Construction of the Other in the U. S. Media

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Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku
Preddiplomski sveučilišni studij engleskog jezika i književnosti (dvopredmetni)

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Zadar, 2016

Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

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Abstract

Representation of something opposite to us has always been a very difficult task. Very often it can cause conflict, misunderstanding and misconceptions between seemingly opposite civilisations over how they perceive the world. The aim of this study was to analyse some of the notions that cause conflict between societies and how that translates into U.S. media representing the Middle East. The analysis presented in this paper was based mostly on the work of Edward Said (1977) and many other authors who focus on post colonialism and the current political landscape in or connected to the Middle East. The analysis showed that there are many examples of misconceptions and distancing away from "the Other" in order to justify the point of view of the West. Paper tries to point out how these kinds of representations can lead to various other difficulties within given society, such as media propaganda and racism issues in America as well as in the rest of the world using the movies Aladdin, True Lies and TV show Homeland as examples.

Keywords: the Middle East, the Other, representation, the U.S. media

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1. Introduction

People all over the world have a need to feel "at home". We try to create and stay within the groups that can offer us comfort and share our sense of what the world should be and how to achieve this goal. We seek the stability in our surroundings and we usually find it in things we perceive as familiar or in something we can relate to. However, what we see as familiar and what we see as different to us has changed over the history of human race. What has also changed is how we look at these differences and what we consider important in comparison to before.

In order to create this familiarity and the notion of what is "us" we need to have something opposite, something that we see as an antithesis to our ideas or at least something that does not accept our point of view and instead tries to explain things differently. This way we create in our minds the notion of something different enough from us that it becomes "Them" or "the Other". Since they represent a different thought on what is right, what our way of life should look like and how we should achieve this outlook they are perceived as our enemy. Just as we see the Other as our enemy, so can we identify who is our friend. For example, there is a distinct line between Croatia and the countries that surround us. We see ourselves as a friend of the West and see America as our ally opposed to the feelings we have towards the Middle East. America feels closer to us when talking about ideas and we identify ourselves as part of the West rather than the south-eastern part of Europe. Our attitudes on what is the Other to us are similar to America in this way. This paper tries to question how these notions of "us" and "them", the process of "Othering" is created and how it translates to everyday life in American society.

This thesis deals with explaining the notion of othering and Other by looking at the representation of Middle East in the media of United States of America. It explains the

reasons why we (who perceive ourselves as the members of the West) feel so hostile to ideas that are different from ours and how we deal with this notion, putting the focus "on us vs them" mentality between United States of America and The Middle East. The othering of the Middle East will be presented from two perspectives, representation in the work of fiction and the representation in the journalistic work and other examples from what is commonly perceived and called as "'reality". Explanation will be given to the roots of the reasoning between the separation of what we perceive as us and similar to us and what we see as a conflicting outlook on life. In order to present this conflict there are several principles that need to be explained since they have a profound effect on how and why these conflicts occur.

2. Creation of "Us vs Them"

The representation of the Middle East and its inhabitants by the West is not a new concept. Ever since the first contact between Europe and the Arabs (as well as Islam) there has been an established notion of what they are, usually stereotypical and suited to portray them as something different and unknown to us (as part of Europe) or even as something that we have to fight to protect our own world view and culture, making them our "Enemy".

The depiction of Middle East by the West today has its roots in history and has been influenced by many different ideas and ways of thinking about what is the Other and how it affects the one who talks about them. Many of them hidden from the public not because they can't be easily accessible but because they have been present in the minds of the West for so long that they are taken for granted.

2.1. Orientalism

According to the Merriam-Webster, Orientalism is "something (as a style or manner) associated with or characteristic of Asia or Asians" ("orientalism"). It has been used in art history, geography and literature to represent Eastern cultures by Western artists. It denotes the fascination with the East and has inspired artists since 18th and 19th century. It is tied to the notion of the Orient and the perception of foreign lands as exotic and fascinating to the West. The use of the word Orientalism and the talk of the Orient was widespread in Europe and "One could speak in Europe of an Oriental personality, an Oriental atmosphere, an Oriental tale, Oriental despotism, or an Oriental mode of production, and be understood" (Said 44). However, the view of orientalism and what it means to the West has changed drastically since the book Orientalism by Palestinian American scholar Edward Said. He argued that it does not only represent the fascination with the East by Western authors but at the same time it tries to explain and rationalise the imperialism carried out by the West. The

view of the East as exotic, mysterious and unknown was also accompanied by the West seeing them as backward, with the customs, people, technology and the way of life in the East being vastly inferior to the West. Western authors cared very little for the plight of the common man and the way of life of the regular people.

Fig. 1. Alloula, Malek. Moorish woman taking a walk

Fig. 2. Alloula, Malek. Kabyl woman covering herself with the haik

The people living in what was perceived as the Orient were made to look exotic and mysterious. Not because that is what they were but because that was what the European powers wanted or thought them to be. Photographs were set up in special studios designed to make the Arab women look exotic, backwards and strange. This was a Western man could

get into the privacy of what West thought of as harem and see the private space of Arab women (Alloula 15).

In the first photo (fig. 1) the photographer shows the western audience the taboo of the human body perceived in their culture. He uses the exotic and unknown nature of this custom and shows his audience something new and interesting. It shows what he presents as a typical scene in Algeria, a covered up woman in a public place. However, he is not satisfied with just the regular life of Algerians and he wants to go deeper into their culture. The second picture (fig. 2) shows that he was successful. He is no longer threatened by something that feels different to him, strange kind of feminine world that cannot be seen in the West. He has unveiled the exoticism (just as the woman unveils herself in her private space) and entered the private domain of the Orient. However, none of this is done in a natural way that shows the life of people in the Orient. The unveiling has been done at the photographer's command to present the exoticism and the mystery of the orient to the West (Alloula 14-15)

Furthermore, there is a prevalent opinion that for the people in the Orient there is no separation of religion (in this case Islam), politics and culture. The developed culture (the notion of "us) can separate these parts of life while the underdeveloped and backwards culture (the notion of "them) has not yet developed these distinctions. This leads to the feeling of superiority in the West over the East (Said 300).

2.2. Othering

Othering is a concept closely connected to the notion of the Orient. The West puts itself in the centre. This is why we create "Others" by looking at the people who are different from us (the West), who are on the margins of what we think of as civilised, developed, and right and distancing ourselves from them. By doing this the West used the Orient as something different, to create their own identity by pointing out the differences in the civilisation of both groups while at the same time using those differences against the Orient

instead of studying them and trying to understand their point of thinking. Othering also creates a fertile ground for conflict where inferiority can create valid reasons and justifications for occupation and wars where one side is always wrong and abused by just being the "Other" (Gallaher et al. 329-331).

The way to remove the "Other" and soothe the conflict that is connected to othering is to stop conceptualising difference as the "Other" and instead put them at the centre. If we do this we remove the boundaries, and "us" as well as "them" stops to exist. The new centre than becomes a mixture of both ideas and this feeling to marginalise something different would be less valid. This way the differentiation will cease to exist and it will provide diversity and a new way to look at reality without putting anyone at the borders and casting them off as inferior (Gallaher et al. 337-338). There will probably never be a way to completely accept the ideas of the Other but trying to soothe the volatile opinion about "the other side" may lead to at least a partial acceptance within society.

2.3. Hidden nationalism

Now that the concept of the "Other" has been established, there is a question of why is there such opposition to the Middle Eastern culture by the West, and more specifically the United States of America. One of the problems is what Michael Billig presented in his book by the same name, banal nationalism.

Today we live in the world of nations. As previously mentioned we feel safe knowing that we are in the company of likeminded individuals and being part of a nation provides us with both the security and gives us a feeling of familiarity when it comes to way of thinking, way of life and the ideas we find valuable. However, nations did not create themselves nor can they remain functional of their own volition. There needs to be a force that reminds us that we are a part of something. We can see examples of that in everyday life. News reports are usually split into national and world news, each country has their own sports leagues (The

Premier League, Ligue de Football Professionnel, Super League Greece) and there are rituals created to remind us what is ours. For example, hanging flags during national holidays and parades celebrating a victorious day connected to our nation. But not all of them have to be so open; they can be mundane and unnoticeable. The name of our nation on our money or other symbols not actively presented to us every day but always present around us and in our view. All of them are subtle reminders of our membership to a nation that and their goal is reproduction of the nation we are trying to preserve.

Even though we are aware that these factors are omnipresent in our daily lives we still do not consider them as nationalistic. As before mentioned, we tend to put ourselves in the middle. On the contrary, using the word nationalism always makes us think of the borders, the edges of society not usually something we love to connect to our surroundings or a lace, group or even just ideas that we love to associate with. Nationalism is always mentioned when talking about separatists, people who are not close to the current political centre accepted in the society and who are usually found in places where current societal structures have collapsed. For the perceived centres of the West (Paris, Washington) there is no nationalism in their territory, it is left to the edge of places familiar to them and tend to recognise it quite quickly when talking about others. Freedom fighters in a country or guerrilla fighters are not something we consider ours, close to us or in some way familiar. In this way people forget their nationalism by focusing on extremism as its major example and its main feature. Nationalism is thus connected to the fringe and not something that shows civilisation and progress. This can be quite disastrous if misused. By thinking of nationalism this way politicians can get the support of the people during crises. It can be used in a good way by reminding people of their national identity, sometimes very subtly(for example, American presidents standing in front of their flag, using established phrases to start and finish their speeches), and garnering their support in the time of need. This feeling of

togetherness is not created at that moment. It is nurtured for a very long time by forming their national identity through everyday actions and reminders. Even though thinking about our nationalism slips from attention, it is still there and can be called upon by politicians. Examples of this can be found at the start of the Gulf War or War on Terror. At their announcements there was no need to remind Americans to what country they belong. There was no need to remind them of what has been done or what needed to be done, they supported them because they were Americans and their national identity was at risk. This way American nationalism was used to garner the support for the war but it was not seen as a form of nationalism since the ideological roots were already established through constant reminder of who we are and why we have to defend what we consider right and proper (Billig 4-6).

2.4. The nature of the clash

The clash of differences is not the same as it was before. There have always been differences between people. However, we cannot talk about a one principle that divided different sides, it changed over time. To begin with, wars were fought on a much smaller scale compared to today. Clashes during the rule of nobility and monarch in Europe did not rest on the same principles that we use today to differentiate what is ours and what is "theirs". During this time wars were fought over territories in order to increase the wealth of the ruling class and broaden their influence to the neighbouring states. Following this, after the French Revolution, wars started to shift from the responsibility of the ruling nobility and started being considered as the wars of the people. This than gave way to the wars of ideologies during the World War I and World War II and finally culminated during the Cold War (with a shift from the world armed conflict to the conflict of two superpowers over influence zones). Common theme amongst all of these conflicts is that they were all fought in the West. They were all "Western civil wars", as labelled by William Lind (qtd. in Huntington 23).

However, this has now changed. The divisions that were used before do not have a meaningful impact on the state of the world today (e.g. First, Second and Third world countries during the Cold War). The way we divide the world has changed (Huntington 22-23).

Today there is a different view on the state of the world. Since the conflict has changed from the West oriented clash to the West vs non-Western nations we can no longer talk about this conflict in the same way as before. Today we talk about the conflict of civilisations. In order to talk about the clash of us vs them there needs to be a set definition on what is our and what is their civilisation. Huntington states that the civilisation is "thus the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species." (24) Civilisations are not constant. Their lines shift, they change and they can even disappear over time. They can also have their subdivisions (e.g. when we talk about Western civilisation we can split it into two groups, North American and European). The differences between civilisations are much more pronounced than the difference between ideologies or different political regimes. They are rooted in centuries of rituals, beliefs and stories usually transferred from one generation to the other. They are very different from one another in the way they think about life, parenthood, marriage, liberties, role of state in everyday life and many other aspects. Conflicts between the different civilisations do not have to be violent. Even though examples of armed conflicts between them are present they are mostly the cause of intellectual disputes rather than physical. But there is still a fact that these differences create a division between people and encourage the "us vs them" mentality. (Huntington 24-25).

Even though the conflict between civilisations has become prominent very recently, tensions between Western and Islamic civilisations have been present since 8th century. Conflicts between Christianity and Islam during the Crusades, Ottoman Turks conquests of

Middle East and Balkans show that there were always tensions between these two sides. Even in recent history wars in Algeria in the 1950s, Egypt in 1956, war in the Persian Gulf during the 1990, "War on Terror" from 2003 shows the longevity of these tensions. They did not waver but instead created more tension (Huntington 30-32).

A similar problem to previously mentioned banal nationalism also emerges from the division between what we see as our and what we than differentiate as their civilisation. Huntington presents the notion of "kin-country syndrome". We are more likely to support one side of the conflict if they have similar view on life to us. As an example, Saddam Hussein was supported by a large portion of the Arab public. Islamic countries universally supported someone similar to them especially since the conflict was widely presented as Western world vs Islam, bringing us back to the talk of us vs them. Muslim countries rallied behind Iraq while the support of the West was leaning towards America and its coalition (Huntington 35-36).

3. The representation of the Middle East in U.S. Media

In order to talk about how we perceive the Other we need to explain representation. Stuart Hall defines it as "the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture through the use of language, signs and images which stand for or represent things" (Hall, 1997). The ideas and meanings created in one society are usually shared by language. It connects signs and symbols to represent the feelings and ideas. It helps us create and share meaning. The ideas of a certain society represent their culture, the "shared values" they find important. Today, the fastest way to share these ideas and values is the mass media. Movies, TV shows and its other forms give people the ability to present and share their ideas very quickly.

The misconceptions about Arabs in U.S. Media are quite common. Due to the struggle between the civilisations to which these two sides belong there has been a lot of representation of the other side as wrong. Ever since the America first started getting involved in the Middle East tensions have been growing. The Gulf Wars, Iraq War, American War on ISIL and many others have all served to prolong and broaden the animosity felt on both sides.

Depiction of the people we consider as "the Other" in real life translates the same way to the media. Others are usually stereotyped and the main emphasis is oriented to what makes us and them different from each other rather than trying to create and image that despite being from different cultures and leading our lives according to different principles there are still some connections that we have as human beings.

When talking specifically about the Middle East, there is a large focus on the scarves and veils worn by Muslim women. They are not presented from the perspective of Muslims and what they mean to them but in a way that the West sees them and makes its own ideas

about the meaning and reasoning for wearing them. They are seen just as costumes connected to Islam and the part of the world where there is a large Muslim populace. Muslim males wearing turbans or any other cloth used to cover one's head usually draws the looks of contempt from the Western media and it has even earned a derogatory term "raghead" due to this practice defined by Oxford dictionary as "A person who wears a turban or keffiyeh (often used as a term of abuse for an Arab or Muslim)" ("raghead"). The similar issues are with the names of people from these regions. Especially today when talking about Middle Eastern people, they are not given any distinction creating the notion that the Middle East is a one nation that "owns" all Muslims and where this is the only ideology. Most men are usually connected to the name Muhammad whether or not they truly are from the Middle East, member of the religion of Islam. This all serves to portray Middle Easterners as very different to us, someone the West has hard time accepting at best or uncivilised, barbaric and violent people from the distant lands at worst.

However, there is a difference in the representation when comparing the movies (with their oversimplification and focus on action to serve the plot, sometimes to the detriment of the people presented) and journalistic work (which tries to be as objective as possible and cover the facts). They do not show the same picture and try to present a different outlook on the problems and stories depicted in them. On the other hand, both of them are coloured by opinions of their creators and can be used to further the gap between "us" and "them". Nevertheless, they both have their problems that need to be addressed.

3.1. Representation of the Middle East in U.S. journalism

Journalists, reporters and other people working to present the news to their readers try to do so as objectively as possible. Their goal should be to present the truth about what happened, where it happened, who was involved and other relevant facts connected to the

story. However, that is not always easy and it is especially difficult when talking about the Middle East. Their work can be influenced directly (by the intervention of the government, news agency limitations or leanings or just simply by beliefs and opinions of the journalist about the topic he is writing about) or indirectly by different factors which don't have to be obvious but can affect either the whole story, from which angle the story can be looked at or even the conclusions.

Nir Rosen, an American journalist lays out some of the problems connected to reporting in the Middle East in his opinion piece Western media fraud in the Middle East. He explains that the reader needs to know the production of the stories and be aware of the problems connected to reporting in these environments. It is quite difficult to explain to the Western audiences "the Other", something that is very different from their point of view. For the most part, views and stories reported from the Middle East by Western journalists are the stories of the ruling class of the country they report in and are not connected or try to establish a connection with the common people. Since it is very hard for the working class to get their message out, we mostly hear the story that was crafted by the ruling class and very rarely is there an actual focus on the struggle and lives of the regular people. Even if there is an attempt to get to know the local populace and present their story it is mostly changed to support the Americans' view of the world. The author also explains that "Western journalists take reality and amputate it, contort it, and fit it into a predetermined discourse or taxonomy" (Rosen). One of the examples given is the assassination of Osama bin Laden. While in America his story was presented everywhere and it was seen as a great victory against terrorism and the moment where past struggles were over, the Middle East saw it just as another political change not worth the attention it was getting from the Western media and especially from the America (Rosen).

Representation of the Middle East usually comes down to portraying them as Islamists usually only living by the principles of Islam. Only the ones who are similar to the Westerners are looked at with interest, and they are usually members of the ruling classes. Everyday workers who do not have the power to make their voices heard are usually ignored, their voices silenced and the only thing describing them is the perception of the journalist who makes up his mind about what are they supposed to represent. This in turn can create a perspective for the Western reader that distorts the image of what and who the worker class is in the Middle East. It can create an image that makes it very hard to relate to them due to differences in looks, beliefs and other aspects of life. As an example, after the bombing in the city of Brussels on 22 March 2016 there was a lot of confusion and misplaced hatred towards anyone who looked even remotely Middle Eastern. The Guardian reports of an incident where a man stopped a Muslim woman in the middle of London and demanded that she explain the attack that happened in Brussels several days earlier. He was arrested and his attack attracted a lot of criticism concerning his actions. On his Twitter account he replied that he felt no remorse for insulting what he called a "towelhead" which shows that he did not think of her as an independent person, but a member of a broader collective of people who support the actions of other Muslims, no matter what (Quinn).

However, sometimes these misconceptions are not entirely the fault of the journalists. The environment in which the journalists near the war zones reside does not allow for the freedom they need to fully explore and understand the problems of the common folk. The "Green zones" where they are safe to work without the fear for their lives does give them opportunities to stay longer near areas that might otherwise be dangerous for them to cover but also limit their movement and touch with the reality of the real world around them. They are mostly guarded by American soldiers and surrounded by protective walls and fences. Rosen tells that "As a journalist, you are making judgements on an entire country and

interpreting it for others, but you don't know the country because you don't really live in it" (Rosen).

Furthermore, even if journalists try and explore the real world of people living in the Middle East they are still unable to experience the whole social fabric which creates the society in these areas. Rarely do they visit markets, stay in restaurants or go to popular meeting places in these lands. Also, it is very common for journalists to just stroll through the town without visiting the local slums and feeling the hardship of everyday people. While they walk through the city, they are usually accompanied by a translator. However, this does not allow them to feel the atmosphere around town. If they rely on somebody else to present them the scene around them they have a hard time understanding how people feel. They, for example, cannot read the graffiti on the walls which can present a clear picture of what is the will of the people. Similar problem is with the background noise of the city, people talking about different things, songs and news playing from the radio. Relying on a translator to pick up on all these small things can be cumbersome and is very hard to present in its original form. There is always a difference from what you hear in the news or from the prominent politicians to what you may hear by going for a haircut, sitting in the restaurant or visiting somebody's home and talking to them in a relaxing and natural environment. The problem with translators does not end there. Talking to a single person for the whole time can lead to only seeing the story from one perspective and it depends on the social class, political position and even the country from which the translator in question comes from. Since there is a lot of instability in this region religious differences can do a whole spin on the story. Sunni or Shia Muslims may express hatred towards one another or Christians in the region or they might know very little of how the other side lives and what are their opinions due to spending most of the time in his own group. People from the rural areas may misrepresent the opinions of the people from the city and the other way around. They may even be hatred

towards the groups living in the same city and that may colour their judgement. Having access to different sort of people can also be very beneficial. In the areas where local militias currently hold a settlement, depending on the connections of the translator there could be different kinds of access which can bring a whole different story or give voice to a group of people who have not been presented or have been misrepresented due to the situation they are in.

Understanding a country from a journalistic perspective means being prepared to work with the common people. Preplanned mission rarely ever show the real picture of a society and only work to confirm our preconceived notions about an area we are talking about. Talking to passers-by, regular people going to or from work, people sitting in cafes and just having an everyday conversation is the only way to understand the people of the Middle East.

3.2. Representation of the Middle East in American popular culture

Fictional representation (movies, tv shows, etc.) differs quite extensively from the representation we can see in journalistic work. In order to be interesting and profitable there is usually a bigger preference for something shocking, unusual and interesting to keep the attention of the crowd during the whole movie. However, just representing the reality does not offer the same amount of action when compared to a fictional work. In order to make the story more interesting, filmmakers usually use exaggeration and distort the reality in order to present to the viewer something enjoyable. This is true when both presenting one's own culture, however, it is even more distorted when representing "the Other". Since we rarely

understand the life of someone we share few or no connections with, we resort to using stereotypes[1].

There are many examples of stereotyping "the Other" in movies and tv shows. For example, Asian people are usually represented as speaking "broken English", surrounded by mystery and strange customs despite the fact that some Asian families lived in the U.S. for a few centuries[2]. Furthermore, Native Americans are rarely shown as a diverse group of people, each with their own customs, practises and beliefs. They are either represented as bloodthirsty warriors who care little about modern life and decide to stay in their secluded villages and huts or as stoical and silent while wearing their native garb everywhere they go. However, Arabs are one of the most popular groups when it comes to stereotyping. It does not matter if they are currently living in the Middle East, moved to America recently or been living there for several generations Arab people are rarely given individual treatment and are instead lumped together with the rest of the people who look or think similar to them while being generalised and extremely streamlined to fit the view the West has of them (Jörg, Andreas). The picture of an Arab is usually very much influenced by the previous oriental works and retains the view of uncivilised, mysterious and barbaric society. In films and television shows they are usually depicted as villains and sometimes this goes even further. Even before 9/11 attacks on World Trade Center Middle Easterners were usually portrayed as terrorists.

The most common view of the Middle Eastern person is one who rides a camel in the desert. Even though people in these areas have a long history of keeping camels as their main

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[1] To believe unfairly that all people or things with a particular characteristic are the same ("stereotype")

[2] Main stereotypes being martial arts experts (Jet Li, Jackie Chan), tech experts (Rajesh in *The Big Bang Theory*), Chinatowns as den of crime and underworld (*Revenge of the Green Dragons)*

transportation this representation is largely outdated. An example of this can be seen in what is arguably the most popular segment in American television, Super Bowl commercials. In 2013 Coca-Cola presented their commercial ("Coke Chase 2013 Ad") showing several Arabs riding camels in the desert at the beginning. Even though Coca-Cola does not harbour any resentment towards Arab people directly, representing them this way furthers the stereotypical view and helps to fix this idea in the public consciousness of American viewers. This commercial features them as backwards and behind the times as they race against several other groups who are using a more modern means of transportation.

3.2.1. True Lies (Live action movie)

Even before the tensions and conflicts currently happening across the Middle East there was a tendency to portray Arabs as one-dimensional and anti-American (without any reason to be) terrorists whose only goal in life is to destroy America. In 1994, American movie "True Lies" was released. There we can see a group of terrorists depicted as nothing more than bloodthirsty and religious extremists called "Crimson Jihad". There is a big difference when talking about American and Arab characters. While the character of Harry Tasker (played by Arnold Schwarzenegger) is a patriotic family person who cherishes freedom and democracy, while the main villain Salim Abu Aziz is an irrational Islamic terrorist who has no remorse when talking about killing civilians. Aziz is presented as unshaven and barbaric and surrounded by henchmen who listen to his every word and obey him (Fig. 3). Even though the motivation for his actions is presented and justified (forcing the U.S military to leave the Persian Gulf and stop all actions in the Middle East), it is quite quickly forgotten and give no thought later in the movie due to actions he undertakes in the movies and his reasons are given no validity because he is unreasonable and dangerous. Through this representation of "the Other" we can learn more about how we perceive this

dissimilarity between cultures and give no thought to how the other side may feel about being lumped in with extremism.

Sulaiman Arti from the Loughborough University points out that this movie is closely connected to Said's explanation of representation in Orientalism. The fight of Orient vs Occident is shown as the main hero saves America from what is seen in film as violent and ruthless Palestinian Muslims. Arti mentions how film also tried to label all the Muslims being like Crimson Jihad and giving no thought about the individual. It dehumanizes them and gives them no chance to present their own point of view on these matters and falls to alreay established views of Arabs in the West (The evolution of Hollywood's representation of Arabs before 9/11: the relationship between political events and the notion of "Otherness",14-15).

Fig. 3. The terrorist leader in true lies

3.2.2. Aladdin (animated musical fantasy movie)

The other widely popular movie famous for its representation of Arabs is Disney's Aladdin. This widely popular children's movie was released in 1992 and quickly became box office hit. It follows the story of a young man named Aladdin who tries to escape poverty and achieve more in life than he currently has. He meets a young woman named Jasmine. It is later found out that she is a princess and the story follows their quest to unshackle themselves

from the limitations their current life possesses (Aladdin living on the street and in poverty and Princess Jasmine being forced by her family to marry a prince). While the movie is intended for children in a typical Disney fashion, there are still a few misconceptions about "the Other" and stereotyping of Arabic people.

At the beginning of the movie, the song "Arabian Nights" is played. It makes reference to the barbaric and underdeveloped nature of Arabic lands. The song states that this land as "where it's flat and immense and the heat is intense. It's barbaric but hey it's home" ("Aladdin"). While this does follow the trend of differentiating the land of the West (where the studio responsible for creation of this movie is situated) from the barbaric and strange far-away land of Arabs it serves a purpose to establish a landscape of this part of the world. It does not help when it comes to othering but it serves just as a simple introduction the world of   this movie. However, bigger problem is that this verse was not the first one featured in this film. The song originally described these lands as a place "where they cut off your ear if they don't like your face. It's barbaric, but hey, it's home" ("Aladdin"). The creators of the song clarified that the barbarity mentioned in the song was supposed to paint a picture of the land rather than its inhabitants (Fox). However, the fact still stands that this movie wanted to create an atmosphere where distant lands of the Arabs represent a danger to the common man and that there is a distinct difference between the civilised West where such a thing (like cutting off ears, especially with no motives given for that kind of behaviour) would never happen.

Opening song has in it several misconceptions about Arab people and it is not the only case of stereotyping. Big emphasis is also put on how the characters look and behave. The main protagonist, Aladdin, is at first portrayed as a street urchin. In order to survive, he has to steal. But since there is always tendency in movies to portray the main

Fig. 4. Aladdin   Fig. 5. Jafar

character as a "good guy", his thievery is justified when he offers not to eat this bread and instead give it to the poor children who are searching trash.

Since this movie was in development during the 1991 Gulf War there are also some parallels that can be drawn between what he is doing and what the United States troops were doing in Kuwait, trying to return order. He goes through the town of Agrabah (a fictional town which is the main location of the movie) and tries to restore order. He saves Princess Jasmine from getting her hand cut off for stealing an apple showing that he is not as barbaric as residents the rest of the residents and he does not agree with the backwards customs and laws of this town. The comparison of American troops and Aladdin does not end there. His looks and motivations are very American (fig 4). He has an American accent and his skin is not as dark as the skin of the other Arabs. He is presented as handsome, with a hair that more resembles the style of haircut in America from the 1990 than the average haircut from this region. He is clean and well-dressed even though he is portrayed as poor. Even his motivations bear a close similarity to the "American dream". Unlike the other Arabs living in

Agrabah, he values freedom greatly and has a dream of getting out of poverty and be successful. While Aladdin does some actions that could be characterised as evil, they are justified because he is doing it for the greater good.

On the other hand, the main antagonist Jafar is clever and self-absorbed. His physique is also presented as such and he is dark skinned, thin and unattractive. As he is the main villain he is made to look like one. However, this is also done through the over exaggeration of his Arabian ethnicity. He has large and feminine eyes, elongated neck and hooked nose (fig 5). He is a sorcerer. This makes use of the representation of the Orient as a mystic place with strange customs to create a character very different from our protagonist, who is a simple everyday person who we can relate to. His hypnotising snake staff also reflects his deceptive nature. He is established as a dictator who wants to take over the whole Agrabah and later to even rule the world. This represents him as a strange man with evil intentions from a faraway land whose schemes ultimately even endanger our world and our freedom. He is unusually cruel and decides to banish and even kill the people who do not share his vision as is seen with him banishing Aladdin to the frozen wasteland, hoping that he will die. This is given even more weight in the scene where Jafar states his intentions to become Sultan of Agrabah and the scene becomes dark and foggy, clearly stating that the intentions and actions of this man are evil (fig 5). He always wears dark clothes and is constantly plotting and scheming.

The third character that has to be mentioned is Princess Jasmine. She and her father are also fair-skinned akin to Aladdin. This representation of skin colour can also be put into question since they are the leaders of their city, richest people in their realm and overall good people as a contrast to the darker skin and clothes of the main villain. Their relationship also represents a backwards custom of the father finding a suitable husband for her father and how they are both bound by tradition (Sultan who forces her to marry his choice for her husband

and Jasmine as a person who has the will of others put on her). Jasmine is fighting alongside Aladdin so she can have freedom and ability to choose against a backwards society with their old customs. However, she is not presented as a strong character in the movie, same as all the other women. They are seen as beautiful, exotic and sexual things. The women (Jasmin included) are shown as scantly clothed and wearing clothes that reveal their stomach while also wearing veils to cover up their faces. This only serves to sexualise them and does not

Fig. 6. Princess Jasmine

have any basis in reality where Muslim women (and Agrabah is presented as a Muslim city) are prohibited from showing their body. This shows a tendency from the West to again mystify and misrepresent reality of the Arab way of life by using the view of "the Other" from the beginnings of orientalism. Homi Bhabha explains that this is done to create an image of the colonized as degenerate based on race and in turn dominates its spheres of

activity. This is done through fixity as stereotypes use racial, cultural and historical differences, reject them and fill the void with what is already known ("always in place") and must always be repeated. We use this to subjectivise the "reality" of something and influence it to be as we perceive it. We use our own opinions and thoughts to create an image in our own mind. This is very dangerous when it is present in mass media as it can influence our perception of the Other and we start to subjectify them ourselves (Bhabha 18-22).

3.2.3. Homeland (Television show)

The last example of representation of the Middle East by the U.S. Media is the television show Homeland. It follows a CIA detective Carrie Mathison and a U.S. Marine Corps Scout Sniper Nicholas Brody. The show covers many anti-terrorist actions undertaken by CIA to protect their citizens. The story takes place both in America and in the Middle East and several locations are visited in both. Despite its high rankings it has received many complaints regarding racism, bigotry and misconceptions about the people and locations in the Middle East[3].

One of these complaints focuses on the opening scene of the second season. Agent Mathison is stationed in Beirut and the scene takes place in the Hamra Street. This street is represented as a gloomy place that looks poverty stricken. Its inhabitants are secretive and look dangerous even to the residents of that city, let alone an American detective such as agent Mathison. She has to cover herself not to attract the attention of people walking by or just standing in the street. All of them look like they are members of some kind of Islamic sect only waiting for an opportunity to strike at a foreigner or join in on some act of terror. There is some strange music playing loudly in the nearby garage and a local imam is yelling

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[3]Durkay, Laura. "'Homeland' is the most bigoted show on television."; Phillips, Claire. "'Homeland is racist': artists sneak subversive graffiti on to TV show."

in the street. To add to the feeling of strangeness, there is a yellow filter trying to further set the scene somewhere in the desert wasteland to show that this is a dangerous place compared to the streets in the West (fig. 7). However, the reality is completely different. Hamra street in real life looks modern (fig. 8), with shops everywhere you look bustling with regular common folk shopping. There is even an American university nearby where you can find Starbucks and similar American chains. People are walking freely without any need to cover up or hide. The depiction in the show has the goal of distancing ourselves from what is perceived as enemy (Arab population) in the show. It cares very little about what picture the Western viewer might get about these areas or people living in them (Durkay).

Another example of this is the local graffiti in season five. To add to the authenticity of the location (a Syrian refugee camp) the creators of the show hired several local street artists to produce graffiti similar to what can be seen on the streets in the Middle East. However, it was later discovered that they cared very little about what was being said in the graffiti as long as it is not too offensive or extreme. The artists decide to use this opportunity to protest this kind of representation of Arabs in the show and wrote things such as "Homeland is racist" and "Freedom … now in 3D" (Phipps). But, this went over the head of the producers since they cared so little about the reality that they did not even bother to check what was written. They achieved their goal of "authenticity" and were happy with the work done. However, this backfired and only put to light the fact that they did not want a realistic picture of that are but one that they saw in their head no matter the harm to the reputation of the population of the area.

Fig. 7. Hamra Street in Beirut

Fig. 8. Hamra Street as depicted in the television series Homeland

4. Conclusion

The feeling of needing to prove ourselves by comparing what is ours to someone else is long rooted in the history of mankind. There has always been a need to validate yourself no matter the cost to others. This has led to many conflicts and misconceptions as well as fuelling hatred towards something unknown to us.

The focus of the paper was to explain the view of American media of the Middle East and in order to achieve that it was necessary to present several notions and processes that we do either purposefully or unconsciously. Notions such as othering, painting the West as the Occident and the Other side as an exotic and mysterious place (the Orient), nationalism so deeply seeded into our culture that we do not even recognise it (banal nationalism) and creation of "the Other" only give the West more fuel to keep the fire of the cultural conflicts burning.

The most sensitive tool for representation on today's world is surely the media. Whether it is fictional (television series, movies) or real (journalistic) it is always susceptible to propaganda, either using the media as propaganda or media being influenced by propaganda and further developing the narrative. Even the objective media (journalism) can be used by state to push a story or it can be that the journalistic work misrepresents the reality due to ignorance of the reality caused by external factors.

Overall, there is still much hatred harboured toward "the Other", especially in the American media which is largely influenced by the current instability of the Middle East and the influence from all over the world. There is always hope that this conflict between civilisations will stop but by looking at the current political situation the chances are very small.

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Stvaranje Drugoga u Medijima Sjedinjenih Američkih Država

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Sažetak

Prikazivanje nečega što je suprotno od nas je uvijek bio težak posao. Često ono može uzrokovati sukobe između civilizacija vezano uz to kako oni vidi svijet oko sebe. Cilj ovoga rada bio je analizirati glavne uzroke koji uzrokuju sukobe između civilizacija te kako to utječe na medije Sjedinjenih Američkih Država kada prikazuju Bliski Istok. Ovaj rad se bazira na radu Edwarda Saida (1997) i mnogih drugih autora koji se bave postkolonijalizmom i trenutnim političkim strujama u ili povezanima s Bliskim Istokom. Analiza je pokazala da postoji veliki broj krivih prikaza i pokušaja odvajanja nas od "onog Drugog" da bi opravdali pogled na svijet koji prevladava na zapadu. Ovaj rad za cilj ima prikazati kako takva prezentacija može uzrokovati razne druge probleme u društvu, poput propagande u medijima i problema rasizma kako u Americi pa tako i u drugim zemljama kroz filmove Aladdin, True Lies i televizijsku seriju Homeland.

Ključne riječi: Bliski Istok, "Drugi", reprezentacija, mediji Sjedinjenih Američkih Država