The evolution of Hollywood’s representation of Arabs before 9/11: the relationship between political events and the notion of ‘Otherness’

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Abstract

This article will deliberate on the political motives behind the stereotypical image of Arabs in Hollywood in the period before 9/11. Hollywood has always played a propagandist as well as a limitative role for the American imperial project, especially, in the Middle East. This study suggests that the evolution of this representation has been profoundly influenced by political events such as the creation of Israel, the Iranian Islamic revolution and the demise of the Soviet Union. Hollywood’s presentation of Arabs through a distinctive lens allows America, through Hollywood, to present the Middle East as ‘alien’ and so helps to make it an acceptable area for the exercise of American power. The interpretations of Hollywood’s representation of Middle Easterners involve different, often contradictory, types of image. They also suggest that the intensification of the Arabs’ stereotypical image over the last century from ‘comic villains’ to ‘foreign devils’ did not occur in a vacuum but, certainly, with the intertwining of both political and cultural interests in the region. It is believed that this was motivated indirectly by U.S imperial objectives.
is the relation between the personality (essential nature) and the person (body) of a human being; it is the relation of essential and superficial characteristics of personal identity that corresponds to the relationship between opposite but correlative characteristics of the Self, because the difference is inner-difference, within the Self.[3][4]. The condition and quality of Otherness, the characteristics of the Other, is the state of being different from and alien to the social identity of a person and to the identity of the Self.[5] In the discourse of philosophy, the term Otherness identi