terrorism discourse.

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The film opens in Saudi Arabia on an American workers' housing compound, soon to be the target of a terrorist attack. The complex is established as a 'miniature America', an oasis of Western normality and civility in the Middle East complete with baseball and barbeques (Lane, 2007: 105-7; Williams & Linnemann, 2010: 200). Arab terrorists launch an attack on the American oil workers, their children and wives, entering disguised as Saudi Police officers and opening fire, all part of a ruse to lure medical responders who are killed by a large explosion that claims 100 American lives and wounds a further 200 (Corliss, 2007: 80-1; Dodds, 2008: 1628-31; Kellner, 2010: 171; Shaheen, 2007: 71; Williams & Linnemann, 2010: 201). An FBI team, many of whom are played by Oscar and Golden Globe award winners actors and actresses (Pearl, 2008: 13), is deployed to the area to investigate the attacks and bring those responsible to justice with the assistance of local Saudi State Police Colonel Faris Al-Ghazi (Ashraf Barhom). Just as with *The Siege*, Hollywood deploys a multiethnic mixed-gender team to respond to a terrorist threat, with the characters of Fleury, Mayes and Al-Ghazi seen to follow genre conventions established by the characters of Hubbard, Bridger and Haddad. The characterisation between Al-Ghazi and Haddad is near-identical, and as I will demonstrate, Al-Ghazi is represented onscreen through the same boundary crossing imagery as used for the character of Haddad in *The Siege*.

Saudi Arabia is framed in *The Kingdom* as a primitive and violent land controlled by religion. The film's opening sequence presents the history of the region since the 1940s, specifically its founding by bearded, sword-wielding, horse-riding tribesmen, its tense political relationship with the US, its links to Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, and the clash between Eastern religious traditionalism and Western modernity that it is currently undergoing (Ansen, 2007a: 82; Barker, 2011: 108-9; Cettl, 2009: 166; Greenen, 2008: 94; Lane, 2007: 105-7; Morgenstern, 2007; Williams & Linnemann, 2010: 200). Against this background of primal violence and religion the audience is introduced to Al-Ghazi, a character who is driven by a clear sense of justice and a desire to bring peace to his homeland for both its Middle Eastern and Western inhabitants (Miller, 2007: 63; Shaheen, 2007: 71; Williams & Linnemann, 2010: 202). He is a patriotic and loyal colleague to the FBI team (Barker, 2011: 109), and while the film's

antagonists use their children as human shields, scenes of Al-Ghazi's home life show him as a loving and devoted father figure. Unlike the Arab terrorists he fights, Al-Ghazi's adherence to the Islamic faith is shown to be moderate and measured. The film's antagonists chant religious prose as they prepare car bombs and suicide vests, storing them alongside religious iconography while broadcasting prayers over loudspeakers, with such images serve to "imply that the Islamic faith is closely tied with terrorists," (Deep, 2002: 58). *The Kingdom* works to actively link together the practice of the Islamic faith and violent militancy (Williams & Linnemann, 2010: 200-4), with followers of Islam constructed onscreen as dangerous and posing a threat to both the FBI and the ally they have found in Al-Ghazi (Aguayo, 2009: 50). It is stated by FBI analysts that the local terrorists are willing to sacrifice ten of their own lives to kill just one American. By comparison, Al-Ghazi is only shown actively practicing his religion in a quick cut-away shot. Just like Haddad, he is a 'Western-friendly' Arab, one worthy of the FBI's trust. While he is initially assigned to them simply as a 'babysitter' to keep them out of trouble, throughout the course of the film the FBI team come to see him as an ally in light of their cultural differences (Aguayo, 2009: 47; Greenen, 2008: 94; Kellner, 2010: 171; Williams & Linnemann, 2010: 202). With the relationship between Al-Ghazi and team leader Ronald Fleury (Jamie Foxx) cold and tense, through working together the two men form a close bond, at one point discussing pop culture and a shared love of *The Hulk* as an action hero. Before this sense of common bond can be forged however, Al-Ghazi must undergo a similar values struggle to that observed in the characterisation of Haddad, one which positions him likewise as a boundary crossing figure struggling to choose between his allegiance to the East and to the FBI, the personification of the West.

As outlined in Barker's model, in fighting terrorism Hollywood heroes are forced to reassess their priorities and beliefs (2011: 43). Through his interactions with the FBI team's only female member, Al-Ghazi demonstrates the primitive beliefs imbued into Orientalist discourses of representations, and is required to find a middle ground between the constructed Eastern sense of conservatism and Western sense of liberty. The interactions between Al-Ghazi and the character of Special Agent Janet Mayes,

played by Jennifer Garner, a Golden Globe award winning actress best known for her leading work on the television program *Alias* (2001-2006, created by J.J. Abrams), serves to highlight the differences in attitudes towards women within Eastern and Western realms, and creates a struggle that Al-Ghazi must mediate in order to carry out his work.

Operating in the lands of the Middle East, the FBI team encounters a number of cultural clashes that inhibit their investigation. They are forced to live in a gymnasium that is locked overnight and are only allowed to venture outside the housing complex with expressed permission from the Saudi royals (Aguayo, 2009: 48). While their movements as a team are constrained, as a woman Mayes finds herself the recipient of ever more restrictive treatment at the hands of the local law enforcement, serving to establish the Saudi people onscreen as possessing the same primal, seemingly misogynistic nature that has been imbued in the representations of their homeland (Dodds, 2008: 1628). In order to assist the FBI, Al-Ghazi is called upon to reach a personal compromise between both worlds; the religious conservatism of the Saudi people and the Western norms and values of the FBI team. Before touching down in Saudi Arabia, Special Agent Janet Mayes informs the team that upon her arrival she expects to be looked at with disdain and treated as a second-class citizen (Greenen, 2008: 96). When local officials visit the crime scene Mayes is covered with a heavy cloak before being presented to members of the Saudi royal family. Upon seeing her in a tight tank top that shows off her feminine, almost hyper-sexualised, figure (Cettl, 2009: 167; Greenen, 2008: 96; Lane, 2007: 105-7) a local State Department official asks “Can we tone down the boobies here, please? We need to get something to cover these situations?”. Garner’s attractiveness has long been established in popular media discourses; she has been labelled one of the most beautiful and sexiest women according to various tabloid and men’s magazines (Aguayo, 2009: 52). Her characterisation as Mayes is seen to draw upon this along with discourses of her most well known character Agent Sydney Bristow from *Alias*. Bristow is a physically tough character who is positioned as a challenge to male hegemony with her femme-fatale characteristics (Aguayo, 2009: 52), in a vein similar to film heroines such as Angelina Jolie's character of Lara Croft from *Tomb*

Raider (1998, dir. Simon West) and Uma Thurman's Poison Ivy in *Batman & Robin* (1997, dir. Joel Schumacher). The film's use of costuming and dialogue draws attention to Mayes' physique in juxtaposition to the conservative dress codes of the local Saudi women and works to highlight the differences between the United States and Middle Eastern mindsets, establishing the values struggle Al-Ghazi must mediate.

Mayes' femininity is represented onscreen as disruptive and foreign to the Saudi way of life, and causes a number of incidents that highlight the East-West division Al-Ghazi is required to navigate. Her role on the team as a medical examiner is impaired through the refusal of local officials to allow her to touch victim's bodies during autopsy (Aguayo, 2009: 50-1; Cettl, 2009: 167). Here, values related to Western scientific reason and Eastern religion come into opposition with one another. The scene is an interesting inclusion considering that many Muslim countries allow women to conduct autopsies, and if this were not the case one could assume the FBI would have been aware of such customs and planned accordingly (Aguayo, 2009: 51; Lane, 105-7). Rather, such scenes have been intentionally added by the film-maker to generate and demonstrate these intersecting and contradictory Western and Eastern views of women. The Arab men she works alongside are represented as uncomfortable with and confronted by her liberation and desire to partake in investigative work normally associated with the male domain. In her presence male members of the local police forces lose their train of thought, stammer, and try to give her quarters a feminine touch by adding pink coloured items, much to the amusement of Mayes and her team. While their actions are lit in a comic light, the unwillingness of the Saudi police to allow Mayes free roaming access within the investigation leads to tensions and anger between the FBI and their hosts (Dodds, 2008: 1631). As the only female member of the FBI team Mayes is the only lead character to miss out on an invitation to dine with the Saudi prince who is overseeing the investigation reinforcing the differing constructed Eastern-Western views toward women. This has been interpreted as "a conduit through which Western modernity, in the name of gender equality, is transmitted and articulated," (Aguayo, 2009: 50) in light of the local treatment of women. Fleury directs Al-Ghazi to personally

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inform Mayes that she has not been invited, leading to a confrontation in which he cannot muster the courage to inform her and instead changes the topic (Greenen, 2008: 96). Through this scene Al-Ghazi demonstrates self-awareness of the awkward situation he finds himself in, struggling to maintain local customs while appeasing his FBI guests.

The notions of the Middle East as a site stuck in the past are extended to the interactions between the Saudi police and Special Agent Adam Leavitt (Jason Bateman). He is questioned with accusations the moment he arrives in Saudi Arabia regarding Israeli stamps in his passport. Despite explaining they were gathered while visiting his grandmother the Saudi border guards are hesitant to allow him safe passage, articulating the Middle Eastern inability to progress beyond their historical conflict with the Israeli nation (Kellner, 2010: 171). Through the film Saudi Arabia is established as a land caught in the distant past. Parallels are drawn between the region and cinematic representations of Vietnam as seen in *Apocalypse Now* (1979, dir. Francis Ford Coppola), *Platoon* (1986, dir. Oliver Stone), and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987, dir. Stanley Kubrick); helicopter gunships frequently hover overhead while terrorists operate out of a series of apartments linked together by rabbit holes reminiscent of those employed by the Vietcong. “You’re in the jungle now baby,” explains Sykes, the most senior of the agents, with the director of the FBI comparing his experiences as part of the Tet Offensive to Saudi Arabia. Imagery such as this reinforces the Orientalist notion of the Arab world as a primitive domain, the customs of which create a tension between the FBI and local police which Al-Ghazi is required to resolve in his position as the boundary crossing Arab counter-terrorist.

Onscreen, Al-Ghazi is characterised as undergoing his own personal values struggle in addition to that between the FBI and the Saudi State Police. As the film progresses and the death toll rises, Al-Ghazi explains that he is no longer concerned with bringing those responsible to justice, and that he now simply wants to kill them. This violent disposition, a common trait of Orientalist discourses, is mirrored in the onscreen representations of the Arab terrorists within *The Kingdom*. Outside of the safety afforded by the US compound’s walls is a dangerous land, one where bullet-proof vests need to be worn

at all times and helicopter gunships accompany armed police escorts equipped with automatic weapons, driving at breakneck speeds to stave off attacks. It is a world constructed between checkpoints manned by armoured tanks that litter the city, where housing compounds are “complete with barricades, machine gun nests, and tanks,” (Williams & Linnemann, 2010: 200) and where \$15,000 ‘safe rooms’ need to be installed in homes in order to keep the oil workers and their families safe. This Oriental love of violence throughout the film is shown as inherent to all levels of the social strata; the royal family are linked to Osama bin Laden and the 9/11 attacks, while children cheer and clap as they enjoy violent video games. Even Saudi charities are cited as being fundraisers for Jihadist activities (Kellner, 2010: 171). Local terrorists are described respectively as ghosts – a ‘master of death’ and a ‘truly talented murderer’ – who are able to sleep soundly at night after killing women and children. They are constructed onscreen as barbaric, violent and warlike, unwilling to negotiate with their enemy or follow any form of diplomacy (Dodds, 2008: 1631; Kellner, 2010: 171; Pomerance, 2009: 28). Throughout the film, the Middle East is seen as a hive of terrorist activity (Dodds, 2008: 1633), with its people characterised as madmen “thirsty for unbounded vengeance,” (Pomerance, 2009: 28).

It is between the world of the Middle East, constructed onscreen as violent and primitive, and the world of the FBI, constructed as upholding Western values of freedom and enlightenment, that Al-Ghazi finds himself. While he is a Muslim and an upholder of the Islamic faith, it quickly becomes apparent that the values of his religion are incompatible with the values upheld by the FBI team. While he feels an obligation to his superiors and his religion, Al-Ghazi’s desire to catch those responsible for the attacks requires him to align himself closely with the Special Agent Fleury and his team (Aguayo, 2009: 48; Cettl, 2009: 116; Morgenstern, 2007). Is it herein that his values struggle can be observed and where he performs the role of the boundary crossing figure. The belief system of the FBI team is established as being “irreconcilable with his [Al-Ghazi’s] religion, Islam, which, according to the diegesis of the film, is highly gender-biased and oppressive,” (Aguayo, 2009: 50). This struggle between Al-Ghazi’s duty and his heritage, mirrored in the character of Special Agent Haddad in *The Siege*, in fact

reinforces rather than dismisses Orientalist notions associated with the discourse of Arab counter-terrorists.

In his position as a liaison between the FBI and the Saudi State Police, Al-Ghazi is required to compromise between his own values and those of his American guests, and in the process demonstrates his position as a boundary crossing figure. By undertaking this assignment his “loyalty to his culture and his religion is called into question,” (Cettl, 2009: 166) as he attempts to mediate a neutral territory between what is established to be two very different and almost completely incompatible realms of East and West. In mediating between the wishes of the FBI and the ways of his people, particularly through his interactions with the female Agent Mayes, Al-Ghazi demonstrates the values struggle that is so central to the characterisation of the Hollywood Arab counter-terrorist.

5.4 Conclusion

Whilst both *The Siege* and *The Kingdom* were hailed as being significant to the genre of terrorist films and seen as genre-defining for their intention to recast the issue of Arab terrorism in a new light, both films still serve to propagate rather than move away from existing notions of the Orientalist. Reviewers and academics have been quite critical of both films for their depictions of the Middle East and exploration of Arab characters. Prior to and during its release *The Siege* came under great public scrutiny from groups concerned about its onscreen portrayal of Middle Eastern citizens. Those who opposed the film suggested that it grouped all Arabs into a homogenous group and established them as violent and threatening (Hall, 2001: 405-7; Vanhala, 2008). Despite claims that the film was critical of the US military rather than the Arab world (Hall, 2001: 411-4; Williams & Downing, 2002: 430), the general public did not feel the same way, audience focus groups and commentators responded that it served only to reinforce Orientalist notions (Hall, 2001: 417; Williams & Downing, 2002: 433-4). Jack Shaheen, the Council on American Islamic Relations, the American-Arab Anti Discrimination Committee and other Arab rights

groups in the US and Canada protested the negative ethnic images and stereotypes even before its release, claiming that the film's images were prejudiced and that it suggested that all Arabs and Muslims are terrorists and enemies to democracy (Hall, 2001: 399-401; Kellner, 2010: 21; Shaheen, 2001: 430-3; Vanhala, 2008; Wilkins & Downing, 2002: 428-32). The inclusion of the character of Haddad, while suggested as a positive move forward by Hollywood, has been labelled singly tokenistic, a one-dimensional character inserted to appease opponents of the film (Hall, 2001: 414; Kauffmann, 1998: 27; Rozen, 1998: 31; Shaheen, 2001: 431; Shargel, 1998: 18-9; Williams & Downing, 2002: 423-34). Similar criticism has been directed toward *The Kingdom*. Reviewers noted that while he is shown in a positive light, Al-Ghazi is still not positioned as possessing the same level of heroism as his American counterparts (Barker, 2011: 110). The charges of simply being 'token' characters are likewise levelled at him and his partner Sergeant Haytham, who reportedly almost had a number of important scenes featuring their characters' personal lives cut from the film (Miller, 2007: 63; Shaheen, 2008: 130), leaving him as simply a supporting rather than a fully formed character.

While these films may have sought to distance themselves from the existing discourse of Orientalism in the construction of their Arab counter-terrorist characters, both *The Siege* and *The Kingdom* in fact further upheld and spread these notions. Neither Haddad nor Al-Ghazi remain perfectly loyal throughout their ordeal, both needing to take time in order to mediate their own boundary crossing identity, demonstrating the Orientalist notion that they are products of their upbringing in the Arab realm which stands in opposition to the beliefs of the West. Both characters demonstrate violent tendencies, a further Orientalist assertion, and are not positioned on equal footing with their Anglo-Saxon counterparts. Of interest to note is that the effects of 9/11, while apparent in the representations of male and female terrorists, do not seem to factor into the onscreen mediation of Haddad or Al-Ghazi. Both are presented to the audience and characterised in similar ways, so much so that strong parallels have been drawn between the two films. This demonstrates that despite the events of 9/11, the discourse of the Arab terrorist has remained unchanged. By applying the framework for examining the counter-terrorist supplied by Barker

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and considering this within an Orientalist viewpoint, becoming apparent that Orientalist beliefs are upheld and reinforced by these films and their boundary crossing Arab counter-terrorists, rather than dispelled.

6 CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Few events since the conclusion of World War II have exerted an influence on the Western populace as that of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. While 9/11 may not have marked the transition from politically motivated to religiously motivated terrorism, it certainly marked a change point in Hollywood representations of terrorism, and subsequently, public perceptions of it. No more is this more evident than Hollywood action films dealing with the phenomena of Arab terrorism. Television audiences watching news coverage of 9/11 initially believed they were watching the promotion trailer for a Hollywood action film, and since this moment a strong connection has existed between public perceptions of the attacks and Western cinema, with many finding cinema to be the closest frame of reference to the scenes of death and destruction.

It is this connection between Hollywood action films and acts of real world terrorism which has been the focus of this thesis, which has sought to investigate the discursive links which operate between the two. In particular I have focused on the impacts the 9/11 attacks had on discourses of Arab terrorism and counter-terrorism within Hollywood action films, noting that:

1. discourses of Orientalism, and in particular notions of violence, primitiveness and religious devotion strongly shape images of the Arab terrorist and counter-terrorist within Hollywood action films;
2. three trends or movements of representation are observed within Arab terrorist media images (pre-9/11, post-9/11 and post-2007), signalling three distinct epochs of representation for these characters;
3. female Arab terrorists within Hollywood are positioned as a greater threat than their male counterparts through their positioning as sexual deviants with an emotional attachment to their cause in addition to their Orientalist nature, and

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4. Arab counter-terrorists are shown to have face difficulty in undertaking their job, due to their Orientalist upbringing coming in direct opposition to their role alongside Western law enforcement, forcing them to choose between the two.

These research findings represent a new space within existing research, and it is hoped that they will open the way for further studies into these media images, some suggestions for which are presented below. Given the continued prominence terrorist incidents have within Western media productions, particularly Hollywood films of the terrorist genre, such research will continue to remain relevant to Western audiences and academics alike.

Despite this raised social awareness however, academic study into the field of Arab terrorist depictions has been lacking. In Chapter Two I presented my literature review, demonstrating that previous examinations of this topic have to present failed to engage with the source material in a manner that allows for pre- and post-9/11 images of Arab terrorism and counter-terrorism to be studied in a longitudinal fashion. A common trend within existing research is to conduct a complete archaeology of Hollywood productions from the early days of the industry until the present, examining each production in turn and generating analysis which covers the multitude of films engaging with the topic, in some cases up to 900 productions. Such studies, whilst forming a strong foundation upon which further research can be conducted, fall short of their intended purpose and are viewed as ‘reference guides’, listing films alphabetically rather than chronologically, resulting in difficulty in examining historical trends. When studies have limited themselves to more manageable figures they limit themselves to simply a pre- or post-9/11 time period in lieu of a direct comparison between both epochs. While the figure of the male Arab terrorist has received good academic coverage, the female Arab terrorist and the Arab counter-terrorist remain very much on the periphery of research. It is these research gaps, and a mixed methodology which examines a manageable sample size across a time period including the 9/11 attacks which is this studies greatest contribution to the field.

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The theoretical framework of such a study presently exists; Shaheen's notion of the 'Reel Bad Arab', based upon an Orientalist reading of Hollywood cinema, clearly demonstrates the repeated tropes of violence, religion and primitiveness this study observed. Such a methodology however had yet to be applied specifically to Hollywood action films released in the decades before and after the 9/11 attacks. Similarly, Third's 'Hyper-dangerous terrorist woman' and Barker's 'Anti-terrorist hero' models both provide a strong framework for the understanding of terrorism and counter-terrorism within Hollywood productions, though this study marks the first time these two methodologies have been applied to characters of Arab descent. It is through this application of existing methodologies to existing knowledge gaps that this thesis demonstrates its significance to the existing field of Hollywood Arab terrorist representations.

Through my engagement with three archetypical Arab characters from recent Hollywood action films—the male Arab terrorist, the female Arab terrorist, and the Arab counter-terrorist—I have demonstrated strong similarities in the representation of these characters, representing the first finding of this thesis. Despite the Middle East being a vast region containing obvious diversity among its people, Hollywood action films dealing with terrorism reduce its inhabitants to a very limited and precise. Those hailing from the Middle East are strongly linked to acts of onscreen uncivilised violence and established as a threat to Western freedom and sensibilities. Said asserts that we only see the "...mad Islamic zealot, the gratuitously violent killer of innocents, the desperately irrational and savage primitive," (Mandel, 2001: 21), with such characters having been shown on screen as terrorists and skyjackers since the 1930s and as violent fanatics since early 20th century cinema (Majaj, 2003: 38; Pomerance, 2009: 28). This overarching Orientalist discourse, with its focus on violence, religious and the primitive nature of those from the region, sits above the three characters examined within this paper, guiding their mediations within Hollywood action films.

The analysis of the male Arab terrorist in Chapter Three is a clear articulation of this. The onscreen mediations of these characters between 1991 and 2011 are grounded in a discourse which

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codifies these individuals as violent, primitive and addicted to Islam. While these three elements have continuously grounded such representations, over time there has been an emphasis on each of these elements in turn as a result of real world elements, the second finding of this thesis. Arab terrorism prior to 9/11 was seen by Hollywood as almost a laughing matter with such terrorists portrayed through a comic lens. As noted, the events of 9/11 brought about a new darker and grittier era of film making, one that is likely to persist for some time. As a result, in the aftermath of the attacks this comedic framing disappeared, with terrorists of Arab descent returning to cinema screens as almost unrecognisable to those seen only a few years earlier. While their primitive nature was still present, a greater emphasis was placed on their Islamic beliefs, which was portrayed seen as the sole motivator for their acts of terror. While such a change has been previously noted in the research literature (i.e. Cettl, 2009; Vanhala, 2007), this thesis has argued that a second representational shift occurred after 2007, whereby this sole blame in Islam was toned down, and while the religious and primitive dispositions of these characters remained, a greater emphasis was placed on their violent nature. Post-2007 third movement cinematic terrorists lacked the innocence of their second movement who had been seduced by Islam, with third movement characters knowingly participated in acts of terrorism. It is also of interest to note the locality of attacks in the studied films, which could represent a third finding. Prior to 9/11 Hollywood placed terrorist on United States soil, with attacks taking place in far removed locales following 2001. Regardless, Hollywood's terrorists prior to and after 9/11 are closely guided by the notions of Orientalism and Shaheen's 'Reel Bad Arab' discourse. Whilst always shown as primitive, religious and violent, at different points in history each of these three elements has become the key driver for characterisation, with the shift between the three brought about by real world events and trends in global terrorism.

The Hollywood Arab terrorist woman, as explored in Chapter Four, is a unique character, and forms the third finding of this thesis. Like the male Arab terrorist she is violent, primitive and strongly religious. However, her characterisation contains a second layer of discourses, those related to the terrorist woman. Violence is a key component of both discourses and by sitting at this discursive

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intersection between Orientalism and femininity the Arab terrorist woman is positioned as a greater threat than her male counterparts. She conducts attacks of a larger scale against innocent bystanders, while male members of her organisation target legitimate targets in a precise nature. The classic tropes of her Arab primitiveness and religious beliefs are combined with the irrationality of the female terrorist; she is more committed to her cause than male terrorists and willing to go to greater lengths to carry out her plans. The third element of her characterisation, her sexuality, is a discursive layer not observed in male Arab terrorists. By engaging her Oriental charm the Arab terrorist woman is able to assert control over and manipulate male law enforcement officers, using them to facilitate her activities. Unlike her male counterpart she is positioned as a dual threat not only to Western society but also to masculinity due to her ability to both conduct terrorist attacks and upset traditional gender roles. Such characters only appear post-9/11, specifically after 2007, adding further credence to the theory that this date represented a change point in the representation of Arab villains in Hollywood action films.

The fourth finding, as Chapter Five demonstrates, is that the onscreen Arab counter-terrorist is another unique character within the discourse of Hollywood action films. Such characters can be seen as 'boundary crossing'; their Middle Eastern upbringing and beliefs come into direct opposition with their work alongside Western law enforcement agencies, calling for these characters to constantly mediate and assess their loyalties. As noted in Chapters Three and Four, a violent nature, addiction to Islam and the possession of primitive beliefs are the hallmarks of the Hollywood Arab terrorist, be they man or woman. The Arab counter-terrorist is no different and still possesses these traits, which are in conflict with their policing duties, forcing these characters to choose between their region of birth and their region of employment. It is interesting to note that this is the only one of the three character representations examined in this thesis that does not appear to have been affected by the events of 9/11 or the subsequent third movement of Hollywood Arab terrorist discourse.

As discussed in Chapter One, the nature of terrorism is forever in a state of flux, resulting in changing representations of terrorism in media texts and popular culture. Trends within terrorism rise and

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fall, motivations and tactics are adopted and fall from fashion (Rasler & Thompson, 2009: 32), with Rapoport (2004) arguing that the existing norm of religiously based terrorism will be replaced by a new wave of terrorism within two decades (66). Other academics argue in favour of this fifth wave of ‘tribal’ terrorism which focuses on ethnic cleansing and close knit group dynamics within which children pay a significant role (Kaplan, 2007: 545-7). The time lag between developments in global terrorism trends and their appearance in Hollywood—a central argument to this thesis wherein I have noted that 9/11 only represents a change-point in Hollywood representations of terrorism and not terrorism itself—suggests that were this tribal wave of terrorism to appear it would not be for some time. While Islamic militancy remains a common plot device for Hollywood action films, attacks conducted by Russian opponents have re-emerged in films such as *Salt* (2012, dir. Philip Noyce), suggesting a possible return to Cold War fears. Another interesting trend to note is the rise of Asian antagonists in Hollywood action films, exemplified in *Olympus Has Fallen* (2013, dir. Antoine Fuqua), where North Korean terrorists capture the White House. Given the rising significance of the region economically and socially, as demonstrated in the recent White Paper (Australian Government, 2012) released by the Australian Government terming this ‘the Asian century’, an increase in the prevalence of Asian terrorist characters could be likely. The impact this has on the presence of Middle Eastern villains in Hollywood actions films will be interesting to watch.

This thesis serves as a point of departure to highlight further avenues of investigation into the effects of 9/11 on media images of Arab terrorism. In Chapter One I argued the need to study only Hollywood action films relating to Arab terrorism released over a twenty year gap. Widening this timeframe to include other major terrorist events, such as the Munich Olympics in 1972 or the Pan Am Flight 103 bombing in 1988, or extending study to other cinematic genres such a documentaries, science fiction or drama would help built a the greater sample size within which to test the arguments put forward in this thesis. While I have limited my work to Hollywood productions, applying the methodology to films created in other regions, such as Europe or the Middle East, could either confirm or challenge the

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assertions put forward in this thesis. Further, work within the field of audience studies could be conducted to examine the impacts that these changing discourses have on audience perceptions of terrorism due to media exposure, and the impact changing discourses of terrorism have on audience meaning making processes. Beyond cinema, these theories and ideas could be applied to other media forms, such as news reporting, television productions or computer games. The expanding of this work into each subsequent media form would provide a larger body of evidence to expand our understanding of Hollywood portrayals of Arab terrorism and counter-terrorism in action films. It is hoped that this study will generate further discussion around the topic of Arab media representations in Hollywood action, and inspire other to challenge the production of such images.

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7.1 Filmography

A Good Day to Die Hard (2013, dir. John Moore)

Air Force One (1997, dir. Wolfgang Petersen)

Alias (2001-2006, created by J.J. Abrams)

Apocalypse Now (1979, dir. Francis Ford Coppola),

Arlington Road (1999, dir. Mark Pellington)

Batman & Robin (1997, dir. Joel Schumacher)

Battlestar Galactica (2004-2009, developed by Ronald D. Moore)

Birth of a Nation (1915, dir D.W. Griffith)

Black Hawk Down (2001, dir Ridley Scott)

Black Sunday (1977, dir. John Frankenheimer)

Body of Lies (2008, dir. Ridley Scott)

Broken Arrow (1996, dir. John Woo)

Collateral Damage (2002, dir Andrew Davis)

Cloverfield (2008, dir. J.J. Abrams)

Delta Force 3: The Killing Game (1991, dir. Sam Firstenberg)

Die Hard (1988, dir John McTiernan)

Die Hard 2 (1990, dir. Renny Harlin)

Die Hard 4.0 (2007, dir. Len Wiseman)

Die Hard with a Vengeance (1995, dir. John McTiernan)

Elephant (1989, dir. Alan Clarke)

Elvis (2005, dir. James Steven Sadwith)

Executive Decision (1996, dir. Stuart Baird)

Fatal Attraction (1987, dir. Adrian Lyne)

Flightplan (2005, dir. Robert Schwentke)

Full Metal Jacket (1987, dir. Stanley Kubrick)

From Paris With Love (2010, dir. Pierre Morel)

Grease (1978, dir. Randal Kleiser)

Home of the Brave (2006, dir. Irwin Winkler)

In the Name of the Father (1993, dir. Jim Sheridan)

In the Valley of Elah (2007, dir. Paul Haggis)

Lions for Lambs (2007, dir. Robert Redford)

Minority Report (2002, dir. Steven Spielberg)

Moonlighting (1985-9, created by: Glenn Gordon Caron)

Olympus Has Fallen (2013, dir. Antoine Fuqua)

Passenger 57 (1992, dir. Kevin Hooks)

Patriot Games (1992, dir. Phillip Noyce)

Platoon (1986, dir. Oliver Stone)

Rashomon (1950, dir. Akira Kurosawa)

Rendition (2007, dir. Gavin Hood)

Rollercoaster (1977, dir. James Goldstone)

Ronin (1998, dir. John Frankenheimer)

Rosebud (1975, dir. Otto Preminger)

Saboteur (1936, dir. Alfred Hitchcock)

Salt (2012, dir. Philip Noyce)

Saturday Night Fever (1977, dir. John Badham)

Swordfish (2001, dir. Dominic Sena)

Syriana (2005, dir. Stephen Gaghan)

The Battle of Algiers (1966, dir. Gillo Pontecorvo)

The Day of the Jackal (1973, dir. Fred Zinnemann)

The Devil's Own (1997, dir. Alan J. Pakula)

The Hamburg Cell (2004, dir. Antonia Bird)

The Human Factor (1977, dir. Otto Preminger)

The Kingdom (2007, dir. Peter Berg)

The Leopard Woman (1920, dir. Wesley Ruggles)

The Peacemaker (1997 dir Mimi Leder)

The Power of the Sultan (1908, dir. Francis Boggs)

The Rock (1996, dir. Michael Bay)

The Siege (1998, dir. Edward Zwick)

The Sum of All Fears (2002, dir. Phil Alden Robinson)

The Tudors (2007-2010, creator: Michael Hirst).

The X-Files (1993-2002, created by Chris Carter)

Tomb Raider (1998, dir. Simon West)

True Lies (1994, dir. James Cameron)

United 93 (2006, dir. Paul Greengrass)

Vantage Point (2008, dir. Pete Travis)

War of the Worlds (2005, dir. Steven Spielberg)

World Trade Centre, (2006, dir. Oliver Stone)