

HOLLYWOOD AND THE REPRESENTATION OF THE OTHERNESS. A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE AMERICAN CINEMA IN SPOTTING ENEMIES TO VILIFY

HOLLYWOOD Y LA REPRESENTACIÓN DE LA OTREDAD. ANÁLISIS HISTÓRICO DEL PAPEL DESEMPEÑADO POR EL CINE ESTADOUNIDENSE EN LA FORJA DE ENEMIGOS NACIONALES

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Resumen: Hollywood ha desempeñado un papel decisivo en la configuración de la corta historia del país bajo cuyo abrigo nació, los Estados Unidos de América. En este artículo se examinan la representación de los pueblos no occidentales en las películas hollywoodienses desde finales de la década de los años sesenta hasta finales de la década de los años noventa; con el fin de detectar recurrencias en los retratos de esos Otros, especialmente cuando se tiende a describirlos en términos peyorativos. Esto demuestra que la tendencia era recurrente y estaba bien asentada en Hollywood mucho antes incluso de los ataques del 11 de septiembre. El análisis de argumentos y personajes de las películas americanas a través de las diferentes etapas históricas observadas ratifica no solo los conocidos lazos entre Hollywood y la Casa Blanca, sino que revela una serie de patrones recurrentes en la caracterización de esta Otredad y también una necesidad aún más interesante de definir y reafirmar la propia identidad a través de la oposición a un Otro cuya fisonomía cambia de manera pareja al momento político e histórico que coincide con el lanzamiento de la película. **Palabras clave:** Hollywood; cine; otredad; política; guerra de Vietnam; Guerra Fría.

Abstract: Hollywood has played a decisive role in shaping the recent and short history of its founding country, the United States. This paper explores the representation of peoples outside the Western standard in Hollywood movies from the late 1960s to the late 1990s; ultimately aiming at spotting recurrences in the portrayal of Others, especially in vilifying terms, that were systematically settled in Hollywood's imagery much before 9/11. The analysis of plots and characters in American movies not only reaffirms the well-known connection between

Hollywood and the White House, but also reveals consistent patterns in the depiction of Otherness, and an even more interesting need to define and reaffirm the Self through the opposition to changing Others that mainly depend on the historical and political period occurring. **Keywords:** Hollywood; Film Language; Otherness; Politics; Vietnam War; Cold War.

*Those who tell the stories
also rule the society
(Plato, Republic)*

One of the most powerful tools through which Hollywood has built its ability to depict peoples is precisely the natural way in which its films glance at them. Certainly, when spectators watch a blockbuster, they may be expecting thrills, love, interesting turns or, simply speaking, a story that is appealing enough. It seems more difficult, though, that, blinded by the fascinating features inherent to film language, both at technical and narrative levels, they pay any attention to the accuracy with which all the social and cultural groups are represented there; unless, obviously, they feel directly identified to one of them¹.

This is precisely what makes Hollywood so powerful, not only when it comes to represent American or ultimately Western society, but also those Others who have been systematically represented throughout history in its productions. “No institution”, as Richardson (2010: 1) points out, “has been more successful at binding together economic and cultural dominance on a world stage than Hollywood”. Bearing in mind that mass media are the main source of knowing Others for average Westerners, the role of Hollywood depictions of these ‘outsiders’ becomes essential, as most people do not have other ways to access those cultures but by seeing their representation on the screen.

Prominent authors like Rosenstone (1998)² and Ferro (1988) have discussed how movies play a decisive role in the configuration of history, but before going

[01] For instance, if a Spanish spectator watches how John Woo’s *Mission Impossible 2* (1990) portrays Seville as a curious mix of *flamenco* (typical music of this Southern region of Spain) and burning wooden figures which clearly evoke the celebration of the *Fallas* (exclusive from Valencia, which is located 432 miles away from Seville), he will immediately feel something is wrong there. But it is unlikely that the same spectator will accord the same level of close attention to the accuracy of the representation of other, though equally misrepresented, groups.

[02] “Times have changed –drastically”, writes Rosenstone (1998: 2) recalling the days when films were not a valid source for most Historians. “Now major journals like the *American Historical Review* and the *Journal of American History* devote sections to film (...) Now the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians both give awards for the best historical film of the year. Now panels on film and screenings mark every major convention of historians”.

into further considerations about the role Hollywood plays in the (re)creation of Others, we might ask whether there is such a necessity as having an Other either in movies, in Politics or in life.

1. Is it necessary to find an Other?

The historical roots of this Otherness notion are inextricably linked to that of Empire. For instance, the Roman Empire was built partly on a reaffirmation of the Self that implied an unspoken –or, sometimes, not so unspoken– primacy over the Other. Patricians, for instance, applied this “Other” label not only to foreigners, but even to subordinated classes. And it is difficult to deny that this mechanism somehow still exists in modern, more subtle versions of Empires –although the United States are a Republic politically speaking, they have often been referred to as an Empire by authors like Ferguson (2005), even if it is only considered to be so at certain levels (cultural, especially)–. As Hardt & Negri (2000: 194) have put it (white) supremacy needs some sense of Otherness, which is measured ‘according to degrees of deviance from whiteness’ (quoted in Sharma & Sharma 2003: 305).

However, some authors have pointed out that current times are seeing a shift in this very concept. In this respect, Jameson (1991: 290) assures that Otherness is becoming an empty category, thus dangerous, as “any type of social content can be poured (there) at will”. Other writers such as Kellner (1995: 83) support this view and categorically affirm that movies “must have an Enemy, an evil ‘Foreign Other’”.

Hence a dialectical portrayal of the Otherness, even more so if it comes in simplistic and vilifying terms, is a useful tool for reaffirming where the self stands. That is precisely what Worth’s (2002: 1) points out when he reminds that the United States ‘defines itself in part through its nemeses’. In the end, it seems that the ultimate aim of the utilisation of the Other is making us all feel that, as Dorothy had to say in *The Wizard of Oz*, ‘there’s no place like home’ (or, in other words, there is no Other better than us). Besides, ‘a common enemy can serve to distract attention and divert aggression and energy toward a common threat’ (Merskin 2004: 159).

2. How to represent a “useful” Other

From our previous definition of the purposes for which Others have been used throughout history, it seems clear that not every representation of the Other is “useful”, neither in Politics, nor in movies. We should also take into consideration that when we talk about a common use of Otherness as a ‘nemesis’ we are referring not only to some Other destined to be feared, condemned, and fought;

but also to someone to be fascinated about (this cross-refers to some of Said's arguments on Orientalism and the mesmerising effect the East has on the West, as quoted in Sharma & Sharma 2003: 302).

Žižek (2002: 16) synthetically summarised the 9/11 attacks as the event that changed the world because “America got what it fantasized about”. Controversially as it is, Žižek’s quote interestingly echoes Said’s postulates on how what Westerners depict as barbaric may be looked at with moderately disguised fascination. When we watch certain movies in which the opposition between “Us” and “Them” is constructed, we not only identify ourselves with the hero that obliterates the Other; but also we somehow feel attracted by this Otherness, safe in the knowledge that we only observe their malicious instincts as unseen voyeurs, far from them, the stuttering bar-bar-ians, whom those intolerable characteristics exclusively belong to.

However, the construction of the Otherness in current times should not be understood as an unchallenged notion. Neither the West, nor the States –hence Hollywood– can be considered as monolithic blocks, nor the represented peoples are utterly passive, nor all Western audiences absorb every Hollywood message without criticism at all. As Sharma & Sharma (2003: 303) highlight, referring to the case of contemporary representations of the Orient, such Western views are beginning to be “confronted, infiltrated, and defied by its own abjured structure of exclusion”. However, it would also be an overstatement to utterly neglect the political-ideological-cultural implications Hollywood’s world-view have and its subsequent impact on the massive audiences that systematically consume their messages.

Let us come back to our heading once again: how is effective Otherness created?? , Returning to our opening paragraph, we can say that audience’s (again not all the audiences, but a relevant part of them) lack of criticism on Hollywood depictions of others has its roots in the assumption that filmmakers do not shape reality, but “just reflect the world as it is” (Michael Medved, quoted in French 1997: 25 y 26).

Decades of research on media (and what are films but mediators of reality, too?) production and effects prove, however, that films do not simply reflect reality (as slippery as the concept may be): they also produce it, as prominent authors such as Hall (quoted in Gavrilos 2002: 428) have repeatedly pointed out. Films can be referred to, paraphrasing Chomski and Herman (1988), as “manufacturers of consent”.

Thus, if we are to accept that films co-contribute to this process of not only recreate, but create, reality, we may even go further and presume that, as Park (1997, as quoted in Sharma & Sharma, 2003: 312) puts it, the West wants

its version of the Other to be “the” version. As Readings (1992: 174, as quoted in Kaplan, 1997: 157) puts it, Americans “believe they can say ‘we’ and their ‘we’ will stand for humanity”. Clarke (1997: 33 & 34) is even more explicit. In his view, “Hollywood has created a series of Others which in no sense relate to the self-definition of these diverse other places and peoples: rather they project the needs, fears, fantasies and representations of particular American ideologies”.

This is why stereotypes serve this purpose so well: as Merskin (2004: 160) points out, stereotypes allow us to ‘present members of a group as being all the same’, exaggerating and simplifying a handful of characteristics and applying them to a whole people without exceptions (Hall, 1997: 258). The use of stereotypes facilitates the understanding of the “buzzing confusion of the outer world”, which was anticipated as early as almost a century ago by Walter Lippmann (1922: 81). The process of stereotyping clearly cross-refers to concerns about the growing commodification of culture as recently expressed by Jameson (1991), Tasker (1993: 110) and Hill & Every (2001: 104), and even earlier by Adorno and Horkheimer (1979).

This reductionist “archetype of the enemy” (Hyde & McGuinness, 1994: 86) has for Keen (1986) a “standard repertoire” of mechanisms through which the Other is depicted. Spillman & Spillman (1997, as quoted in Merskin, 2004: 160) articulate this process of simplification of the Other through different steps:

1. **Negative anticipation.** Label every act performed –either in past or in current times– by the Other as malicious and addressed to harm our interests.
2. **Putting blame on the enemy.** The Other is the cause of all the current negative conditions of our group.
3. **Identification of Evil.** The Other represents the exact opposite to our whole set of values. What is more, they are envious of our position and therefore, they want to destroy our morale and, ultimately, us.
4. **Zero-Sum Thinking.** The enemy is our nemesis, so if something is good for them it is bad for us and vice-versa.
5. **De-Individualization.** There is no intermediate position. Anyone who shows some sympathy to the enemy becomes immediately our enemy as well. Again, simplification of what is, usually, a more complex reality.

6. **No sympathy.** We have nothing in common with them; therefore there is no way we can show sympathy at any time.

Kaplan (1997: 81) adds to that other mechanisms like “infantilizing minorities”, “animalizing minorities” (cf. also Green, 1993: 327) or “sexualizing minorities as lusty”.

3. How America creates Others. A Hollywood/ White House affair

Dr. Thomas Radecki, founding member of the National Coalition on Television Violence, said once that he found at least “dangerous” the fact that former United States President Ronald Reagan had acknowledged to have learnt how to deal with terrorists watching Rambo movies (quoted in Shaheen, 2003: 68). And, although the ties Obama’s Administration had with Hollywood are probably less remarkable than Reagan’s –Sklar (1994: 339) affirms that “the 1980s would be remembered, in movies and in politics, as the Age of Reagan”, and it is still doubtful that Obama’s impact will be recalled as such in the future–, it is difficult not to evoke some distant similarity when one thinks of President Obama’s open admiration of TV show *House of Cards*³, whose ties have been interestingly explored by Hackett (2015: 88-90) and recall nothing but the aforementioned power films and TV have nowadays to not only reflect but, more importantly, shape reality.

Also, Reagan’s words seem to reflect more a whole set of ideas than a mere anecdote. Indeed, Kellner (1995: 74) argues that Reaganite foreign policy –mainly based on violence and secrecy– clearly evoked “Ramboesque solutions”. That is why he ended up saying that neither Hollywood nor the White House can be considered “innocent entertainment, but lethal weapons in the service of dominant socio-economic forces” (Kellner, 1995: 77). Žižek (2002: 16) even talks about an explicit cooperation after the 9/11 attacks, when some press reports talked about a group of Hollywood specialists in catastrophe films recalled by the Pentagon, which wanted them to imagine “possible scenarios for terrorist attacks and how to fight them”. One month later, in November 2001, the White House and the Hollywood Industry representatives met a few more times “with the aim of co-ordinating the war effort” against terrorism.

Yet this relationship seems even clearer when we check Huntington’s and Fukuyama’s works on the dialectics between the West and the constructed Others. Both had previously worked as United States policymakers or advisors,

[03] The United States President published a tweet in February 2014 saying “Tomorrow: @HouseOfCards. No spoilers, please” (<http://twitter.com/barackobama/status/434108103789793281>). Previously, he had confessed to Homeland star Damien Lewis that he was a big fan of the show (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zQqDgWVEhY>).

therefore the coincidences of their works with some Hollywood depiction of Others becomes particularly striking. Huntington (1993: 40) literally affirms that the whole set of ideas and values that characterise the West “often have little resonance” in other civilizations.

Focusing on the specific case of Islamic civilization, he concludes that the problem of the West (which he probably identifies with the United States –and that is revealing enough too) is not with fundamentalism, but with the whole Islam, “a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power” (Huntington, 1996: 217). One should note here how the mechanism of simplification and stereotyping described before also works for Huntington: all the Muslims feel superior and need to obliterate the West (cf. also Kimball, 1991: 13). It is also interesting the terms in which Huntington establishes the rules for the relationships between civilizations: superiority is a sin except when it is played by the West.

In like manner, although Fukuyama does not talk about such clash of civilizations and probably believes in a landscape in which the West is not so challenged (the end of History), we can still see in his work a vital separation between us (the good ones) and them (evil), which evokes the simplification of many Hollywood movies. “The good states”, says Fukuyama (1992: 88), “still have to live in a world with bad states”.

4. Some “Others” Throughout Film History

From Early cinema until today, Hollywood has shown great skills in the process of vilification of certain peoples (cfr. Merskin, 2004: 164). The most significant case in classical Hollywood is probably the mythical and distorted portrait of Native American Indians, as profusely and accurately explored by Jojola (1993), but can also extend, as suggested by May (2002: 90) to the “perpetuated racial stereotypes” of non-whites that Hollywood strongly echoed from the 1930s. There are many more cases throughout Film History⁴ where we can find inte-

[04] One of the oddest changes in Hollywood’s mainstream view was that towards the Communist regime of the Soviet Union during the Second World War. After years of vilification of a regime identified as the enemy of the Western set of values (films like Lubitsch’s *Ninotchka* (1941) and King Vidor’s *Comrade X* (1940) are good examples of this), *Mission to Moscow*, by Michael Curtiz (1943) amounted to a milestone. There, the character played by Walter Huston even argued that it was “unwise, un-Christian” not to help “the courageous people of the Soviet Union”. The switch in the stereotype fits perfectly in the quest of a common enemy mentioned by Merskin (2004: 159). And in that quest, every ally was welcome. However, this alliance did not last forever. As Fyne (1985: 199) points out, McCarthy’s witch hunt showed no mercy with the directors, writers and actors who took part in the film.

resting depictions of the Otherness that proves that the very notion was well settled in Hollywood much before the 9/11 attacks.

4. 1. Vietnam: the new (hi)story

The role Hollywood played in the conflict in Vietnam was probably one of the most outstanding efforts the industry had to undertake to help the United States population cope with one of the most notorious war traumas they had to go through in the 20th century. Hill & Every (2001: 105) label a big number of American movies on Vietnam with a “form of nostalgia for a present that never was”. Kellner (1995: 64) is even more explicit and talks about an “inability to accept defeat”, which leads him to affirm that, after their military failure, Americans have tried to “achieve it (victory) in media culture” (Kellner, 1995: 69).

Many of these movies portray an American hero returning to Vietnam for a high-risk mission, usually related to the liberation of other soldiers. Stallone’s *Rambo II* or Norris’ saga *Missing in Action* are just some of the most prominent examples of this trend. Vietnamese are typically represented as evil, merciless bandits who, to top it up, befriend Soviets, whose recurrence in torture scenes reinforce their portrait as sadistic villains.

Of course Hollywood discourse, if such thing exists, was not totally homogeneous. Films like Oliver Stone’s *Platoon* (1986), *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), *JFK* (1991), and *Nixon* (1995), Michael Cimino’s *The Deer Hunter* (1978), Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now* (1979) or Stanley Kubrick’s *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) are also American productions that went beyond the Manichean vilification and portrayed the war, and more specifically its side effects, in a much more complex manner.

4. 2 Finish them off. Late Hollywood offensives against Communism

Anticommunism seems to slowly fade away from the American political scene –and, subsequently, from Hollywood movies– after the late 1960s (Ryan & Kellner, 1988: 212 y 213); but, in the late 1970s, and especially in the early 1980s, it strikes back in what could be interpreted as a last –and, seemingly, successful– attempt to finish the Soviet enemy off. Reagan identified Soviets as the “focus of evil” in the 1980s, and they were certainly presented that way in many Hollywood productions of that time: they were the past, present and probably future menace to the welfare state of the West, ergo the Evil enemy that needs to be utterly obliterated. Rambo’s ‘trip’ to Afghanistan, where he befriends Afghan is not only paradigmatic of this stig-

matization of the Soviet Enemy as pure Evil⁵, but also of the fact of how changeable the Other could be for Hollywood⁶.

Rocky IV, with Stallone (yet again) fighting Russian champion Ivan Drago is another good example. The comparison between both of them is clear: Rocky trains between “friends” whereas Drago is surrounded by Russian officials and his training sessions are always monitored (symbol of mechanisation, that is, lack of humanity). At the end, we see Drago taking steroids as a final symbol of not only his degradation, but also that of the whole Soviet system (Tasker, 1993: 125). Oddly enough, the mechanisation Hollywood used as an argument to degrade the Soviet enemy becomes a friendly reasoning with which they belittle the underdeveloped Arab Other (who has nothing to do with the hyper-technological American Self). Thus not only is the Other mutable, but the arguments that are used to despise them are too; and this could seem normal, as they are presented to be so from both the politico-ideological (White House) and the cultural (Hollywood) environment.

4.3. The latent threat. The Post-Communist Evil

Contrarily to what it may be thought, the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War did not mean an absolute disappearance of the Soviet enemy in Hollywood. Part of this prototypical character was shifted into that of a new ally of the United States, as it can be seen in *Iron Eagle* (Sidney J. Furie, 1986). But there’s still a silent menace coming from the former USSR. The Sadism, Machiavellism, and calculating character applied once to the Soviet villains is still valid for some recent evildoers coming from the former USSR or areas influenced by it. Somehow, these are the same villains, yet freed from any State power. Such “lawless” component adds an extra danger to evilness itself, even though one may infer that the same feature is decoded as appealing, not fearful, when applied to characters like John Rambo himself. Films like *Die Hard* (John McTiernan, 1988) –in which Bruce Willis played a law outsider, but yet again only to fight the enemy–, *Con Air* (Simon West, 1997) or *15 Minutes* (John Hertzfeld, 2001) certainly portrait this prototypical villain. Yet this contemporary category of bad guys seems to reinforce some of

[05] Other movies, such as *Red Dawn* (John Milius, 1984), went even further and staged a Soviet invasion of the United States. Apart from the already-mentioned depiction of the Russians as total Evil, this kind of fantasies seem to be addressed to make Westerners aware of the threat that hung over their heads.

[06] Again, Jameson’s notion of postmodern Evil as an empty category where ‘any type of social content can be poured at will’ (Jameson 1991: 290) becomes specially relevant.

the same aims already seen Hollywood films made to fight the Communist threat.

5. In Quest of New Scapegoats? Arabs on Screen

Iron Eagle is not only one of the first Hollywood products which offered a new détente between Russians and Americans. Its racist portrayal of Arabs as “subhuman sadists and villains” (Kellner, 1995: 84) also made it one of the first sagas of the 1980s that made a clear shift in quest of a new Enemy. As Said (1997: xxviii) puts it, it was all as if, once the Cold War had ended, America needed a new scapegoat, “a new foreign devil”. But, was it true that the Arabs literally substituted the Soviets in the category of Evil Otherness? This is where Said’s views need qualifying.

5. 1. Where did they come from? Settling Arabs within the Evil space

Rather than being a quick process of negatively stereotyping a whole people, Shaheen (2003: 2) suggests that the vilifying of Arabs in Hollywood films was a task performed over the long-term. That would explain why more than nine hundred out of about a thousand films he analyses in *Reel Bad Arabs* deliver negative portrayals of the Arabs. Certainly, if we take a look at some old movies, we recognise some of the features which currently are associated with Arabs in contemporary Hollywood films.

For example, in *The Black Coin* (Albert Herman, 1936) was the first movie to present an Arab terrorist trying to blow up an airplane (Shaheen, 2003: 10), something that also cross-refers to Žižek’s (2002: 16) notion already referred to of Hollywood’s ability for fantasizing with its own fears. But even before that year Hollywood’s fight against the Arab Other was well-installed. In 1928 Gary Cooper performed as Major Henri de Beaujolais in *Beau Sabreur*, where a despotic sheikh was the origin of a serious confrontation that “obliged” the heroes to obliterate every Arab resistance (Shaheen, 2003: 92).

In *I Cover the War* (1937), John Wayne plays a cameraman visiting a British-occupied colony who has to deal with rebels not only depicted in the movie as dirty and ugly, but also openly labelled as a group of “fanatic tribesmen” (Shaheen, 2003: 250). *Follow that Camel* (1967), in which one character refer to the Arabs as “these monkeys” –something that evokes the notion of animalization mentioned by Kaplan (1997: 81) and Green (1993: 327)– is also a good example of how Arabs have been portrayed as villains in a considerable number of Hollywood productions from the very beginning of Film History.

5. 2. The 80s. A milestone of Arab's presence in Hollywood films

With such precedents, Arabs' presence as villains in contemporary Hollywood films seems to be nothing but the awakening of a hibernating mantra. Apart from the aforementioned *Iron Eagle*, there are some other interesting examples. For instance, *The Delta Force* (Menahem Golan, 1986) presents Chuck Norris fighting against evil Palestinian hijackers portrayed as subhuman, sadistic terrorists "prepared to die" (as one of them literally says). No intermediate position is provided: they are total Evil and we (Norris) are utterly good.

Also, Harrison Ford played the United States President fighting against Kazakhstani terrorists (who oddly plan to land in some Arab country) in *Air Force One* (Wolfgang Petersen, 1997), and one year after Denzel Washington played an FBI agent who had to fight against Islamist terrorists too in *The Siege* (Edward Zwick, 1998). *Wanted: Dead or Alive* (Gary Sherman, 1987), *Death before Dishonour* (Terry Leonard, 1987), or *Navy Seals* (Lewis Teague, 1990) can also be included within this group of films in which Arabs are uncivilized savage terrorists full of rage, waging a war against the West which, paraphrasing Huntington, is motivated by their inability to get what the West has achieved.

True Lies (James Cameron, 1994) deserves a special mention, not only concerning to this stereotyped depiction of the "irrational, barbaric, underdeveloped, and inferior" Arabs (Kellner, 1995: 87), but in the relationship between Hollywood and the White House. Starring future Governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger, *True Lies* perpetuates the stereotypes of both Arab sheikhs ("boring oil billionaires", as Harry, the character he plays, calls them) and unmerciful Palestinian terrorists. Again, as outlined previously, Arabs are presented as an inferior class who do not know how to be funny even when they are rich. That is why it does not seem surprising to hear Harry, when asked by his wife Helen (Jamie Lee Curtis) whether he has ever killed anyone, reassuring her beloved one by acknowledging it with a big "but" in between": "Yeah, but they were all bad".

5. 3. Exceptions. Three Kings or the last hopes of mutual understanding

Some critics have referred to *Three Kings* (David O. Russell, 1999) as a breath of fresh air in the polluted landscape of cinematic Arab portrayals. Certainly, there is much more of an effort to overcome stereotypes in the movie, where we can see not only the habitual Arab unmerciful scoundrel (represented here by the Iraqi guard); but other groups, Arabs as well, who appear in thoughtful and courageous roles. Oddly too, this Warner Bros production reflects American characters portraying some moral weaknesses such as greed (although the main heroes ends up leaving this aside, aware of the situation of Iraqi people).

Does this mean that the door for a mutual understanding and a more respectful and fairer treatment of the Other –in this case the Arabs– is still open in Hollywood films? This should be fully discussed in other papers focused on that specific topic, although prominent authors seem to disagree. Following Kellner's (1995: 88) arguments, for instance, we would conclude that movies still need to be less offensive, as producers will probably want to “gain the maximum possible audience by offending nobody”⁷. Hence, issues of sensitivity will become more central. Even more so if, as Shaheen (2003: 6) points out, Arabs eventually get to form an influential lobby in the United States. But would either Hollywood or the White House survive without stereotyping Enemies destined to be picked up when necessary?

6. Conclusion. A prospective gaze on Hollywood's hunger for Others

American history seems to suggest that neither Hollywood nor the White House will be able to do without constructing Others whom to run up against. This partly roots in the historical foundations of the United States history. In the 18th century the French and the British had set up a number of (shifting) alliances and/or arrangements with various indigenous North-American Indian peoples⁸; (post-) Revolutionary Americans did not feel committed to maintaining those, opening the way to expansionism and ultimately to genocide (cf. Zinn, 1980: 77-102).

As the process of expansion to the West began, so did the process of denial of the Other. Yet, there was no sound reason for settlers to claim an utter superiority, aside of firepower, over the natives. In fact, Indian natives were one of the most recurrent Others in emerging Hollywood in general, and the Western genre in particular⁹. The United States seems to depend much more on the construction of the Others, mostly for its short history and the necessity of compressing the process by which previous Empires have created their social imaginary in a much more abbreviated span of time. Most of what the United States had to claim their superiority was, in fact, derived from the European roots they somehow wanted to differentiate from, as Obama has

[07] In the same terms, Hill & Every's believe that movies will have to “work in as many markets as possible”.

[08] In fact, current Thanksgiving roots back to Plymouth harvest festival, which started in the 17th century as a brotherly event where the European settlers and Native Americans gathered to celebrate richer harvests –which were possible by the implementation of the techniques that the settlers had brought over (cf. McKenzie, 2013).

[09] Cawelti (1999) and Simmon (2003) have also explored the role played by the Western genre in the configuration of American History.

recently acknowledged apropos of the recent killings of November 13th 2015 in Paris¹⁰.

As a result of these roots, Hollywood has systematically vilified groups of peoples as part of the business, but with clear ideological bonds/repercussions. The Russians have been both evil and the redeemed partner, according to the exigencies of the times, and their Asian counterparts have coped the Otherness in a good share of Hollywood's movies, especially when addressing the Vietnam War.

Meanwhile the Arabs, who seem to have substituted them in recent years, have impersonated vilified roles from Early Hollywood cinema. But all of them seem to represent for the Americans a set of ancient, modern and latent threats that reassure the identity of this hastily built country. We may even go further and affirm that these Others are, somehow, the American identity itself. In the times in which it was about forming a nation, the Indians served as the opposite force; when it was the prevailing power in the world that was emerging, it was the turn of the Russians then the Arabs to take up that role.

In the end, it seems unlikely that Hollywood machinery will be able to live without these recurrent Others, fresh fodder for stereotypes, degradations and, ultimately, obliteration. The United States have historically created a cast of enemies who are already part of themselves, by stressing the bonds of the states by identifying common fears and threats. Hollywood's role in the process is not only undeniable; but possibly vital and indispensable, too.

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[10] After the bombings, Obama showed his support to the French people by reminding that "in this time of tragedy (...) the bonds of liberte, egalite, fraternite, are not just the values French people share, but we share."

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11995505/Paris-attacks-Why-has-France-been-targeted-again.html>).

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