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SHEIKS AND SHERIFS:

WESTERN PORTRAYALS OF THE MIDDLE EAST BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Oftentimes, when there are analyses of E. M. Hull's *The Sheik* or discussions of Lowell Thomas's presentations over "Lawrence of Arabia," the intertextual nature between these works—as well as the historical and cultural context in which they were created—is overlooked. Through this thesis, I aim to show how historical events from World War I influenced and enabled E. M. Hull's *The Sheik* and led to how Lowell Thomas tailored his presentation of "Lawrence of Arabia," and furthermore, how they altogether influenced the world of film during this period. Furthermore, I posit that this is, almost exactly, Orientalism in the sense that Said describes, in which these texts serve as a set of stereotypes and assumptions for which Orientalist stereotypes and assumptions are brought in to the Western consciousness.

In other words, by showing how all of these events, novels, films, and productions came together, I aim to show just how they were able to set of stereotypes through which the West absorbed their information about the Middle East—forcing it into more and more standardized and familiar molds—and creating a narrative on what the Middle East was for the West. This would lead to how the Middle East was portrayed throughout the period between World War I and World War II.

Introduction

We are living in a time when, even almost seventeen years later, the consequences of the September 11th attacks are still felt to this day. When I experienced the attacks as a child, it was almost impossible not to notice the both sudden and intense shift in focus of America—taking the gaze of many Americans from home to abroad. And with this shift, people's interest in stories from the region began to grow. People, particularly my childhood friends, began to almost demand stories of this far off land that—collectively, in their eyes—had torn away the safety and isolationism that America had once enjoyed. Perhaps it was in search for answers and to better understand the reasons why the terrorist attacks had occurred. But nevertheless, the shift in attention was there.

For this reason, as I was researching early portrayals of the Middle East and the political climate towards the end of the First World War, I felt some sense of recognition—a kind of déjà vu—with the events that I saw. The sudden surge in political interest in the middle east, the dramatic change in portrayals of this region, the emphasis on an "anti-western" area of the world were all things I saw in this time period, and all things I had experienced during my upbringing. And so, I set out to examine the shifting politics, ideologies, and most importantly, representations of and towards the Middle East during this time period—just after World War I, as America was beginning to test the waters for its growing aspirations abroad

While I am chiefly interested in the portrayals during this time period, the key reason I am interested in them is because of the political climate at that time. To better understand the reasons why these representations came into being, it is important to understand just how much the United States was toying with the idea of imperialism

during this time period, and more importantly, just how often the entire Middle Eastern region was being brought to the forefront of the American people.

Although the United States did not truly begin to display its imperial ambitions over the Middle East until after the Second World War, it was after the First World War that some of the key events took place that would drag America's attention overseas, and as such, shift Americans' perceptions of the Middle East and its inhabitants for much of the twentieth century. In truth, America was known for its isolationist tendencies during the first half of the twentieth century. But there were key moments—all of them interrelated, and in the case of this thesis, surrounding the administration of Woodrow Wilson—when the United States tried to take its first steps towards becoming a key nation on the global stage, or where its attention was otherwise drawn overseas.

One of these early events was the Armenian Massacres. Turkish massacres of Armenians were, sadly, growing increasingly common throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Fromkin 211). As tensions between the Armenians and the Turks grew, distrust and violence became more and more rampant. This came to a head in early 1915, when Enver Pasha, a military officer and then Minister of War for the Ottoman Empire, "claimed that the Armenians were openly supporting Russia, and had taken to mob violence" (Fromkin 212). In retaliation for this perceived act, the Turkish government "ordered the deportation of the entire Armenian population from the northeastern provinces to locations outside of Anatolia,"[1] thus keeping the Armenian population away from the war with Russia (212). This series of deportations was carried out with extreme

[1] Notably, this was not directly ordered by Enver Pasha, but by Talaat Pasha, who was serving as Minister of the Interior during this time (Fromkin 212). He would later go on to become the Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire shortly before its downfall.

force and brutality, and it is now collectively known as the Armenian Massacre of 1915[2] (212). Beating, rape, and outright murder were common throughout this relocation, and those who were not killed outright were "driven through mountains and deserts without food, drink, or shelter" (212).

The total number of fatalities ranged in the hundreds of thousands, with some Armenian sources putting the total count as high as one and a half million (Fromkin 212). "[T]hough the figures are still the subject of bitter dispute, there can be no disputing the result: Turkish Armenia was destroyed, and about half its people perished" (212). In essence, during war time, the Turks had destroyed and desecrated the home of what many western nations had already considered—through years of brutality and massacres—a downtrodden people.

While the United States might be tempted to overlook this, the Armenians had a common trait with the United States that oftentimes fuels support among American citizens, and that is the fact that the Armenians were predominantly Christian (Fromkin 211). Indeed, Americans tended to look upon the Armenians as freedom fighters, standing up for their own beliefs in the face of an oppressive regime (211). As such, the international backlash caused by the massacres, coupled with the pillaging and raping, was tremendous—especially in the United States (213). The Armenian Massacre was "useful and effective propaganda for the Allied powers… for they reinforced the argument that the Ottoman Empire could not be left in control of non-Moslem populations, and possibly not even of non-Turkish-speaking populations" (213). The effects of this sentiment can be seen clearly in point XII of Wilson's Fourteen Points,

[2] This is also often referred to as the "Armenian Genocide" or the "Armenian Holocaust." For the purposes of keeping consistent with my sources, however, I will be referring to it as the Armenian Massacre.

where he states, "The turkish [*sic*] portion of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development" (Wilson).

Indeed, once the First World War had concluded, much of the Ottoman Empire had been broken up and given to the victorious Allies under the guise of "mandates."[3] This would lead into the next key reason that the United States had its attention on the Middle East—a concern for the imperialist ambitions of its allies. "Despite the crying need of salvaging Europe first, the victors early turned to dividing the booty—the enemy's colonies" (Bailey 605). The Allies did this through splitting the Ottoman Empire and making their respective areas into individual mandates. [4] While this would not be an issue for the still largely-isolationist United States, there was a growing concern with the British and their sudden, vast control of the world's oil supply:

> During World War I, the United States had dipped heavily into its own reserves of petroleum to float the Allies to victory. Modern navies had

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[3] Mandates were essentially the ability for countries to control territories on behalf of the League of Nations. This is covered under Article 22 of "The Covenant of the League of Nations," where it states, "To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilisation and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant" (Article 22). It continues, "The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility, and who are willing to accept it, and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as Mandatories on behalf of the League" (Article 22). In essence, a mandate is the ability for a developed country to take over the governing of a country the League of Nations determines as underdeveloped and unable to govern itself after a period of war. It is governance a step short of annexation.

[4] The French obtained the mandates for Syria and Lebanon. The British already held a protectorate over Egypt, but also gained a mandate over Palestine and Iraq. The only areas that received any kind of freedom was Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the Armenia (Brinton 732). The issue between the Turks and the Armenians would come to a head shortly after.

> recently been converted from coal-burners to oil-burners, and the sea-dominant British agreed with Clemenceau that oil was ‘as necessary as blood in the battles of to-morrow.’ With a calculating eye to the future, British promoters had staked out their claims to the gigantic oil pool of the Middle East by securing a mandate from the League of Nations to Palestine and Mesopotamia. By 1919 British oil companies, which accounted for less than 5 per cent of the world's production, had cornered more than half of the world's known reserves. (Bailey 634)

The United States was hesitant to allow its control of the market to be challenged, and shortly after, it worked to make its own deal to plant its own companies in the Middle East, challenging the would-be British monopoly. “The outgoing Wilson administration had insisted that America should not be without a voice in the parceling out of the spoils and the oils … At long last success crowned Washington's efforts when, in 1928, five American companies were admitted to an important Middle East petroleum combine" (Bailey 634).

Admittedly, allowing the United States to get any portion of the Middle East was not entirely planned for, as France and Britain had already decided in secret which areas they wanted halfway through the First World War with the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916 (Fromkin 195). But nevertheless, newspapers in the United States began to question the original divvying up of the land, with one Virginia newspaper remarking “Evidently, John Bull[5] aspires to be the monarch of all oil he surveys” (qtd. in Bailey 634).

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[5] John Bull is a national mascot for the United Kingdom, similar to Uncle Sam for the United States.

The convenience of this agreement to France and Britain, obviously, did not go unnoticed, and eventually it became apparent that this "compromise between idealism and colonialism, generally turned out to be thinly disguised imperialism" (Bailey 605). Indeed, this perception was increased dramatically with the Bolshevik's publication of the Sykes-Picot Agreement to the world (Fromkin 344). With the agreement published, the struggle for the United States to maintain its footing in the oil market, and the United States' reluctant first steps into imperialism, the Middle East was growing in the consciousness of the American people.

Furthermore, this was a period where the issue of Zionism[6] was growing in support in the Western nations. Particularly with the British, Zionism was a common concern within the government, largely due to the efforts of Lloyd George:

> Lloyd George—an "Easterner" both in his war strategy and in his war goals—succeeded in winning support for his views from important civilian members of the government, who came to view the Middle East in general, and Palestine in particular, as vital imperial interests, and who arrived independently and by various paths at the conclusion that an alliance with Zionism would serve Britain's needs in war and peace. (Fromkin 276)

As such, the country began working towards a solution to the Zionist question, which would eventually lead to the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917. In a letter written to Lord Rothschild, Athur James Balfour—the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary—

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[6] Zionism is defined as a "movement among modern Jews having for its object the assured settlement of their race upon a national basis in Palestine; after 1948, concerned chiefly with the development of the State of Israel" ("Zionism, n.").

wrote a declaration of sympathy to the Zionist cause, stating, "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object" (Balfour).

This idea would come to the United States due to President Wilson's approval of the idea:

> President Wilson was sympathetic to Zionism, but suspicious of British motives; he favored a Jewish Palestine but was less enthusiastic about a British Palestine. As the British Cabinet considered issuing the Balfour Declaration, it solicited the advice, and by implication the support, of President Wilson. (Fromkin 295)

This concern with the idea of a British Palestine was, at least in part, due to Wilson's foreign policy advisor, who took the proposal of a British-controlled home of the Jewish people as another method for Britain to create a buffer state[7] for Egypt and India—two regions under its control during this time (Fromkin 295, 374). Nevertheless, Wilson ultimately gave his own statement of support, and "[on] the occasion of the Jewish New Year in September 1918, President Wilson endorsed the principles of the Balfour Declaration in a letter of holiday greetings to the American Jewish community" (300).

As Wilson's tendencies to become involved in international affairs grew more and more, American citizens, already feeling skittish from entering World War I, began to long for a return to the isolationist tendencies that the United States had enjoyed previously. These three issues—the Armenian massacres, the concern with imperialism and ownership over Middle Eastern oil reserves, and the Zionist question—would all

[7] A buffer state is defined as: "(in international politics) a state lying between two others, owing allegiance to neither, and serving as a means of preventing hostile collision between them" ("buffer state, n.").

eventually lead to Wilson's continued defeat in congress, including his proposal of joining the League of Nations being defeated in congress, until after the war had concluded (Bailey 606). In his last attempt to keep the United States invested in global affairs, Wilson was offered the mandates for "Constantinople and Armenia. But [due to his health,] President Wilson did not get around to proposing an American Mandate for Armenia until 24 May 1920. The Senate rejected his proposal the following week" (Fromkin 398). While Constantinople was not entirely desirable to the United States, the concept of an Armenian mandate—in order to protect the Armenian people who had just suffered genocide—was something that President Wilson could support. Even still, it was promptly shot down by congress, even though the United States had been thoroughly concerned with the future and well-being of the Armenian people some years earlier.

I do not bring up the history between the United States and the Middle East during and after the First World War to simply set a scene for the events I will discuss in the following chapters. Rather, I wanted to make it clear just how often the idea of the Middle East was being brought to the forefront of the minds of the American people. During a time period when America—despite being in the midst of a World War—is commonly associated with isolationism, Americans were still very much involved with and engaged in the Middle East due not only to the events taking place during this time period, but due also to the efforts of President Wilson attempting to bring America forward into the global stage.

As the purpose of this thesis not only covers the news that Americans were taking in through this time, but additionally the culture they were consuming, I will largely be taking a postcolonial reading to many of the texts, events, and films that this document

will discuss. More specifically, as this is largely an analysis of portrayals and the creation of these portrayals, I will be relying largely on the concepts of Orientalism, as explained by Edward Said, and the concepts of cultural imperialism.

For context, Said is fairly broad, and certainly intentionally so, when it comes to actually defining Orientalism. Said states, "[B]y Orientalism I mean several things, all of them, in my opinion, interdependent" (2). Said goes on to give three separate, but as he states, interconnected definitions of Orientalism.

The first definition of Orientalism refers to the academic use of the term, essentially meaning that "[a]nyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist—either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism" (2). His second definition, which he hinted earlier in the book as being the definition that would be much clearer, is that "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (2). Said argues that this acceptance of a distinct and separate West and East has allowed for the types of studies and research that he mentions in his first definition. Moreover, it allowed many "writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists" who have "accepted the basic distinction between East and West" to use this distinction as a "starting point" to write about the Orient (2-3). This leads to his third definition, in which he states, "Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by

teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3).

Together, these definitions of Orientalism essentially create a rather troubling picture. Chiefly, the implication is that the West has—through cultural and academic investment—insisted on keeping itself separate from the East. Not only that, but through the stories, studies, and narratives that those in power have created about the Orient, the West is only able to comprehend and view the East through a false-perception that has already been crafted and built for hundreds of years. Said refers to this false-perception or lens through which we see the Orient as a grid or filter. He states that:

> Orientalism … is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied—indeed, made truly productive—the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture. (6)

Therefore, as Said states, not only is Orientalism a filter through which the West obtains information about the Orient, but that this filter itself is also reinforced through a constant investment in the continued, inaccurate portrayals of the Orient. In essence, this creates a cycle—as the filter grows stronger, so too do the portrayals it takes in and adds to this filter. In other words, this self-fulfilling cycle makes these views increasingly difficult to change. As Said states, "Orientalism responded more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object, which was also produced by the West. Thus the history of

Orientalism has both an internal consistency and a highly articulated set of relationships to the dominant culture surrounding it" (22).

To reiterate, this filtering of information is a self-perpetuating cycle, as the same material that is filtered through to the Western consciousness is then used to reinforce the grid once more. Said argues that this is particularly true of the media: "Television, the films, and all the media's resources have forced information into more and more standardized molds. So far as the Orient is concerned, standardization and cultural stereotyping have intensified the hold of the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of 'the mysterious Orient'" (Said 26).

As such, the use of postcolonial theory—particularly that of Orientalism—will be important to this thesis, as I mean not only to show how popular opinion of the Middle East was filtered into the American consciousness, but how these "standardized molds" came to be, and how the neverending cycle of stereotyping and "consuming" the Orient were so prevalent, and in some cases shifted, during this time period. Because of this, postcolonial theory, and particularly Said's idea of Orientalism, will play a part not only in the methodology I use to approach the materials that this thesis will cover—including history, text, and film—but also will provide a set of definitions and ideas which I will reference throughout all of the following chapters. Again, because I argue that the cultural production for this period was cyclical, and Orientalism itself is, as Said defines it, cyclical, it will prove invaluable for my approach for analysis in the chapters ahead.

The first chapter will start with an overview of the literature that created a massive surge in interest with the Middle East artistically, coupled with an in-depth examination of Edith Maude Hull's *The Sheik,* the novel that is commonly argued to be

the cause of a surge in "desert romance novels." More specifically, I will examine the popularization of Orientalist tendencies that Hull wrote, and how much effort—either intentionally or unintentionally—was given into "othering" the Middle East and turning it into a place for subverting Western ideologies. Notably, while Hull herself was a British citizen, her novel was massively popular in the states, and it did a great deal to shape American's conceptualization of the Middle East during the early 20th century.

The second chapter will continue the examination of popularized Orientalism with an analysis of the creation of the myth of "Lawrence of Arabia". As this was largely done through a presentation by Lowell Thomas, I will also analyze reports of the presentation itself, as well as Thomas's spread of the myth and how his portrayals—and indeed, the story itself—served as a vehicle for Orientalist sentiment.

In the third and final chapter, I will examine the "desert romance" or "sun and sand" cycle of films produced during the interwar period, particularly through the lens that its predecessors—both the "Desert Romance" novels and the myth of "Lawrence of Arabia." Through this, I will show the shifting perceptions of the Middle East in popular media during this time, particularly in their interrelatedness, and demonstrate their lasting effects on the film industry throughout that time period.

My goal through examining these different topics—the history, novels, presentations, and films—is not simply to provide a history of what was going on throughout this period. Rather, throughout my research, I noticed that there was little context given for all of these items and events, especially given how interrelated they are. Certainly, the creation of the icon of "Lawrence of Arabia" is often placed in its historical context, but rarely do critics grapple with the idea of its effect on film in that period.

Similarly, E. M. Hull's *The Sheik* is compared to films insofar as its film adaptation in 1921, but never how both the film and the novel came together to influence cultural production throughout that period.

In this thesis, then, I aim to show not only how interrelated these events are, but furthermore, through the concept of Said's Orientalism, how they accumulated, by which I mean came together in order to create further and further replications of a romanticized Middle East. In other words, showing how historical events influenced and enabled E. M. Hull's *The Sheik* and Lowell Thomas's presentation of "Lawrence of Arabia," and how they all together influenced film culture during this period, I posit that this is, almost exactly, Orientalism in the sense that Said describes, as discussed earlier in the chapter: "…Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied—indeed, made truly productive—the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture" (*Orientalism* 6).

By showing how all of these events, novels, films, and productions came together, I aim to show just how they were able to create a series of filters for which the West absorbed their information about the Middle East—forcing it into more and more standardized and familiar molds—and creating a narrative for the West about what the Middle East was. Or more specifically, creating a narrative on what the Middle East *should* be interpreted as by the West.

Sheiks and Sherifs:
Western Portrayals of the Middle East Between the World War

Chapter One

E. M. Hull's The Sheik *in a Post-War West*

Partly from renewed curiosity in the region, partly from renewed sexual intensity from the growing women's movement in the early 20th century, the desert romance novel began to grow in popularity just before World War I began. Indeed, both the war and E.M. Hull's famous novel *The Sheik* hit at just the right time to promote change and understanding of the Middle East, as "*The Garden of Allah* [(1905), the novel,] launched the early twentieth-century craze for the 'desert romance,' [popularizing] a romantic subgenre that *The Sheik* capitalized on and transformed in the 1920s" (Teo 69). In fact, *The Sheik* capitalized so strongly on this genre that, even being introduced to America in 1921, two years after its publication in England, it was one of the few novels of the 20s to make the American best-seller list two years consecutively, "ranking sixth among the top ten best selling [*sic*] works of fiction in 1921 and rising to second place in 1922" (Raub 119).

While the desert romance had been around shortly before the war began in full in 1914, it was still with Hull's writings and the war effort that the shifting understandings for this "mysterious Orient" began to change. Indeed, it is important to not only understand the situations that led up to the creation of *The Sheik* and its success, but also to understand what about this bestseller transmitted itself into the Western consciousness.

When it comes to Hull's *The Sheik*, then, there are many different factors that caused it to be as popular and influential as it was—perhaps the most obvious reason being the war itself. This is to be expected, as Hull had the war on her mind during the

creation of the novel, especially since it was likely outcome of the war was not clear when she was writing the novel [8] (Teo 100). It was "[n]ot until American troops began arriving at the Western Front in huge numbers after April 1918 [that the] tide of the war begin to shift decisively in favor of the Allies. In fact, it is possible that when Hull was writing the novel, the outcome of the war was still uncertain, with Germany favored to win after the collapse of the Eastern Front following the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917" (100). Regardless, with the war on Hull's mind, it would follow that some of the social changes that were happening at home—particularly with women's rights, as women's independence grew as a result of the largely male-free homefront—would be present in her text, as well. I mention these social changes because many of them will alter the interpretation of Hull's novel and its depictions of Orientalism entirely.

More specifically, these changes have to do with the shifting role of women in society. "The postwar period was one in which women made a number of gains. They got the [right to] vote. They entered the workplace in ever increasing numbers. Perhaps the most dramatic were changes in their values and behavior, the 'revolution in morals' which occurred in the Twenties" (Raub 120). This is reflected quite clearly in *The Sheik*'s protagonist, Diana Mayo, as well. Similar to how "[y]oung women shortened their skirts, bobbed their hair, danced fast dances, drank and smoke, and petted in the back seats of

[8] It is reported by Teo that Hull had written *The Sheik* as a way for her to escape from her husband's absence during the war, which would have been during this time, with Hull herself stating that it was her husband's absence that "prompted her to start her writing career" (Teo 94). Considering *The Sheik*'s content, it's unclear if this was entirely for her escapism, or if it was in response to his absence romantically.

motor cars," Diana wears her hair short[9], drinks[10] and smokes[11], and is all but turned into an object of sexuality [12]in the novel (Raub 120).

Indeed, Diana's sexuality—and this new form of womanhood—is frequently brought to the forefront throughout the novel. As Turner states in her analysis of *The Sheik*:

> Crossdressing and notions of androgyny were not entirely absent from *The Sheik*. For instance, Diana, *The Sheik*'s heroine 'looks like a boy in petticoats,' … However there is never any doubt that 'Diana Mayo, with the clothes and manners of a boy, was really an uncommonly beautiful young woman.' Diana's masculinity is always qualified with an assertion of her essential femininity. In Hull's first novel, androgyny is more about fashion than it is about power. (Turner 177)

Most analyses, in fact, claim that Diana's appearance is largely due to the changing times. Raub argues, "Diana is essentially the literary embodiment of this change in morals. She wears her hair short, considers men 'considerably less than her peers,' and therefore gains some semblance of independence" (120). Similarly, Turner, in her examination of gender roles and cross dressing in *The Sheik*, states "Part of this performance of 'female masculinity' in Hull is, I suggest, representative of the movement

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[9] "The long, curling black lashes that shaded her eyes and the dark eyebrows were a foil to the thick crop of loose, red-gold curls that she wore short, clubbed about her ears" (Hull 4).
[10] "For her only the servant poured out the light French wine that he had brought" (Hull 85).
[11] "With shaking fingers she took another cigarette; smoking would soothe her. Yet she hesitated before she lit it; there were only a few left and her need might still be greater" (Hull 123).
[12] In reference to her literally being objectified throughout the novel, particularly during the rape scene. "Lie still, you little fool, it is useless to struggle. You cannot get away, I shall not let you go…. Why have I brought you here? You ask me why? Mon Dieu! Are you not woman enough to know? No! I will not spare you. Give me what I want willingly and I will be kind to you, but fight me, and by Allah! you shall pay the cost!… I know you hate me, you have told me so already. Shall I make you love me?… Still disobedient? When will you learn that I am master?" (Hull 238).

of women into the masculine public spheres of, amongst others, travel and politics" (172). Even in larger works, such as Holly Edwards' examination of the history of orientalism in America, she argues that "Diana Mayo has many of the cultural attributes of the flapper of the period. For example, the novel stresses over and over again her androgynous appearance and independent will" (108).

While I certainly believe that the women's movement of the time had some impact on the design of Diana, there are multiple moments throughout the text—particularly at the beginning of the novel itself, before Diana's abduction—where Hull implies that Diana's appearance and personality is a result of the setting itself rather than any social movement.

More specifically, despite Raub's argument that "Diana's masculinity is always qualified with an assertion of her essential femininity," this is not always the case (177). In the opening of the novel itself, for instance, Diana is described by one of her admirers as "Not a very human girl... She was sure meant for a boy and changed at the last moment. She looks like a boy in petticoats, a damned pretty boy…" (Hull 2). Additionally, it is later revealed that Diana has none of a typical girl's upbringing—or at least what was considered typical during the time. When Diana was a child, her mother passed away due to an illness, and shortly after her mother's death, her father shot himself out of grief (3). As a result, she was left to her older brother, Aubrey, to raise. "The problem of bringing up a girl child was too much trouble to be solved, so [Aubrey] settled the difficulty by treating her as if she was a boy. The result is what you see" (3). Indeed, in these opening passages, Diana rarely has her femininity pushed back onto her

other than with labels and pronouns, and she is rarely referred to in anything that would be used to describe her as "feminine" until much later in the text.

Perhaps more surprisingly, however, is the fact that most analyses of *The Sheik* seem to ignore the idea that Diana prefers to think of herself as more masculine than feminine in these opening chapters. Diana even describes herself with such a preference, stating, "I was born with the same cold nature as his. I was brought up as a boy, my training was hard. Emotion and affection have been barred out of my life. I simply don't know what they mean. I don't want to know. I am very content with my life as it is" (Hull 11). In other words, she was content with her upbringing, and despite the questioning of other members of Western society, she does not entirely want to know what these "feminine" traits of emotion and affection are. She even prefers to wear traditional male clothing over dresses. "Her smile broadened as she looked at the smart-cut breeches and high brown boots. They were the clothes in which most of her life had been spent, and in which she was far more at home than in the pretty dresses…" (16). While it could be argued that this shying away from traditional feminine attire is something more in-line with the social changes happening with women during the flapper's movement in the 1920s, it is important to note that she's not simply wearing more male clothing than most women—she's literally talking about being more comfortable in male clothing, as this is what her brother would have provided for her, and this is, as she says, what she spent most of her life in (16).

In sum, Diana does not simply tease the notion of passing boundaries, she simply crosses them. Fittingly, then, Diana mentions that she finally feels at home in the desert, stating:

> She drew a long breath. It was the desert at last, the desert that she felt she had been longing for all her life. She had never known until this moment how intense the longing had been. She felt strangely at home, as if the great, silent emptiness had been waiting for her as she had been waiting for it, and now that she had come it was welcoming her softly with the faint rustle of the whispering sand, the mysterious charm of its billowy, shifting surface that seemed beckoning to her to penetrate further and further into its unknown obscurities. (Hull 24)

From this, we gain a few important pieces of information. Not only does Diana feel more at home in the desert, but she feels an immediate sense of both fulfillment and belonging. Perhaps even more notable is the adjectives used to describe this object of Diana's "longing." The sand is described as whispering and mysterious, something that covers the unknown. In essence, Diana feels at home among the unknown—among the "Otherness" of the Orient—and this mysteriousness is beckoning her with not only a sense of belonging, but also with provocative terms—chiefly that of a "billowy" surface, waiting for her penetration.

Other scholars have noticed this rather unexpected occurrence, as well. Edwards, in her analysis of Orientalism in *The Sheik*, notes that "Another peculiar irony of Diana's Orientalism is the notion of the desert as a 'home,' a place for which she has been yearning but which has been denied her as an orphan brought up in the sterile society of upper-class England, and yet it is a home that is desolate. Nevertheless, those who do not quite fit in British society are supposed to find their 'home' there" (108). Here, Edwards posits the idea that Diana enjoys the Orient because it is freeing, but because it is

everything that Britain is not—making a note that in traditional texts, those who are considered outcasts in some form or another of the West—be it in terms of lawfulness, spirituality, temperament, or manner—generally find some home in the East[13].

Before exploring this line of thought fully, it is important to address that, only a few paragraphs before this, Diana makes a change of dress, changing from her traditionally masculine clothes into something much more traditionally feminine. “She had changed from her riding clothes into a dress of clinging jade-green silk, swinging short above her slender ankles, the neck cut low, revealing the gleaming white of her soft, girlish bosom. She came out of the tent and stood a moment exchanging an amused smile with Stephens, who was hovering near dubiously, one eye on her and the other on his master” (24). Not only does Diana’s dress change in this scene, but her descriptors do, as well—her boyish body becoming feminine, her bosom becoming more developed, and taking on much more the air of the seductress trope that is generally present in 19th and 20th century romance texts.

It is not Diana’s ability to switch between the categories of femininity and masculinity, bur rather the act of switching itself throughout the novel that seems familiar to traditional Orientalist texts. In these older texts, the Orient becomes a place where the lines of gender blend and become unclear—completely undermining the traditional and rigid boundaries that Western society had placed on gender for centuries. One novel in particular, "Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle* (1897) signaled imperial fears of reverse colonization. In this novel, a sinister, hermaphroditic, shape-shifting Oriental pursues a

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[13] This concept is addressed more fully later in a later chapter of this thesis during an analysis of the film version of *The Son of the Shiek*, as Andre—a renegade Frenchman and antagonist in the film—finds home in the desert.

British politician back to London, where the Oriental hypnotizes the politician and threatens to wreak havoc on his political ambitions and his romantic relationship with the English heroine" (Teo 71). If anything, the idea that Diana feels at home in the Orient—and is willing to challenge the dominant sexual norms—seems to fit entirely within the realm of Orientalism and could readily be seen as Hull showing a sign of disapproval to Diana, and all women who challenge the norms like her, by straying from traditional womanhood.

While I do understand that the idea of a dysphoric character being compared to a magical, hermaphroditic, somewhat-demonic Oriental blackmailer might be frowned on by a modern audience, it is important to note that there was a tension accompanied by questioning gender roles and norms surrounding the period this book was written. Indeed, it was this tension that led to the women's movement following World War I. As such, Diana approaching her own gender identity with uncertainty is something that the Occident would shun, and as such, would be something that stereotypically would be ascribed by writers to the Orient. In other words, when it comes to Western cultural production and a Western perspective, if the Occident must remain rigid with its gender roles, then the Orient must be fluid with its own—or at least allow the opportunity for its inhabitants to be.

This fluidity, however, does end with the titular antagonist-turned-love-interest, the Sheik. Ahmed completely ends Diana's free will by force—through kidnapping and rape—and finally convinces her to love him. "The modern reader may well disapprove of Diana's ready acceptance, even idolization, of her masterful lover. The Sheik tames Diana as he would one of his spirited horses, and as he bends her to his will she sheds her

haughty arrogance, her 'obstinate determination,' her sexless boyishness - her independence" (Raub 120). It is not until Sheik Ahmed fully forces Diana to submit that she resumes a more traditional, feminine role. If Diana's sexuality is something that seems more at home in the Orient—as discussed previously—then by extension, Ahmed's mastery of Diana's sexuality is, at least in part, a mastery over the Orient itself.

But before examining the concept of Ahmed's mastery and the Orient fully, it is important to investigate the strong presence of rape throughout the text. Again, throughout the majority of the novel, Ahmed is villainized—and rightly so—for his treatment of Diana. But once again, this was in large part due to the war. Hsu-Ming Teo, in her description of the 1920s, states:

> "It was during the First World War that sex, violence, and rape came to the forefront of British culture and consciousness in a most dramatic way. A number of wartime developments were responsible for this: the onset of 'khaki fever'[14] among young women at the start of the war; tales of German atrocities in occupied Belgium and France that were used by the British government for propaganda purposes; and the return of war-traumatized veterans, which briefly resulted in an increase in public and domestic violence." (95)

[14] Teo gives an excellent description of "khaki fever," stating: "As Angela Woollacott shows, the outbreak of war in Britain was accompanied by an 'epidemic of khaki fever' whereby, according to the press, adolescent girls and young working women flocked to military camps, sexually propositioning and harassing soldiers in towns and cities … Khaki fever problematized overt displays of sexuality by women in public. In the nineteenth century, the open display of sexual desire or sexual behavior was associated with prostitutes. When the 'amateurs' or 'free-lance girls' succumbed to khaki fever in 1914, they were perceived in their pursuit of soldiers to display a prostitute's sexual aggression and shamelessness" (Teo 95).

In essence, it was not necessarily a fear of the Orient itself that led to the rather disturbing amount of rape in this text—or at least, not entirely. Rather, if the Orient is the "other" for the Occident, then the Central Powers would have been the "other" for the Allies, and therefore, these ideas from one "other" could move to the next "other," and so on.

With this on the mind of the general public, it is strange that Hull would choose to depict Ahmed as so sexually violent if she was not trying to fuel an provactive relationship with him and the reader. Again, for readers of the time, the horrors of the war would be fresh on their minds, and a concern with sexual depictions, or even simply a form of "sexual xenophobia," would be present for most of her audience. As such, while rape created a provocative response towards the Sheik because of its relation to the war, it nevertheless still placed this violent act on a leader of the Orient itself.

It is important to mention that there are those who claim that Diana's repeated rape—although crude—is being used as a rather unorthodox vehicle for female empowerment. Karen Chow examines the sexual dynamic between Sheik Ahmed with Diana, stating "Diana Mayo's knowledge of sex comes to her 'under the consuming fire' of the Sheik's gaze; the scene is prelude to her rape. When confronted with the purple passages of submission and domination in E.M. Hull's 1919 bestseller, one cannot argue that *The Sheik* is not a tale of male sexual mastery" (71). She argues this by bringing to the forefront the shift that takes place throughout the novel in the Sheik's characterization, stating, "Ahmed's 'dark, passionate eyes' render Diana powerless, unable to turn away, but by the end of the book the transfer of power is apparent as Ahmed begs for recognition in Diana's eyes" (78). More specifically, Chow goes on to argue that:

> And yet, *The Sheik* may be seen as empowering the female reader, for Ahmed transforms from a sexual brute into a tender lover… Ultimately, it is not Diana the character, but the woman reader, writer, and filmgoer in the material world who is liberated by reading these steamy passages ... Diana may not be active or liberated, but Hull-as-author might be; in giving Diana power over Ahmed at the end of the book, even if Ibraheim Omair [Sheik Ahmed's enemy] and 'male' competitiveness are the vehicles, Hull offers women the chance to identify with Diana's passions and share them vicariously, swooning to the Sheik's embraces and feeling satisfied at the end that love has conquered. (73)

And while I will agree that this could be a valid interpretation of the ending of the novel, I will also note that this change, where Diana suddenly has power over Ahmed, comes after it is revealed that Ahmed was European all along. Indeed, very little happens in the book between the revelation of the Sheik's ancestry in the phrase, "He is not an Arab … He is English," and his submission to Diane in the closing, where he asks "'Diane, will you never look at me again?' His voice was almost humble," apart from the Sheik's recovery after the book's climactic battle (243, 295-96). In essence, I posit that this was not Ahmed-as-Arab that removed himself from sexual power, but rather, Ahmed-as-European, as the book was operating in the context that Ahmed was now white, and as such, was given fewer Orientalist characteristics than he was earlier in the novel. This transformation, of course, will be addressed more fully later in this chapter.

This is especially amplified throughout the novel with the Sheik's repeated cruelty, even towards people other than Diana. As an example, Diana saw Ahmed beating

one of his servants with a whip, turning him into a "limp, blood-stained heap that huddled on the ground with suggestive stillness," and Diana notes that "[Ahmed's] callousness horrified her even more than his cruelty" (Hull 94). While Ahmed was taming a horse, Diana watched in disgust. "It was a punishment of which the untamed animal was never to lose remembrance. The savagery and determination of the man against the mad determination of the horse. It was a hideous exhibition of brute strength and merciless cruelty" (102).

Perhaps most notably, however, was the fact that this was something that the environment encouraged. As the text itself states, after the taming of the horse had been completed:

> The Sheik was standing on the ground beside the colt, who was swaying slowly from side to side with heaving sides and head held low to the earth, dripping blood and foam. And as she looked he tottered and collapsed exhausted. There was a rush from all sides, and Gaston went towards his master, who towered above the crowd around him. Diana turned away with an exclamation of disgust. It was enough to have seen a display of such brutality; it was too much to stand by while his fellow-savages acclaimed him for his cruelty. (103)

Notably, it was his "fellow savages" that applauded him "for his cruelty"—*specifically* his cruelty. With this, coupled with his status as Sheik Ahmed—head of his tribe—there is a rather explicit acceptance, and even reverence, for the use of violence and cruelty—both sexually and physically—that is placed on the Orient through Hull's works. As such, these become characteristics of the Orient itself.

These characteristics are attributed much more flagrantly to the Orient later in the novel's climactic battle.

> Then, with a wrestler's trick, he swept Ibraheim's feet from under him and sent his huge body sprawling on to the cushions, his knee on his enemy's chest, his hands on his throat. With all his weight crushing into the chief's breast, with the terrible smile always on his lips, he choked him slowly to death, till the dying man's body arched and writhed in his last agony, till the blood burst from his nose and mouth, pouring over the hands that held him like a vice. (Hull 230)

Through this, Ahmed is—ontop of all of the other traits prescribed to him—shown to be murderous. Despite the fact that this was a place of war, Sheik Ahmed was shown, in great detail, to relish the fact that he was murdering someone with his bare hands.

Perhaps most alarmingly, however, is the fact that Ahmed is consistently described as being the Devil—or devilish—either by the narrator or by himself, with lines such as, "He jerked her to him, staring down at her passionately, and for a moment his face was the face of a devil," or "'Take care you do not wake the devil in me again, *ma belle*,' [Ahmed] said somberly" (Hull 141, 142). Even at the end of the novel, Ahmed reminds Diana of his devilishness, stating, "Pray God I keep you happy. You know the worst of me, poor child—you will have a devil for a husband" (296). In fact, the entire plot of *The Sheik* is foreshadowed in the opening passages, when Diana's party stops at a oasis, and her guide asks her to move on. "'No man rests here, Mademoiselle. It is the place of devils. The curse of Allah is upon it,' he muttered, touching his horse with his heel, and making it sidle restlessly—an obvious hint that Diana ignored. 'I like it,' she

persisted obstinately" (44). Through these lines, Hull foreshadows not only the fact that Diana is not afraid of the mysteries of the Orient, but that she tends to favor them—going so far as to enjoy the company of the devil, or Sheik Ahmed, himself.

Regardless, this demonization occurs virtually every time Sheik Ahmed is angered. More notably, Sheik Ahmed becoming angered is a common occurrence in the book itself. Combined, this repetition only serves to further cement the concept of the demonic aspects of the Orient.

Such demonizing of the middle east had been going on for centuries prior, in fact. As the Christian-dominated Occident tended to view religions through the lens of their own, much of their understanding of Oriental religions was put into terms of their own religion. Edward Said addresses this in *Orientalism*, stating, "One constraint acting upon Christian thinkers who tried to understand Islam was an analogical one; since Christ is the basis of Christian faith, it was assumed—quite incorrectly—that Mohammed was to Islam as Christ was to Christianity. Hence the polemic name 'Mohammedanism' given to Islam, and the automatic epithet 'imposter' applied to Mohammed" (Said 60). Through this, the Orient became an area of twisted Christianity—a place of demonic energy and Satanic worship—which became the subject of many Western novels about the Orient.

Roughly a century before Hull wrote *The Sheik*, in fact, author William Beckford wrote what was arguably his most famous novel, *Vathek* (1786). The titular character, Vathek, is similar to Sheik Ahmed, with a beautiful face but a literally deadly glare. "His figure was pleasing and majestic; but when he was angry, one of his eyes became so terrible, that no person could bear to behold it; and the wretch upon whom it was fixed, instantly fell backward, and sometimes expired" (Beckford 3). Even more troubling,

however, was the fact that Vathek made a pact with a demonic "Gaiour[15]" to sacrifice fifty children in order to gain access to a palace of immense power and riches. "'Not so fast,' replied the Indian, 'impatient Caliph!— Know that I am parched with thirst, and cannot open this door, till my thirst be thoroughly appeased; I require the blood of fifty children. Take them from among the most beautiful sons of thy vizirs [*sic*] and great men; or, neither can my thirst nor thy curiosity be satisfied'" (19-20). And through this demonic visage—and this demonic power—Vathek was able to show immense cruelty, strangling fifty children before throwing them into an ever-growing pile of corpses. "Never before had the ceremony of strangling been performed with so much facility. They all fell, without the least resistance or struggle: so that Vathek, in the space of a few moments, found himself surrounded by the dead bodies of the most faithful of his subjects; all which [*sic*] were thrown on the top of the pile" (29).

My point in bringing up all of the factors and traits of Sheik Ahmed is not to argue that he is a callback to an older text. Rather, Ahmed is a callback to an older *time*—an older understanding of the Orient and what set it apart from the Occident. That European culture that, as Said states, "gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (Said 3). By showing Ahmed in a position of power, and essentially delegating him to the spokesperson for these lands to the reader, giving him all these traits that were examined above calls back to traditional Orientalist thought—of the need to "[safeguard] humanity from sexuality… madness, [and] irrational violence" (Said 313). By showing Sheik Ahmed with all of these aspects the West typically applies to the East—of violence, madness, and

[15] A pejorative term used for non-Muslims ("giaour, n").

unrestricted sexuality—it once again brings conceptions of the Orient being everything the Occident is not back to the forefront of its readers.

But *The Sheik* did not simply reinforce these stereotypes of the Orient itself, but it also reinforced the archetype of a white-leader-gone-native, later referred to as the "Lawrence of Arabia" archetype[16], in which a white westerner travels to a society that is either completely colonized or distinctly inferior to the Western audience, and proceeds to not only thrive in this setting, but eventually become one of the best leaders or warriors in that region. By this, I am referring to the fact that Sheik Ahmed, of British descent, ended up in the desert and was raised to become a great tribal leader.

But not only is Sheik Ahmed the literal leader of this part of the Orient, but—as discussed throughout this chapter—he also serves as the embodiment of all of the traditional "Oriental values" commonly prescribed to the Orient by Orientalists. He's violent. He evokes demonic imagery. He's sexual. He's cruel. He's a rapist. Again, all of those qualities that Orientalists generally attribute to the Orient are present—and Ahmed, as shown through his position of power and the praise of his peers—is the most "Oriental" of all of them, despite not being from the Orient himself.

Indeed, creating the Sheik as a white character gave Hull the ability to explore the sexuality of a young, European woman without risking a tacit approval of miscegenation. As Teo points out in her analysis of *The Sheik*:

> Saint Hubert tells the tale of the sheik's European parentage, which permits Diana to remain with and love him without the taint of miscegenation. This story thus supports conventional ideas about class, gender, imperialism, and

[16] This archetype is addressed more fully in the next chapter.

> race, because at its close an aristocratic British couple, both performing traditional gender roles, rules over a tribe of Arab "natives." In Diana's story, however, the sheik remains an Arab and she loves him for being an Arab. (92)

In essence, Diana's vision of Sheik Ahmed never truly changes, as evidenced by the closing line in the novel: "I am not afraid of anything with your arms round me, my desert lover. Ahmed! Monseigneur!" (Hull 296). Nevertheless, the story still replicates the traditional colonialist narrative—a European couple holding leadership and power over a tribe of natives and performing their culture and their ways better than they could themselves.

In sum, although the text might appear to be progressive in the sense of women's issues for the time period, I posit that the vast majority of any progressive thought in this text—regardless of intent—serves only to reinforce the way that the colonizer views the colonized. In an age when colonization of the Middle East was perhaps the most flagrant that it has ever been—with the vast majority of our modern countries being divided and divvied up to the victorious Allied powers—this text served a influential purpose, particularly at a time when the Western consciousness was being drawn to the Orient with potent force.

During this same time period, another mythical Orientalist figure was created, this time by a journalist enlisted by the United States government named Lowell Thomas. With the goal of arousing support for the war effort, Thomas learned of T. E. Lawrence, a British officer who helped train Arab tribes in an uprising against the Ottoman Empire. Through his skills in writing and journalism, Thomas began to craft the myth behind "Lawrence of Arabia," making him a romantic figure of a white man succeeding and

serving in an unquestionable leadership position in an Arab setting—similar to the Sheik. Through this story, Thomas created a series of lectures in the United States, England, and eventually most of the English-speaking world which would spread these Orientalist sentiments, quite similar to those in *The Shiek*, and popularize them throughout the world, giving rise to the "Lawrence of Arabia" archetype.

Chapter Two

Lowell Thomas and the Creation of the Icon "Lawrence of Arabia"

Thomas Edward Lawrence, commonly known as T. E. Lawrence, did not rise to fame during the 1920s alone. Instead, his popularity was the result of a series of carefully crafted lectures, novels, and articles—all of which were started by a journalist named Lowell Thomas. Indeed, Lowell Thomas was arguably more responsible for the icon of "Lawrence of Arabia"[17] than T. E. Lawrence was. Through Thomas's romanticization of the "Lawrence" figure, he created a sensation throughout much of the speaking world, influencing Western interpretations of the Middle East and popularizing the very concept of the Faux-Middle-Eastern Anglo leader that was discussed with Hull's novel, *The Sheik*.

Before the beginning of the First World War, Lowell Thomas served as a journalist for the Chicago *Evening Journal* while simultaneously attending the Chicago Kent School of Law (Hodson, *Lawrence of Arabia* 13). It was during these years that he became relatively well-known for solving the case of a man who was blackmailing representatives of the meatpacking industry (14). He would move on to teach at Princeton, where he taught part-time in the Speech department, as well as earning money through reporting (Crocker 298). In essence, these jobs became the foundations for what would make Thomas well-known later on into his career: his gift of finding and creating a story and his gift of public speaking.

[17] For clarity, when I use the term "Lawrence of Arabia," (in quotes), it will be in reference to the persona created by Lowell Thomas. If I'm referring to the man, I will simply say T. E. Lawrence.

Years later, in 1917, the Secretary of Interior asked Thomas to journey to Europe for a propaganda mission. There was a catch, however, in the sense that it would not be official—congress would not actually be funding his trip. "Whereas Congress was busily appropriating money to fight the war, 'they might be slow in allocating funds to tell about it.' Thomas was asked if he could privately raise funds to cover his reportage of the war" (Hodson, *Lawrence of Arabia* 13). In order to get the money he needed to travel, Thomas requested financial support from the various meatpacking plants, such as Swift, Armour, and Wilson, that he had helped save years before (14). Thomas's desire to find a story to cover in Europe led him to discover General Edmund Allenby, who was a cavalry officer who would become known for his role in the Arab revolt[18]. Thomas visited Allenby in Jerusalem in January of 1918, and it was during this time that he met T. E. Lawrence.

When Thomas would later recollect his meeting with Lawrence, he would never fail to point out his blonde hair and blue eyes, and then contrast this with his distinctly Arab dress. "He is 5 feet 2 inches tall. Blonde, blue sparkling eyes, fair skin—too fair even to bronze after 7 years in the Arabian desert. Bare-footed. Costume of Meccan Sherif" (qtd. in Hodson, *Lawrence of Arabia* 16). Because of this, Lawrence struck Thomas immediately as a fascinating character. Thomas seemed enthralled with the idea of a European officer conquering an Arabian landscape—both in his military prowess, and his ability to overcome the cultural boundary between Occident and Orient. From this point on, Thomas decided to cover Lawrence alongside General Allenby, and the beginnings of the Orientalist figure of "Lawrence of Arabia" were formed.

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[18] The Arab revolt was a small revolt, started by Emir Hussein of Mecca, when he discovered that the Young Turks (a political party) had intended to depose him (Fromkin 218). To Hussein, this would have ideally led to a single, unified Arab state; to Europe, an Arab protectorate would have been preferable (193).

It is apparent that Thomas did not take his task of creating support for the war in Europe too seriously, as he reportedly never published an article until after the war had concluded—nor did he return to the United States until the war was won (Hodson, *Lawrence of Arabia* 15). However, after the war's conclusion, he gave a series of lectures in the United States over the Arab Revolt (Crocker 298). These lectures began in March of 1919 and would become a world tour that would last for four years (Hodson, *Lawrence of Arabia* 28). One of the most popular aspects of these presentations was not the Arab Revolt but rather T. E. Lawrence himself—who had caught Thomas's eye the year before. Thomas realized this fact rather quickly, and early in the life of his tour changed the name of his presentation from "With Allenby in Palestine" to "With Allenby in Palestine and Lawrence of Arabia" (Hodson, *Lawrence of Arabia* 28). As the audience became more and more interested in this man who conquered Arabia, Thomas began to emphasize Lawrence's role in the presentation—and even his role in the Arab revolt—more and more.

This was something that Thomas was able to accomplish rather easily, as he was a skilled public speaker. Apart from being a lecturer at Princeton for public speaking, Thomas was also good friends with Dale Carnegie, famed lecturer and author of the famous book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (Hodson, "Lowell Thomas" 52). Carnegie served as a consultant for Thomas's lectures and gave him advice on his speeches. With Thomas's background in public speaking, along with Carnegie's guiding hand in his presentations, his lectures over "Lawrence of Arabia" became a great success because of how well he could connect with the audience.

One of the chief ways Thomas accomplished this was with his rhetoric. In an analysis of Thomas's rhetoric, Lionel Crocker states that throughout Thomas's career, he was always very fond of "puns, sarcasm, and ridicule" (299). This was one of the many ways that he was able to relax and bond with his audience. The problem arises, however, when Thomas ridiculed and demeaned the Orient—which he often did with his Lawrence presentation. As an example, during his stay in Madison Square Garden, Thomas's lecture took place next to the Barnum and Bailey Circus—which caused a very noticeable odor. To dismiss the smell, Thomas would quip, "As you probably have discovered, the circus is next door. When Barnum and Bailey discovered we were making a trip to Palestine on camels, they kindly consented to putting the beasts under us so that we might have the Oriental atmosphere" (qtd. in Hodson, "Lowell Thomas" 46). This emphasis on the Orient as being more primal, bestial, or simply less developed—and therefore culturally inferior—falls in line with Edward Said's view on how the Occident twists and controls the Orient through its depictions to keep its own dominance (3, 340).

Thomas certainly was a heavy contributor to Orientalist sentiment. In fact, Thomas's presentation mirrors the way Said argues that Orientalism spreads throughout the Western consciousness. "Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it … in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3). Thomas's entire presentation over the Arab Revolt was, at its core, a display of his expertise over the Orient—to make statements about it, to authorize his views of it, to describe it, and to teach it, just as Said lists. Crocker points out that Thomas would often try to "[use]

foreign words to give color to news stories from foreign places," and his presentation over Lawrence was no different (300). However, Thomas's use of terms that he learned from his time in Arabia not only gave color to his presentation, but it also demonstrated his authority and knowledge over the Orient.

Thomas's emphasis on pushing the Orient as exotic, foreign, and Other was certainly apparent in his choice of props. During his time in London, speaking at the Covent Garden, Thomas took every possible opportunity to Orientalize the stage of his presentation. As an example, Thomas's presentation was given on a stage—but it was decorated like a scene from the Nile, complete with an artificial moon lighting the pyramids in the backdrop (Hodson, *Lawrence of Arabia* 31). His music was performed by the Band of Welsh Guards—but the orchestra pit was filled with palms (31). He had gentle lighting, but it came from braziers filled with burning incense (Hodson, "Lowell Thomas" 51). And he had an opening, but it was an Arabian dancer performing the Dance of the Seven Veils (51). This was all punctuated with the special effects[19] and projection machines run by Thomas's cameraman, Harry Chase, who was in charge of running three separate projection machines that would constantly give off images of the Middle East—including areas that were originally off-limits to tourists and non-Muslims, which further emphasized Thomas's authority over the Orient (51). And, as Said warns his readers in *Orientalism*, authority can be a potent tool for Orientalist ideology. "There is nothing mysterious or natural about authority. It is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is

[19] I should note that I am not referring to special effects in the modern sense, but rather the changing in lighting, use of incense, breezing from fans, etc. All of these will be mentioned and explored further in this chapter.

virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces" (19-20). In essence, as Thomas very blatantly continued to establish his authority over matters in the Orient, his messages—regardless of their truth or lack thereof—began to construct and disseminate a version of the Orient for his audience, and it began to slip into the Western imagination.

It is no surprise, then, that Thomas's presentation was critically acclaimed, as the amount of film and photographs that Thomas managed to acquire was all but unprecedented for its time, and served as a perfect way to further establish his authority over the Orient. Overall, the presentation had 240 lantern slides, 30 film segments, and aerial photographs of locations that people had never been able to see before (Hodson, "Lowell Thomas" 51). The presentation was just over two hours long, but Thomas's script was over 60 pages in length (Hodson, *Lawrence of Arabia* 32). The amount of information and the length of his presentation served, in a sense, to make his statements seem more and more true—and it grabbed the attention of the audience, to the point where many people came to see the presentation more than once (Hodson, "Lowell Thomas" 51). Thomas's presentation had become a massive success.

These lectures, starting in New York before making their way overseas to London, would eventually be presented across most of the English-speaking world. The series was so popular, in fact, that during Thomas's stay in London, for example, he gave the lecture twice a day, six days a week, for five months (Hodson, *Lawrence of Arabia* 31). In total, he gave the lecture "as many as [four thousand] times to more than four million people" (Macfie 82). It is estimated that he made as much as one million dollars off of this series of lectures alone (Crocker 298). In essence, Thomas's presentation—

complete with its romanticized, Orientalist overtones—became popular throughout the English-speaking world.

But one of the most interesting things Thomas did with Lawrence's story was not simply the Orientalist tones he placed with it, but rather it was how much he emphasized, and even romanticized, T. E. Lawrence. He did this in a number of ways, but perhaps the most blatant was with the many titles that Thomas bestowed on Lawrence throughout his presentation. Macfie compiles a list of some of these titles in his essay, which includes, "Lawrence of Arabia," the "Prince of Mecca," the "Uncrowned King of Arabia," "Shereef Lawrence," and the "Terror of the Turks" (82-83). The list of names is contributed to by Thomas's own writing, where he calls Lawrence "The English Shereef" and "Lawrence, King Maker of Arabia" (Thomas, "The Matinée Idol of Arabia" 1209, 1206).

Thomas would romanticize Lawrence further by contextualizing his actions in Arabia with references to Christianity. "An air battle (staged by Chase) was fought above the hills of Moab, and a battle between the Scots and Turks [was fought] on a field where David had slain Goliath" (Macfie 83). Most notably, however, was when he contextualized Lawrence with the Crusades—a time when Orientalist values were at their peak. "[The] British Army became Allenby's crusaders, and … they traversed the same roads that Godfrey of Bouillion [*sic*] and Richard Cour de Lion had tramped along eight centuries before" (83). This emphasizes how Thomas consistently attempted to place Lawrence in an Orientalist context.

As with most romanticizations, the "Lawrence of Arabia" myth changed depending on which region it was presented in. Thomas would be certain to twist the

Lawrence tale to make it more palatable for his audience, depending on where he was. In London, for example, Thomas knew that Imperialism was still widely accepted, and so Lawrence would be presented as "the model British imperial hero," protecting British interests in the Orient (Wyatt-Brown 518). But in America, he knew that anticolonialism was the dominant ideology, and so Lawrence was painted as a freedom fighter, struggling against oppression and striving for an independent—presumably democratic—nation (518). The Orientalist meaning behind this representation being that the idea of freedom would not survive in Arabia without Western influence and support. In fact, "[like] most Westerners, Thomas thought Islamic, tribal people could never achieve modern values and a sense of nationalist loyalty and freedom without the energetic guidance of the Anglo-Saxon" (519). Regardless, this idea of shifting and twisting the narrative proves that Thomas was skilled at being able to make the story of "Lawrence of Arabia" acceptable, and even glamorous, to all the places he visited. Lawrence's prominence continued to grow more and more throughout the tour. The problem with this, however, is all of the Orientalist sentiment that Thomas had in his presentation—including the set, choice of special effects, his rhetoric, and his views of and about the Orient. In other words, Thomas created a very specific, and generally false, mold for what the Middle East should be, generally characterized by how unlike it was to the values of many English-speaking audiences who heard his presentation. All of this together increased the novelty of the "Lawrence of Arabia" icon, and gradually, the Lawrence figure began to grow in popularity.

This was aided by the fact that Lawrence was not nearly the hero that Thomas made him out to be. In fact, most Lawrence scholars—and even Lawrence himself—

claim that Thomas's account of Lawrence's role in the war was greatly exaggerated (Hodson, *Lawrence of Arabia* 21, 52, 56; Crawford and Berton 300, 317). While there is some controversy over who exactly is to blame for the romanticization and exaggeration of Lawrence in the Arab Revolt, most scholars place the blame on Thomas. This is largely because of the way that Thomas handled stories about Lawrence outside of his presentation.

One of the best examples of these romantic stories was published by Thomas in a magazine called *Asia*, which was America's chief magazine of scholarship concerning the Orient at the time. This story is about Lawrence taking part in a massive raid, leading a group of tribesmen to destroy a train occupied by Turkish soldiers. He successfully demolished the train with explosives, but at the very last moment, was spotted by a Turkish officer, who immediately recognized him as the great "Lawrence of Arabia"—a man with a massive bounty on his head. Thomas writes:

> Lawrence stood watching [the approaching officer and his men] as coolly as though the Turks were his best friends. He allowed them to get within about twenty paces of him, and then with a speed that would have made an Arizona gunman green with envy he whipped out his long barreled Colt's automatic from the folds of his gown and shot six of the Turks in their tracks. The Turks suddenly lost interest in the possible reward for Lawrence's head and scurried back. Lawrence made a dash for the summit of the hill and succeeded in rejoining us. ("With Lawrence" 998-99)

It is interesting to note, however, the amount of Orientalist values that are present in Thomas's writing even outside of the presentation. His allusion to the wild west of

America is potent here, particularly with the reference to “Arizona Gunman.”[20] A distinct image is being painted about the Orient through Lawrence as being lawless and hostile—the antithesis of modern Western civilization.

In truth, this event would have been impossible for Thomas to have witnessed. Joel Hodson’s research is thorough at disproving this claim, demonstrating that this occurrence would be all but impossible given Thomas’s itinerary and what Thomas wrote about—especially how he neglected to mention this occurrence in any of his travel journals (*Lawrence of Arabia* 24-25). Lawrence himself, in fact, protested often to both his own personal friends and Thomas’s publishers about these “red hot lies” that Thomas was printing about him (300-302). This testimony and research indicates that the stories Thomas created can safely be discredited.

Essentially, Thomas created a very interesting, romantic, exciting figure out of Lawrence—as if he were straight out of an action movie. With the fantastic tales and exotic titles Thomas bestowed on Lawrence, amplified by Thomas’s public speaking ability and use of special effects, he created what he called “The Matinée Idol of Arabia” out of Lawrence, and transformed him into a cultural figure (Thomas, “The Matinée Idol of Arabia”). This figure was all too easily brought—along with its Orientalist context—into film.

[20] This is especially potent since Arizona only received statehood a few years before this presentation—becoming a state in 1912 (“Arizona History”).

Chapter Three

From Lawrence to Valentino: The Shift from the Thomas Presentation to Film

Considering that Lowell Thomas began giving his presentation over "Lawrence of Arabia" around 1919, the same year that E.M. Hull's *The Sheik* was published, it is unlikely that his presentation influenced the novel. This being said, since this was still a few years before the film's release, it is likely that Thomas's show was able to influence the story's transition into film—and indeed, this does seem to be the case. Rather fittingly, just as Thomas realized that people did not come to his show to see the war, but rather Lawrence, the director of the film, George Melford, tailored the film to focus more on the Sheik himself. This shift away from Diana and her struggle with her captivity, to Sheik Ahmed and his displays of power and sexuality as the main focus of the film gave the adaptation many problematic, Orientalist implications.

This is not to say that the film was entirely lifted from the concept of "Lawrence of Arabia." Indeed, for the most part, the film version of *The Sheik* (1921) is a fairly faithful recreation of E.M. Hull's novel. Diana Mayo, for example, makes the transition from novel to film relatively unchanged. Similar to her novel counterpart, Diana displays the independence that symbolized much of the flapper movement. Diana is still as rebelious against expectations and demands as her novel counterpart, and still detests the idea of marriage, claiming that it is the end of a woman's "freedom," similar to the novel (Melford 6:28, 8:09). There were some concessions made, however, as her hair and dress did not entirely fit the "flapper" ideals that many contemporary analyses attribute to Diana. In particular, for much of the film she wears a more conservative type of dress. Additionally, Diana is shown to have much longer hair than her novel counterpart, only

being curled rather than bobbed, and for the most part, she is more traditionally beautiful rather than revolutionarily so in the new flapper style (20:00).

As an aside, the more specific aspects of her appearance—such as the length of her hair—could be at the request of the actress who portrayed her, Agnes Ayres. Certainly, around the time of this film's release, she appeared in other films, such as *Forbidden Fruit* (1921), *The Affairs of Anatol* (1921), and *The Love Special* (1921), and this could have made it impossible for her to alter her appearance too far from the roles for which she was intended ("Agnes Ayres"). Regarding the length of her hair, however, there were scenes in which it was curled, and it was impossible to tell the true length of it. During the scene of her sleeping during Sheik Ahmed's break-in, however, her lengthy hair is all but flaunted for the audience. While this seems minor on the surface, it is important to remember that there are some critics who considered Diana's adherence to the flapper style in the novel to be Hull's attempt to steer her female readers away from the cultural revolution for which the flappers stood for. As Turner states in her analysis of *The Sheik* and Hull's novel:

> Hull's inversion of power does not re-imagine a new feminine power but rather insists, in a sense, on the old order of power whereby the attributes of masculinity and femininity remain intact but are severed from biological gender categories. In contrast with more recent poststructuralist thought on gender binaries – exemplified by Judith Butler's claim that 'there is no reason to assume that genders ought to remain as two' – gender in Hull is always maintained along a strict binary divide. Power, in

> Hull, always belongs to the masculine and in this sense her novels remain a tool of the imperialist patriarchy. (179)

This, coupled with the tendency for Diana to wear more traditional Western dresses, shifts the film away from being a message of cautioning against social change, such as the book could be interpreted as doing. By removing this struggle that Diana has against society, it leaves a void in the film which could only be filled by her struggle with the lustfulness of Sheik Ahmed, thereby emphasizing the Orientalism in this film further.

Indeed, even Diana's rebellious nature tends to create some of the same problematic Orientalist tones that were present in Thomas's presentation of "Lawrence of Arabia." For instance, when she notices the casino in the opening of the film and desires to enter it, she is stopped by a member of her party who informs her that it is an area reserved for Arabs only. Diana simply responds, "And why should a savage desert bandit keep us out of any public place?" (Melford 9:51). It's important to note that having clubs for white colonizers was relatively common at this time—particularly in British colonies. Furthermore, the opening in the novel *The Sheik* takes place inside of one of these exclusively white parties. It did not take place outside of a casino, but rather inside of a ballroom filled with wealthy visitors from England, France, and the United States, demonstrating this desire for separation on the part of the Western characters quite clearly (Hull 1-16). The inversion of this racial separation—where white colonizers are not permitted in an Oriental space—is unacceptable to Diana. Diana's inability to accept this reveals a sense of ownership and superiority over the native inhabitants of this land, thereby an Orientalist ideology[21].

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[21] As Said argues in *Orientalism*, "… it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a

On that note, this scene, despite taking place far before the revelation of Sheik Ahmed's genetic heritage, further emphasizes the concept of Ahmed's power over the Orient. While this scene functions as the first time we are able to meet the love interest of the film, and to inform the audience that he, Ahmed, is indeed Arab, it becomes much more problematic once the Sheik's origins have been made clear. As the son of a Spaniard and an Englishman, he too shares a similar disregard for the rules of the Casino as Diana and assumes a superiority over the laws and customs of this land. Despite the film explicitly stating that the casino was closed to non-Arabs, Ahmed still remained inside (Melford 9:00).

Furthermore, similar to the Sheik, Diana shows an assumption of mastery over the culture. She borrows the garb of a dancer, walks into the casino, and sits among the women who were either waiting to perform or who had already performed. There is a slight parallelism—perhaps even intended foreshadowing—to the fact that Diana, our white lead, dons Arab garb and proceeds to try to fit in, similar to our white Sheik Ahmed, who she meets in this scene. But the difference is, and certainly to the film's credit, rather than having her completely pass as her assumed Arab role, as Ahmed does, she is almost immediately spotted by the locals and cast out (Melford 15:05).

But on the part of Ahmed, this scene is representative of the interplay between the hinted whiteness of Ahmed and his self-identification as Arab that forces blatant Orientalist sentiments to the forefront. This is particularly evident in Ahmed's ability to

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superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" (7). As Diana is from a European family, she predictably possesses an idea that she has cultural mastery over the native culture. Of course, this is far from the case.

be a European who dominates the Orient and his ability to master both Occidental and Oriental cultures by virtue of his heritage. While the novel form, as discussed in the first chapter, had the benefit of its length to obscure its Orientalist aspects, the film thrives on Ahmed's hinted whiteness—particularly because of its brevity. More specifically, the same plot points which hint at Ahmed's true background are present in both the novel and in the film, but since the film is so brief in comparison, those points just come much faster. Just as Thomas's show with "Lawrence of Arabia" gained in popularity through the 20s because of the audience's interest in a European man living and leading distant peoples in far-off lands, the film release of *The Sheik* thrived through this same interplay of race and culture. Rather than the military conquests of "Lawrence of Arabia," however, the Sheik has cultural and romantic conquests, showing the same domination in a much subtler, less physical way. The problematic implications behind having a distinctly superior leader of a tribe—whose main aspect *is* his whiteness—remains.

And this assumption of Occidental superiority over Oriental "savagery" takes place throughout the film itself. Even before the Sheik is revealed to be truly white at the end of the film, his behavior throughout the film is largely redeemed through his Occidental tendencies and upbringing. For instance, in the opening of the film, when Diana asks, "And why should a savage desert bandit keep us out of any public place?" she is answered by a guest informing her that "Sheik Ahmed is not a savage. He is a rich tribal prince, who was educated in Paris. In Biskra, his slightest wish is law" (Melford 9:51, 10:08). In other words, Ahmed cannot simply be an Oriental savage as a result of his Western education.

Even the infamous rape scene is somehow redeemed in this movie. And it should be noted that even though the rape scene in the novel is much more explicit, the existence of rape in the movie is still heavily implied. The Sheik chases Diana into his tent, and eventually, Diana is shown resting against the side of a bed in distress for some time before the Sheik approaches here, and the scene switches over to a intertitle stating, "An hour of anguished revolt, while a savage sand-storm sweeps in from the fevered waste" (Melford 31:05, 31:13). Between the description of an "hour of anguished revolt," and the presentation of Diana resting helplessly against the side of the bed shortly before, it leaves little room for an interpretation for anything other than rape. Furthermore, this implication of rape is all but confirmed when her clothes are changed in the next scene, as the violence of the "revolt" still necessitated a change of clothes (31:45).

But shortly after this, the audience is introduced to the Sheik's greatest friend, a famous author and Doctor from France, Dr. Raoul de St. Hubert. The sudden appearance of a famous author as a friend with Sheik Ahmed gives Diana pause, as she needs to reconsider why, exactly, a famous western author would befriend someone who she only knew as a "desert savage." Furthermore, it is easily visible just how much this author means to Diana, as there is a small plot arc in the middle of the film itself discussing just how nervous she was about having someone from "her world" see her in her current state. Not only is she a kidnapping victim for Sheik Ahmed, but furthermore, the Sheik forces Diana to wear clothes that are very distinctly Arab—giving us our second white character in Arab dress. (Melford 40:00). Unlike Ahmed, however, Diana seems to detest the idea of wearing the clothing, asking if the Sheik is going to bring St. Hubert, to see her when she's "like this," opening her arms as if to show the issue lies with her Arab garb (43:09).

Soon after, a intertitle stating "…The hour approaches when Diana must face the humiliating ordeal of meeting a man from her own world" appears on the screen (45:21).

Through the introduction of this character, then, two major things are made clear. The first is that Diana explicitly holds the Occident in higher regard than the Orient itself, despite starting to fall in love with the Sheik during this portion of the film. She makes this quite clear through her repeated use of the word "savages," as well as her disdain for the culture and dress. The second is that by allowing Diana to represent the Occident, and by showing that she, as a representative of the Occident, regards St. Hubert with such high esteem, she immediately elevates that author's position. Furthermore, through the proximity allowed by friendship, this elevates the Sheik's standing in both her and the audience's eyes, as well. In essence, shortly after raping Diana, the Sheik was redeemed from rape because of his association—his friendship—with Western culture.

This trend of forgiving Ahmed goes so far as to relieve him of his guilt for strangling a man to death. Similar to the novel, Ahmed raids the camp of Omair, and he does end the raid by choking Omair to death (Melford 1:19:45 – 1:20:05). Unlike his novel counterpart, however, Ahmed kills Omair without a smile. The book, as shown in the first chapter of this thesis, very distinctly shows how Ahmed revels in the act, but Valentino's Sheik shares none of the same malice or jubilation in killing his opponent.

Nevertheless, the film still finds a way to forgive him for this act of murder by reminding the audience of his Western upbringing—but not by centering on his European education or his literary companion. Instead, it does this by bringing up Sheik Ahmed's heritage itself. In a rather macabre scene, while Sheik Ahmed is recovering from the wounds that he received during the battle, Diana is gazing and toying with his hands

while he sleeps—the same hands that he had used to strangle Omair to death a few scenes earlier. She remarks, “His hand is so large for an Arab” (Melford 1:23:00). In response, St. Hubert finally reveals the secret of his ancestry to Diana, shaking his head sadly and saying, “He is not an Arab. His father was an Englishman, his mother a Spaniard” (1:23:15).

As if Ahmed’s hands themselves were being excused for murder—they transform from the hands of an Arab to the hands of a European man right before the audience’s and Diana’s eyes. Indeed, in this same scene, Sheik Ahmed awakens and shouts, “Diana, my beloved! The darkness has passed and now the sunshine” (1:25:20). Notably, Ahmed proclaims this almost immediately after it's revealed he is white after all, thereby giving a much more palatable tone to their relationship for viewers at the time. In other words, the “darkness” of miscegeny is averted to the light “sunshine” of wholesome European love.

As St. Hubert sees Ahmed's eyes open, he simply leaves the tent and goes outside, taking one last look back. The entirety of the camp is sitting outside, waiting for news on Ahmed's condition. After some time, St. Hubert tells them, and the camp raises their hands and proclaim "All things are with Allah!" before kneeling and bowing towards the tent—presumably in prayer. (1:24:40 - 1:26:00). While it is implied that these camp members are praying in gratitude for the revival of Ahmed, the imagery of an entire camp of Arab soldiers and citizens kneeling and bowing in the direction of their now-white leader is troubling, showing the Oriental habitants bowing to their white leader. This only further displays the Orientalist assumptions and ideology within this film.

On a similar note, and as a slight aside, there is a moment in the film that serves as an elevation of Ahmed above his Arab companions. This comes soon after St. Hubert’s

arrival. Yusef, the Sheik's right-hand man, bursts into the room, shouting to St. Hubert, "Come quickly, doctor! There has been an accident!" (Melford 57:50). Both Diana and St. Hubert look frightened for a moment, with Diana crying for Ahmed, before Yusef clarifies, saying "One of the men—a gun exploded in his hand" (57:53-58:06). They both look relieved, and St. Hubert turns to her and says "You see, Mademouiselle—it is all right!" (58:07-58:14). While this could simply be written off as them both caring deeply for Ahmed, it does seem like a callous thing to say considering how dangerous and life-altering such an accident can be, unless St. Hubert is explicitly and consciously prioritizing the life of someone he knew was of Western origin over that of one of Ahmed's tribesmen.

All of this is similar to our "Lawrence of Arabia" figure. It was not the ability for him to go to the Middle East and fight alone that allowed Lowell Thomas's presentation of him to gain such popularity, but rather, the explicit disconnect of Occident and Orient. Or, more specifically, the ability for T. E. Lawrence to thrive in an environment that was typically considered savage and unrefined. And not only did they both serve to show an imperialistic tale in a positive light, they also made it look appealing. "The Twenties also marked the emergence of the movie star as sex symbol… best exemplified by Rudolph Valentino… While male movie-goers termed Valentino effeminate… woman [*sic*] thrilled to his virile charms" (Raub 123). This is not to say that Valentino's efforts were largely unappealing to men, however. Indeed, when combined with the efforts of Lowell Thomas's presentation on "Lawrence of Arabia," the exact opposite seems to be the case. As Teo states:

> The hypermasculine, violent, primitive, sexually potent sheik succeeds where “civilized” but emasculated modern Western men have failed. But the sheik is, of course, a European, and Gargano compares his disguise with that of the famous “white sheik” of the war years and after: Colonel T. E. Lawrence, or “Lawrence of Arabia.” Both Englishmen are presented as ‘better’ Arabs than the Arabs, and this serves to underline the fact that ‘an Englishman, raised under the same conditions of unimpeded freedom, absolute power over his subordinates, and constant physical activity, is still superior,’ thus reaffirming Britain’s imperial mission and providing a suggested cure to enervated postwar British masculinity. (Teo 91).

This could easily be extended to the United States, as well, particularly as it was beginning to take its first steps into globalism. As I have stated before, by doing all these things, the film has privileged the Occident over the Orient, and moreover, has shown to its viewers that the Orient is not only culturally inferior, but something as base, or primal. If, in these narratives, the West represents sophistication over baser desires, and the East represents the savage nature that same sophistication has overcome, then by this implication, the West already has a natural command of Eastern culture.

The film *The Sheik*, coming after E.M. Hull’s novel and Lowell Thomas’s presentation on “Lawrence of Arabia,” gave rise to a trend in 1920s film. This is what Hodson calls the rise of the “sun-and-sand” films (Hodson, *Lawrence of Arabia* 61). During this period in the 1920s, there was a large number of films that all followed roughly the same pattern. First, an Arab protagonist is established as being good, or at least above his peers, and is usually in a position of power with a title reminiscent of one

bestowed on Lawrence by Thomas in his presentation, or even sometimes being another Sheik. Secondly, the Arab protagonist would be contextualized by other Arab characters who are either distinctly inferior in terms of morals and upbringing, or even outright evil. Third, a white love interest would enter the film, and would win the affection—or at least the attention—of the Arab protagonist. And lastly, the Arab protagonist and the white love interest would fall in love, and the Arab protagonist would be revealed to actually be European all along.

Many allusions are made to the "Lawrence of Arabia" myth within *The Sheik* itself. In the opening of *The Sheik* (1922), Ahmed is shown serving as an adjudicator for the selling of wives, which is a position that T. E. Lawrence was often asked to fill during his time in Arabia (Hodson, *Lawrence of Arabia* 71). Additionally, there are many instances throughout the film that depict the Sheik leading a small band of his followers into battle. Notably, all of the men that he is leading are cavalry (Melford 24:08). As Thomas's presentation was set in the context of General Allenby's struggle in the Middle East, and General Allenby was a cavalry officer, the similarity between "Lawrence of Arabia" and Sheik Ahmed is apparent.

The Sheik was successful enough for its sequel to be made into film, called *The Son of the Sheik* (1926). As Ahmed, the protagonist of *The Sheik*, fell in love with the white female love interest Diana, their resulting child—who is also named Ahmed, and is also played by Rudolph Valentino—would be free of any trace of Arab blood, thus resulting in another depiction of a white, Easternized European male serving in a dominant leadership role in an Arabian setting. Again, similar to how Lawrence was viewed throughout Thomas's presentation.

Hodson points out that this movie begins in a way completely different from its predecessor, however. "*The Son of the Sheik* begins with a curious disclaimer that the film takes place 'Not east of Suez but south of Algiers.' Since the original film, *The Sheik*, had also been set in North Africa, this disclaimer seems unwarranted, unless it was made in order to avoid a possible lawsuit or other charge that parts of the plot of *The Son of the Sheik* were derivative of Lawrence's story" (Hodson, *Lawrence of Arabia* 71). It is also important to note that Lawrence was growing increasingly bitter at Thomas's presentation of him during this time, and refused to have any movies made over his story (71). This disclaimer could be seen as an attempt to distance themselves from Lawrence's story for legal concerns.

This disclaimer did not stop allusions to "Lawrence of Arabia" from permeating the film itself, however, as there are still distinct similarities between Thomas's story and the story of both Ahmed and his son in the film *The Son of the Sheik* (1926). One of the most blatant is the scene where the son is captured. This is punctuated by a long torture scene, before he eventually is allowed to escape. This coincides with part of "Lawrence of Arabia"'s story, as he was also captured and tortured, but eventually managed to escape (Hodson, *Lawrence of Arabia* 68). There is also a scene in the movie where Ahmed is searching for his son, but the audience is given a close glimpse of Ahmed's garb, and he is decorated with combat medals (Fitzmaurice 36:53). As Colonel T. E. Lawrence had a decorated military career, having a scene with the Sheik similarly shown as decorated with combat medals draws the two characters closer and closer together.

Essentially, while Lawrence's exact story could not be replicated—especially because of legal concerns—these two films, which are renowned in their genre, seem to

be heavily influenced by Lawrence's story and mystique. They not only capitalize on the craze for stories involving a European thriving in an Arabian setting, but they also distinctly make nods to Lawrence's career and his exploits throughout both films.

Fig. 1. Lawrence in London, Fall of 1919. Used for cover of Thomas's biography of Lawrence, from Joel C. Hodson; *Lawrence of Arabia and American Culture: The Making of a Transatlantic Legend*; Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995; 69; Print.

Fig. 2. Rudolph Valentino in Arab garb. Production still from *The Sheik*, from Joel C. Hodson; *Lawrence of Arabia and American Culture: The Making of a Transatlantic Legend*; Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995; 70; Print.

Perhaps one of the most striking similarities between the fictional Sheik Ahmed and the icon of "Lawrence of Arabia," however, lies within the promotional imagery that was used for their respective stories. Hodson emphasizes the similarities between these two images (fig. 1 and fig. 2), stating, "An Italian American, Valentino had a dark complexion and Lawrence, an Anglo-Saxon, was fair-haired. But once in costume, as pictures of Valentino and Lawrence side-by-side show, the likeness is striking.

Valentino's costume and the pose he strikes resemble closely those in a photograph of Lawrence that Thomas used [for his biography of Lawrence]" (Hodson, *Lawrence of Arabia* 71). More strikingly, however, is how this promotional imagery—specifically with Valentino—was used. Elizabeth Gargano provides an innovative and often overlooked observation in the marketing of these films, shown in the pictures above, in that their Orientalist appeal is advertised by Valentino's sensuality, as well as emphasizing the fact that he is "Latin"—a term that she argues, like Oriental, provokes a sense of "otherness" (184). These films, essentially, seemed to be born out of a fascination of a European man becoming Easternized—or Orientalized—and thriving in an Arabian world, just as "Lawrence of Arabia" was renowned for doing (173).

This Orientalist ideology extends to the second film, *The Son of the Sheik* (1926), as well. In fact, the very first scene in the film depicts the setting as savage, hostile, and lawless—the antithesis of modern Western civilization. This is demonstrated by the gang of thieves that greets viewers in the very beginning, all of whom are seen gambling and fighting—and as the scene evolves, the tensions escalate, and daggers are thrown at a man suspected of cheating (Fitzmaurice 2:40 – 3:10). In fact, the leader of this band of thieves, named Andre, serves as a potent figurehead for Orientalist stereotypes. The movie quickly lets its viewers know that Andre is a renegade Frenchman, who is currently seeking refuge in the desert (1:46). The fact that he *is* a renegade from France and finds a home in the Orient, however, carries the overtone that the Orient is everything that France is not. Or more specifically, if following the laws of modern Western civilization was something that this man was not capable of, then showing that this man

is flourishing in the Orient quite heavily implies the hostile lawlessness that the West often attributed to the East.

In fact, this follows the Orientalist notion of the West identifying itself by setting itself against the Orient exactly as Said says, “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (Said 3).This renegade from France could only find a place in the Orient, as the Orient has been set as the West’s antithesis for years.

In essence, Thomas’s presentation placed the Middle East in the minds of the public again, and gave rise to “Lawrence of Arabia”—essentially a fabricated white character through which to depict the Arab landscape comfortably and safely. The film industry caught on to this idea of using a white character to tour the Orient rather quickly, especially as Thomas’s presentation and his book over Lawrence became more and more popular. Although films could not replicate his tale exactly—especially because of legal concerns—there is a general trend of increased interest in the Middle East after Thomas’s presentation, specifically with regards to an Easternized European thriving in an Arabian landscape, but also combined with the added effect of including Thomas’s emphasis on the foreignness of the Orient in these depictions, particularly with the same presentations of vast deserts, exotic dancers, violent tribes, and so on. With the popularity of *The Sheik* serving as an excellent proof of concept, it started a trend in American cinema, popularizing the “sun-and-sand” cycle[22] of films that surged during the 20s.

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[22] I am borrowing Richard Griffith’s use of the word “cycle” from his essay “Cycles and Genres.” Essentially, they are groups of movies with a commonality that the audience has a demand for, but do not quite have enough distinction to be classified as its own genre. As Griffith explains, a cycle essentially works as follows: “A story ‘theme’ becomes popular enough with general audiences to warrant a cycle of films to be built around it. But the ‘theme’ itself Is repugnant to the upper middle-class who, though they form only a small percentage of total motion picture patronage, are organized and articulate. Then,

Indeed, there are many films in this cycle that copy and *The Sheik*'s concept closely, such as *A Son of the Sahara* (1924), *When the Desert Calls* (1922), *She's a Sheik* (1927), among others[23]. Again, these movies all follow roughly the same pattern of introducing a love interest, having a struggle that is distinctly Oriental—generally involving warfare among tribes—and then revealing that the love interest was European all along, and thereby avoiding the idea of a mixed-race union, something that would be rather troubling in the white-dominated patriarchal West during this time.

This is not to say that all films of this cycle copied *The Sheik* exactly. Some of them can even be flipped across gender lines and focus on a female protagonist who became accustomed to a desert landscape, such as *A Café in Cairo* (1924)[24]. In this film, a desert bandit, named Kali, attacks a British military camp and kills a Colonel and his wife, leaving only their "small" daughter behind (Munden 103). Strangely enough, Kali spares her on the one condition that he will be given the chance, once she is older, to claim her for his bride. Left without parents, the child grows up believing herself to be Arab, and adopts the name of Nadia. While not quite following the narrative of *The Sheik*, as Ahmed knew he was English all along, it does mirror the childhood aspect of it quite well—particularly with the parental abandonment in an Arab landscape.

Nadia is taken in by a man named Jaradi, who becomes her foster father. Jaradi also happens to own the titular café in Cairo, which is actually a front for an organization plotting political activities and uprising. Similar to "Lawrence of Arabia"'s ideal of

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although the cycle's box-office warrants its continuance, it is abandoned in deference to other pressure groups" (113).

[23] Summaries for this film were gathered from *The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States: Feature Films 1921-1930*, pages 744, 886, and 708 respectively. For the purpose of this thesis, I will focus on the outliers.

[24] According to the Library of Congress's National Film Presentation Board, this film is now considered lost (Leggett 18). A summary of this film was drawn from *The American Film Institute Catalog*.

coming to a desert landscape to rise up against their oppressors, the story focuses on the concept of freedom and self-determination (Munden 103). As it might be hinted from Jaradi's character, however, as well as the fact that Egypt was still a protectorate of England during this time, this is not a revolution that the audience was supposed to be rooting for. And, indeed, Kali is one of the main figures for this uprising. He comes to the café to meet Jaradi, the foster father, in order to plan a revolt. During his visit, however, he notices Nadia in the café, and once again, Kali declares that Nadia will be his bride (103).

Regardless, it comes to pass that in order for this revolt to come to pass, the revolutionaries will need a confidential document that is currently in the care of an American "soldier of fortune" named Barry Braxton. Nadia's new job is to take it from Barry. In short, Nadia tracks Barry down and takes it from him while he is sleeping, but during their short time together, she falls in love with him. Out of guilt, she is unable to betray her new love, and does not give the document to Kali. Enraged, Kali commands her to marry him at that moment, and preparations are made for their wedding (103). Again, this does seem to circumvent the natural progression for this movie cycle slightly, but it still does share similarities with some of the aspects that made "Lawrence of Arabia" such a popular show—particularly with the military man, our soldier of fortune Barry Braxton, thriving in an Arab environment.

The movie ends in a dramatic climax, with Nadia sending for Barry to return the document to him. As she was supposed to be in seclusion for her wedding, however, Kali notices a man coming to her room and becomes enraged once more. He captures Barry, ties him up, and prepares to throw him into the Nile River—a prominent feature in the

Lowell Thomas presentations. Nadia rescues Barry herself, and proceeds to fight Kali, her would-be husband. She begins to lose, but before she is killed, her foster father kills Kali instead (Munden 103). Nadia and Barry inevitably fall fully in love and proceed to be married. Sadly, it is at this point that the summary of this lost film becomes unclear. In the catalog itself, it states "[they] return to England" (103). As Barry was originally from America, and Nadia was the only character who was from England originally, it could easily be assumed—particularly because of the cycle that this movie belongs to—that, just as Sheik Ahmed, Nadia's heritage as an Englishwoman is revealed, the threat of miscegenation in the 1920s is averted, and they proceed to live happily ever after.

Although not as distinct as the other films listed above, there is another example of this "Lawrence of Arabia" archetype in a film called *Arabian Love* (1922)[25]. In this film, Nadine Fortier and her husband go to meet Nadine's mother, who is ill. To do so, they cross a desert, where they are taken prisoner and are separated. Through a random game of chance, Nadine becomes the property of one of the tribesmen named Norman Stone, who is an American fugitive, joining the band to escape punishment from his home (Munden 24). Immediately, this echoes the idea of not only the "Lawrence of Arabia" myth—as this man assumes the culture enough to feel comfortable taking part in this game—but it also reinforces that same Orientalist ideology of the Orient being the antithesis of the Occident—a place of lawlessness, violence, and lust, and perfect for an American outlaw.

Regardless, Norman takes her as his property and escorts her away from the game. Shortly after, she discovers that her husband was killed, and in a rage, Nadine

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[25] According to the Library of Congress's National Film Presentation Board, this film is now considered lost (Leggett 125). A summary of this film was drawn from *The American Film Institute Catalog*.

offers a bounty for the capture of her husband's killer. Inevitably, Stone, our Westerner-turned-Arab, falls in love with our protagonist. But Themar, the daughter of the Sheik of his tribe, becomes jealous of his love for Nadine, and to spoil their union, informs Nadine that it was actually Stone who was behind her husband's murder all along (Munden 24). The most interesting point in this part of the narrative is that, as if to put a stamp of approval on Lawrence figure, the Sheik's daughter falls in love with Stone.

To the film's credit, it does a rather odd twist on *The Sheik*'s narrative, in which rather than having the heroine's capture be a result of the hero's desire, instead it is the hero's desire coming as a result of the heroine's capture. It's a slight change, but an important one. As Rudolph Valentino was known for his gaze of almost endless lust, famously stating "When an Arab sees a woman he likes, he takes her," here, our protagonist is much more reserved (Melford 47:21). In truth, this could simply be because Stone was never intended to be painted as an Arab. Unlike Sheik Ahmed, there was no sense of surprise at the reveal of his whiteness. As most of these characters immediately embrace the Orientalist mentality that these films hold up as a standard after they are revealed to be of white, European ancestry—generally symbolized by the couple returning to England, France, or the United States—here, this standardized mold of whiteness is what Stone was introduced by. Therefore, this limited his ability to truly "go native" and still receive the audience's best wishes.

In the end, Stone reveals that the depiction of events surrounding the death of Nadine's husband was all the result of a misunderstanding. In reality, Nadine's husband had been arranging questionable meetings with Stone's sister, and when Stone confronted him, his revolver accidentally discharged, and he presumably caused his own death.

Stone fled from the scene in order to save his sister's name and keep her from suspicion of wrongdoing and taking part in adultery (Munden 24). Of course, Nadine is immediately forgiving of the misunderstanding, and begs Stone for forgiveness, quickly falling in love with him. The two enter a relationship, and in true fashion to this sun-and-sand cycle, return back to America (24).

My point by bringing up these films is not to simply build a catalogue of what movies were present in the "sun and sand" cycle. Rather, I want to point out just how similar most of them were. Even with the two films that I consider outliers for this particular cycle of film, as I discussed above, both films still share much of the same content and trends that were present throughout Thomas's presentation of "Lawrence of Arabia," and most certainly with the film adaptation of *The Sheik*.

Indeed, through this thesis, my aim was to show how all of these events that occurred in such a relatively short time were interrelated and communicating with one another. And not simply communicating, but in a sense, amalgamating—resulting in the same promotion of Orientalist stereotypes and values that I emphasized in the introduction of this thesis which helped construct and disseminate a concept of the Middle East in the minds of the Western public. History might have given the Occident the opportunity to push this Orientalist ideology into prominence once again, but it was certainly the multiple forms of cultural production that took advantage of this ideology. By producing and reiterating the same clichés, the same icons, and the same ideologies, it would becoming increasingly more palatable to the Western public through consistent repetition and reinforcement throughout this period. And, perhaps, the monetary incentive—and the popularization that would lead to monetary success—was, in a sense,

the primary mechanism behind this process. None of the works or events that I have explored and examine in this thesis, perhaps barring the last two examples in film, were particularly obscure. “Lawrence of Arabia” would go on to be the subject of the film *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) decades later. *The Sheik*—in both novel and film forms—has its mimics to this day with authors such as Susan Mallery and Kristi Gold, and films such as James Cameron’s *Avatar* and Kevin Costner’s *Dances with Wolves*. Certainly, they have made their impact, and were far from being ignored.

While these films and novels are not within the scope of this thesis, although perhaps might be the focus of later research, I do believe it is important to show just how much of a lasting impact the original works and events during the period between World War I and World War II had. Moreover, and by extension, it is important to understand that this lasting impact would keep the portrayal of the Middle East, slanted and romanticized as it might be, in the minds of Western audiences, and by extension, their combined lasting effect in this continued “filter” that Said outlines.

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