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A Postcolonial Study of David Lean's Film *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962)

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To my mother Tounsia and my father Rachid

To my lovely brother Nadir, his wife Siham and their little angel Amir

To my brother Tarik

To my Husband Mourad and all his family

To all the beloved ones

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Abstract

This dissertation analyses David Lean's 1962 film *Lawrence of Arabia* in the light of postcolonial theory. Appropriating Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, our research was conducted on three major axes; the depiction of the Arabian Desert as a space where the events took place, the representation of the Arabs and the possible hidden agenda underlying the film. Having analysed various scenes, characters, dialogues, we came out with the conclusion that the film is filled with all manner of stock Orientalist images, characters and themes. As an Oriental space, the Arabian Desert is represented as a place beyond history and civilisation and is given two images. It is both an "exotic" place where a bored and undisciplined young Englishman gets the opportunity to become a hero and a "hostile" place where the latter is in constant danger. As Orientals, the Arabs are ascribed a set of negative characteristics that fix them in an inferior position vis-a-vis the Westerners. Most of all, we discovered that, in his adaptation of Seven Pillars of Wisdom, director David Lean added several historically inaccurate scenes. From our analysis of the these scenes we noticed that the Arabs are shown either as a divided people always fighting against each other or as subordinates who are in desperate need for Western guidance. Taking into consideration the historical context of the film's production, it appeared to us that all the added scenes carry overt political connotations. It became clear that Lean purposefully altered history to serve his film's hidden imperialistic agenda.

While expressing Enthusiasm for a film like Lawrence of Arabia might be unproblematical to some, it becomes disturbing to others. It is one of those movies that artistically high-minded cineastes hate to love as one of the most pleasurable Hollywood epics ever made and that the same critics might love to hate as a quintessential, orientalsit discourse. (Caton, Steve C., 1999)

What if Lean had made not Lawrence of Arabia but Faisal of Arabia? Audiences would have seen Arabs in the forefront, thinking and acting as well if not better than the British. Courageous actions of Faisal, Ali and Auda would abound. Lawrence would appear not as a desert savior, but as a well-disposed and important intermediary between the British and the Arabs. Such a scenario would offer viewers, for the first time, not only credible history but glorious images of the proven roles the Arabs rendered in their victorious revolt. (Shaheen, Jack G., 1989)

General Introduction

General Introduction

For centuries, the Middle East was part of the Ottoman Empire; a great and successful empire covering great swaths of territory around the Mediterranean, through the Middle East, almost to the borders of India.This empire maintained its stability mainly through its rulers' policy that allowed its subject nationalities to keep their identities.[1] However, in the years preceding the First World War (1914-1919) the Ottoman rulers abandoned their multicultural formula by instituting a "Turkification" policy that made Turkish the official language in schools, army, and government.Furious and resolved to keep their identity, the Arabs, who constituted the majority of the empire's population, instigated an uprising in June 1916[2] to get their independence.This uprising became commonly known as the "Great Arab Revolt."

Considered as one of "the most dramatic episodes of the twentieth century history," the Arab Revolt was a "seminal moment" in the history of the Ottoman Empire and played a major role in the shaping of the modern Middle East.[3] This episode became well-known through the writings of numerous authors such as James Barr's Setting The Desert On Fire: T. E. Lawrence And Britain's Secret War In Arabia, 1916-1918 (2008), David Murphy's The Arab Revolt 1916-1918: Lawrence sets Arabia ablaze (2008) and Neil Faulkner's Lawrence of Arabia's War: The Arabs, The British And The Remaking Of The Middle East In WWI (2016).

Nevertheless, so much of its popularity, especially in the Western world, has emanated from the works of the British Lieutenant Thomas Edward Lawrence. Sent by his superiors on a fact-finding

[1] O'Brien Browne, "Creating Chaos: Lawrence of Arabia and the 1916 Arab Revolt," accessed on http://www.historynet.com/creating-chaos-lawrence-of-arabia-and-the-1916-arab-revolt.htm.(November 11th, 2014).
[2] Ibid
[3] Ibid

mission in 1916[4], Lawrence spent two years working for the revolt. Upon his return to Britain, he wrote Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph (1926); a memoir of his two-year service in Arabia.

In his book, Lawrence chronicles the Arab Revolt staring from his 1916 fact-findingmission to Mecca ending with his exit at Damascus in 1918.[5] He describes his efforts to unify the feuding Arab tribes against the Turks and recounts missions of up one thousand miles a month on camel back traversing the harshest deserts through extremes of heat and cold. He also describes several successful guerilla campaigns that he and his Arab warriors led against Turkish railroads; campaigns that, according to him, played a key role in the success of the Arab Revolt.

In addition to his description of the events that took place, Lawrence also profiles several British and Arab leaders such as General Edmund Allenby the Commander-in-Chief of British forces in Egypt and Palestine, Prince Feisaland his brother Sherif Ali, two of Sherif Hussein's four sons, and Auda Abu Tayi, the leader of the Howeitat Tribe.The book ends with the Arab army's victory and capture of the city of Damascus in 1918.

Considered by critics as one the best works of literature in the English language, Seven Pillars of Wisdom was adapted into a film in 1962. This adaptation offered Hollywood one of its most popular and commercially successful films; David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*. Starring Peter O'Toole as T. E. Lawrence, Alec Guinness as Prince Feisal, Omar Sharif as Sherif Ali Ibn El Hussein and Anthony Quinn as Auda Abu Tayi, the film tells the story of the British Lieutenant T.E. Lawrence who goes to Arabia during WWI with the aim of unifying the Arab tribes, make them stand up to the Turks and successfully achieve independence.

[4] Constantine Santas, The Epic Films of David Lean, (Annapolis: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2012), p. 29.
[5] Ibid 27.

Review of the Previous Literature

David Lean's 1962 film *Lawrence of Arabia* has been the centre of interest for a large number of critics who have approached it from the historical, the intertextual and the psycho-analytical perspectives. Among the critics who have approached the film from a historical perspective figures Jeremy Wilson (1990); Lawrence's authorised biographer. Wilson speaks about the film's unfaithfulness to history at the level of the narration of historical events noting that these historical inaccuracies are more troublesome than what can be allowed under normal dramatic license. As an example, he refers to the fact that Lawrence is made aware of the "Sykes-Picot Agreement"[6] very late in the story and is shown to be appalled by it whereas the real Lawrence, while fighting alongside the Arabs, knew about it much earlier. [7]

Similarly, biographer Michael Korda, author of Hero: the Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia(2010),criticisesthe film's deficiency in historical accuracy. According to him, it is neither "the full story of Lawrence's life nor a completely accurate account of the two years he spent fighting with the Arabs."[8] He justifies this by the fact that in adapting T.E. Lawrence's Seven Pillars of Wisdom"the object was to produce, not a faithful docudrama that would educate the audience, but a hit snapshot."[9]

In The Epic Films of David Lean (2012), Constantine Santas reviews the filmfrom the same perspective as Wilson and Korda do but making reference to its discrepant representation of historical characters mentioned in Seven Pillars of Wisdom, namely T. E. Lawrence and his two Arab

[6]*The Sykes-Picot Agreement:* Georges Picot, First Secretary of the French embassy in London, and Sir Mark Sykes, a young British politician serving on one of the British government's committees looking into the future of the Middle Eastern region after the decline of the Ottoman Empire, struck an agreement in the Autumn of 1916 according to which, following WWI, France would occupy Syria, while England would be awarded Palestine and Mesopotamia. Karin Lovey, "The Sykes-Picot Agreement's Regional Moment: Drawing Lines of Development in a New and Open Space," accessed on http://www.law.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/upload_documents/Loevy%20-%20Part%202_10-19-16.pdf(November 11th, 2014).

[7]Jeremy Wilson, Lawrence of Arabia: The Authorized Biography of T. E. Lawrence, (London: Heinemann, 1990), pp. 409-410.

[8] Michael Korda, Hero: The Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia, (New York: Harper, 2010), p. 693.

[9]Ibid 694.

collaborators in the campaign Sherif Ali Ibn El Hussein played by Omar Sharif and Auda Abu Tayi played by Anthony Quinn. According to Santas, the characters of Sherif Ali and Auda Abu Tayi are reshaped to fit their roles in the film's sequences.[10]

Concerning the character of T.E. Lawrence, he claims that the Lawrence of Seven Pillars of Wisdom, aside from his physical differences from that of *Lawrence of Arabia* as rendered by the actor Peter O'Toole, "is in crucial ways an entirely different character from the film's hero."[11] In his narrative, Lawrence is presented as a rather self-effacing character; very respectful of his superiors and having a high regard for General Allenby.[12] In the film, however,

> He is at first shown a vain braggart, initially contemptuous of the Arabs, disrespectful of his superiors, and subject to abrupt shifts of mood, though later proven a valiant hero and brilliant strategist.[13]

Santas adds that the film also describes him as a rather unstable, "half-mad" individual and even a "bloodthirsty monster."[14]

Santas's view about the film's misrepresentation of the historical Lawrence is shared by T.E. Lawrence's brother Arnold Walter Lawrence who harshly opposes the film and denounces its misrepresentation of his brother. In an article written for the Observer entitled: "*The Fiction and the Fact*", he writes: "I do not want to give the impression that I consider the Lawrence of the film entirely untrue. I need only say that I should not have recognized my brother."[15]

A. W. Lawrence describes the film sardonically to one of his brother's biographers saying:

> They [referring to the film's director David Lean and his screenwriter Robert Bolt] have used a psychological recipe: take one ounce of narcissism, a pound of

[10] Constantine Santas, The Epic Films of David Lean, (Annapolis: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2012), p. 31.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Jeremy Wilson, Lawrence of Arabia: The Authorized Biography of T.E. Lawrence, pp. 409-410.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid 32.
[15] Gene D. Phillips, Beyond the Epic: The Life and Films of David Lean, (Frankfort: the University Press of Kentucky, 2006), p. 314.

> exhibitionism, a pint of sadism, a gallon of blood thirst, and a sprinkle of other aberrations; and stir well.[16]

He denounces the film for "attempting to tell an adventure story in terms of psychological study which is pretentious and false."[17] Indeed, he was so dissatisfied with the film's representation of his brother that he refused to allow the use of T. E. Lawrence's title "Seven Pillars of Wisdom" as its title.

In the same book, Santas provides an intertextual analysis of the film. He notes that it departs from Lawrence's narrative mainly at the level of the narration of the events. For example, Lean's choice to show Lawrence's expedition against Akaba as the first major event inthe story omits an entire sequence of events described in Seven Pillars of Wisdom; as he states: "the expedition against Akaba, a key first episode in the film, is only one chapter in the massive Lawrence account of the war."[18]

In other words, when he was sent from Cairo to Arabia with the aim of finding Prince Feisal to scout his "intentions" at the beginning of the revolt, Lawrence's mission included several phases before the decision to attack the Turkish stronghold of Akaba.[19] Santas's view about the film's infidelity to Lawrence's narrative may be summed up in the following quote

> Thus, Lean makes the history of Lawrence not so much a chronicle of the Arab campaign- as Seven Pillars of Wisdom does- but a story of personal relations, the rise and fall of a hero who in many waysis an unstable man, or at least a "flawed" character… Lean makes Lawrence the central interest of the film, while in Seven Pillars of Wisdom he is the narrator who modestly recounts in his slow-paced style a multifaceted and weighty event; the Arab Campaign. In the book, the war is the main subject, in the film, the war becomes the vehicle for the hero's adventures.[20]

Among the critics who have provided psycho-analytical analyses to the film figure Michael A. Anderegg (1984) and Gene D. Phillips (2006). The former discusses a trio of paradoxes inherent in the Lawrence myth and demonstrates how Lean and the screenwriters Robert Bolt and Michael Wilson

[16] Gene D. Phillips, Beyond the Epic: The Life and Films of David Lean, p. 313.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Constantine Santas, The Epic Films of David Lean, p. 30.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid 32.

have effectively put these contradictions on the screen. For example, he mentions the "weakness/strength" paradox; one in which Lawrence has been discussed both as a weak and a strong figure. To use Anderegg's words

> The slight, short, pale, ascetic, aesthetic T. E. Lawrence, an Oxfordian with a schoolgirl giggle, connoisseur of fine printed books, collector of brass rubbings, perhaps homosexual, almost certainly masochistic versus the courageous, dashing, magnetic Oriental Lawrence, Prince of Mecca, uncrowned King of Arabia, bravely enduring torture, thirst, hunger, and hundreds of other miseries and discomforts in a noble cause [21]

In the film, the "effeminate" nature of Lawrence is shown in his soft-spoken manner in the earlier scenes and the way in which General Murray deals with him; considering him as being less masculine than his comrades. His "strong" nature is shown in the second part of the film; most definitely in the scenes preceding the taking of Akaba where he is shown as the sole commander having the final word in every issue. Anderegg adds that Lean and his collaborators did not attempt to resolve these paradoxes but, "interlinked and transformed them in such a way as to enrich the texture of the Lawrence myth"[22] instead.

In Beyond the Epic: The Life and Films of David Lean (2006), Gene D. Phillips writes that, in making *Lawrence of Arabia*, Lean "was looking for more of a character study of a complex personality, one with inner conflicts simmering underneath the surface behavior."[23] He mentions that in response to Michael Wilson's first draft of the film's screenplay Lean complained that "many faceted aspects of Lawrence's character were not yet in the screenplay"[24] implying that the latter wanted the screenplay to be focused on a character study of Lawrence rather than on action.

According to Phillips, the film deals mainly with three of Lawrence's character traits. First, his homosexuality is implied in his relationship with the two Arab boys Daud and Ferraj;a relationship

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[21] Michael A. Anderegg, David Lean,(Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), p.106.
[22] _____, "Lawrence of Arabia: The Man, The Myth, The Film," in The Michigan Quarterly Review, Spring 1982, p. 288.
[23] GeneD.Phillips, Beyond the Epic: The Life and Films of David Lean, p. 272.
[24] Ibid.

that seems to be more than an innocent one. Second, his masochism which is implied in the scene of his rape by the Turkish Bey; as Phillips says: "the beating resembles a masochistic ritual; the nearly naked Lawrence seems to enjoy being tortured."[25]Third, his sadism which is implied in two scenes; the execution of Gasim and the Tafas massacre in which he launches a massacre of Turkish soldiers.

Indebtedness to these critics should be acknowledged in the sense that they present interesting views about the film's inaccuracies in terms of its narration of historical events and its representation of historical characters, its infidelity to its source as well as thepsych-analytical study of the character of T. E. Lawrence. Nevertheless, as it is clear,critics have limited their analyses to a closed circle of perspectives and have seemingly missed the fact that the film may be approached from another perspective; the postcolonial one. It is our belief that approaching the film from such a perspective will yield potentially illuminating findings and will help us discover and understand many hidden aspects of the film that previous critics have missed.

Issue and Working Hypothesis

The general aim of our dissertation is to study *Lawrence of Arabia* in the light of postcolonial theory. More precisely, we will attempt to answer a number of questions that represent many of the matters brought into light by postcolonial studies. A) Does director David Lean provide his audience with an "objective image" of the Arabian Desert and the Arabs? B) How is the Arabian Desert, which stands for the Orient, represented? C) How are the Arabs, who stand for the Orientals, represented?D) What kind of relationship does exist between the Arabs and the Western characters; most specifically the film's protagonist T. E. Lawrence? E) Is the film principally produced with the aim of entertaining the audience or is it meant for other purposes? If yes, what kind of "hidden agenda" underlies it and how does Lean proceed to convey it?

[25]Gene D. Phillips, Beyond the Epic: The Life and Films of David Lean, p. 310.

To answer the above stated questions, three major hypotheses underlie our dissertation.First, we claim that the filmdoes not provide the audience with an "objective image" of the Arabian Desert and the Arabs but with a "subjective image" that is highly influenced by the 19th and early 20th century European Orientalsit discourse on the Orient and its people. In terms of the film's depiction of the Arabian Desert, we claim that Leanconstructs this part of the world as a polar image of the Occident according to two discourses; the historical Orient filled with exotic and romantic splendor and the Orient trapped in a state of perpetual danger.[26]

To be more explicit, the Arabian Desert as an Oriental locale is rendered in two different ways. On the one hand, it is depicted as an "exotic" place where T. E. Lawrence, introduced at the beginning of the film as an ordinary British military officer confined to a life of routine, initially experiences a romantic adventure, gets the opportunity to free himself from the Western confinement and becomes a hero.On the other hand, it is depicted as a dangerous place where he faces constant danger; both physically and mentally.

Second, concerning the Arabs, we claim that what can be defined as a uniting representational practice in the film is the depiction of the Arabs in accordance with the postcolonial notions of the "Other" being depicted as, amongst other things, backward, primitive,irrational, inferior, passive, cruel…etc.It is a stereotypical Orientalsit representation that maintains them in a static inferior position vis-à-vis the European characters.

Contrary to the Arabs, the film's protagonist Lawrence is depicted in accordance with a "Eurocentric discourse"whichattributeshim the very European traits of superiority, civilisation, rationality, intelligence, courage …etc. It also distinguishes him from the natives and places him in a privileged position among them. The relationship betweenLawrence, a representative of Europe, and the Arabs, as representatives of the Orient, is still unequal; the former being higher in the hierarchy.

[26]Edward Said, Orientalism, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978), pp. 1-57.

Third, we claim that *Lawrence of Arabia* is not solely meant to entertain the audience. It is an ideologically loaded cinematic production carrying overt political connotations. Lean subtly captures the political context in the Middle Eastern region during the 1950s and early 1960s and incorporates a hidden imperialistic agenda under his film's apparent layer of epic adventure. To achieve this aim, he does not only breathe life into those negative images about the Arabs already existent in Seven Pillars of Wisdom but purposefully alters history by adding several historically inaccurate scenes that further worsen their image.

Research Methodology

In terms of the theoretical framework, we find it appropriate to appeal to Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, as explained in Orientalism, as it provides vital ideas to our analysis. In his book, Said claims that one key element of mainstream nineteenth century European thought about the world generally known as the "Orient" was a particular conception of the difference between the two. He identifies this element as "Orientalism" which he defines as follows

> Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident."Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have acceptedthe basic distinction between the West and the East as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, mind, destiny and so on.[27]

In other words, Orientalism denotes the entire way of thinking which bases itself on the dichotomization of the West and the Orient as two distinct and fundamentally different entities. It encompasses all the texts, images, attitudes, institutions …etc through which the West have created and perpetuated a certain image of the Orient that soon became "common knowledge" among the Westerners.

[27] Edward Said, Orientalism, p. 2.

Said's most fundamental assumption is that there is no objectively existing Orient within the discourse of Orientalism. Rather,

> The Orient was orientalised not only because it was discovered to be oriental in all those ways considered to be common place by an average nineteenth century European, but also because it could be, that is submitted to being, made oriental. [28]

Indeed, the discourse of Orientalism "defines it in a certain way and produces widely accepted "truths" about it, thereby making a certain representation of it appear real."[29]

In other words, this discourse is never simply a more or less accurate representation of the Orient but one which actively "orientalises" it, investing it with the qualities that make it seem inevitably "Oriental" to the Westerners. This practice has contributed to the creation of the dichotomy between the two worlds whereby the West establishes its identity or "Self" by identifying the Orient as its "Other." As Said claims

> The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest colonies, the source of its civilisation and languages, its cultural contestants, and one of its deepest and recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.[30]

The crux of Said's argument is that this "manufactured" image of the Orient is both a result of and contributor to the European imperial enterprise. That is to say, the kind of knowledge Orientalism as a discipline produces is used to justify and further the exertion of European colonial and imperial domination over the Orient. In other words, in order to justify their imperialist activities in the Orient, eighteenth and nineteenth century European officials embraced Orientalism as a

> Self-serving view of Asians, Africans, Arabs and Muslims in terms of their perceived deficiencies and inferiority, a view that was used to rationalize their own imperial activities.[31]

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[28] Edward Said, Orientalism, pp. 5-6.
[29] Zachary Lockman, Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.186-187.
[30] Edward Said, Orientalism, pp. 1-2.
[31] Sulaiman Arti,"The evolution of Hollywood's representation of Arabs before 9/11: the relationship between political events and the notion of 'Otherness," in Networking Knowledge: Journal of the MeCCSA Postgraduate Network, (l 1/2), 2007.

Indeed, as Said believes, European scholarship of the "Orient" has been historically fabricated and manipulated to portray this part of the world as an inferior counterpart to the West thus opening room for the justification of the exercise of imperial power over it;

> To believe that the Orient was created … and to believe that such things happen simply as a necessity of the imagination, is to be disingenuous. The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of varying degrees of complex hegemony […] Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient- dealing with it by making statements about 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.[32]

Though initially literary, mainly anchored in European nineteenth and early twentieth century travel narratives on the Orient, the Orientalist discourse is not solely restricted to one form of cultural expression. As a "Western" modern form of cultural productionborn in the 1890s, Cinema is an important part of this discourse. Indeed, as Alan Nadel states, Said believes that the "Other" to Europe's self is the Orient which even in "postcolonial times" still "comprises a set of loose "realities" reinforced in political speeches, newspaper accounts, television shows *and films*."[33]

The birth of cinematic image did not bring with it new representations of the Orient but rather breathed life into those stereotypical images found in the European writings on this part of the world. As the world's biggest film industry whose productions reach nearly every single person in the world, Hollywood plays an important role in this process. It produces, and sometimes finances, films which upon close inspectionfollowing postcolonial theoryare revealed to contain deep Orientalist images.

In our case, analysing *Lawrence of Arabia* in the light of the theoryof Orientalismseems promising considering the fact that the film encompasses two major West-meets-Orient dynamics; the general portrayal of the Arabs and their locale and Lawrence's relationship with the Arabs.

[32]Edward Said, Orientalism, pp.5-9.
[33]AlanNadel, "A Whole New (Disney) World Order: Aladdin, Atomic Power and the Muslim Middle East," in Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film,eds., Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar, (London: I.B. Tauris,1997),p.185.

Additionally, it contains several scenes, dialogues and images that lead one to think back to Said's theory; mainly three of his most important assumptions.

First, in the Orientalist discourse the Orient is designed as the West's "Other" and is constructed according to two images. It is either "a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences"[34] or "Insinuating danger."[35]In other words, it is either an "exotic" or "dreamlike" place which provides a means of escape for the Westerners who, once there, get the possibility to get into contact with what all they have learnt to banish and free themselves from the constraints of their society or a "highly dangerous" locale where they face constant danger; either physically or mentally.

Second, a sharp dividing line is drawn between the Westerners and the Orientals. These two groups of people are separated not just in terms of natural physical differences such as the skin color but also in terms of specific traits that, according to the Orientalist discourse, are significant to each group's culture. This is what Said refers to as the set of "'us' Europeans as against all 'those' non-Europeans"[36] or "'We' are this, 'They' are that"[37] binary oppositions whereby the Oriental subject is ascribed a set of essentialist racial stereotypes such as "laziness, aggression, violence, greed, sexual promiscuity, bestiality, primitivism, innocence and irrationality,"[38] while the Western subject is characterised as carrying all the good traits of humanity such as civilisation, benevolence, rationality, intelligence, sophistication …etc.

Third, these binary oppositions are deployed to uphold the imperial project. Indeed, the construction of the Orient and its people as inherentlybackward, chaotic, inferior ... etcis used by European imperialists to implant a perceived necessity of an urgent need to help themin the Western

[34]Edward Said, Orientalism, p.1.
[35]Ibid.
[36]Ibid 20.
[37]Ibid 277.
[38]Ania Loomba, Colonialism – Postcolonialism, (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 106-107.

mind. In other words, they urge the Westerners toembrace the "White man's burden;"[39] the idea that the "civilised" Europeans have the moral duty of exercising a firm but beneficent tutelage over the Orientals.

Among the natives, it seeks to create an urge of surrendering themselves to the rule of the West; a rule which will supposedly rescue them from their miserable conditions and reinstate them in civilisation. However, under the layers of this philanthropic mission lies an imperial project of bringing these people under Western control; as Said claims: "these humanistic ideas coexisted so comfortably with imperialism."[40]

Methodological Outline

Our work is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is a historical background that provides a general survey of the historical context under which the film is created. The second chapter deals with the representation of the Arabian Desert, the third chapter deals with the representation of the Arabs and the film's protagonist T. E. Lawrence while the fourth and last chapter deals with thepolitical connotations of the film and the possible imperialistic agenda underlying it. The general conclusion consists of a concise restatement of the main ideas dealt with all through our dissertation.

[39]Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," in European Imperialism 1830-1930, ed., Alice L. Conklin and Ian Christopher Fletcher, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), pp. 58-59.
[40]Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism, (New York, Vintage Books, 1994), p. 82.

Chapter One: The Historical Background

Introduction

Artistic works cannot be separated from their historical context and their study requires a deep understanding of the historical circumstances under which they are produced. Accordingly, this chapter proposes an overview of the historical context under which *Lawrence of Arabia* was produced. Taking into consideration the fact that it is a Hollywood film that deals with events in which both Britain and the Middle East are involved, it will provide an overview of the major developments that occurred in the Middle East in the aftermath of the Second World War and Britain's connection to this region during the same period.

➢ Britain and the Middle East in the Aftermath of the Second World War

During most of the nineteenth century, Britain hungered for the Middle East because of its strategic importance as a land bridge between Europe and Asia. Its desire could, however, not be satisfied as this region was under the rule of the powerful Ottoman Empire. The First World War came as the right moment to give the British a chance to settle there. Indeed, in 1916, the Arab leader Sherif Hussein Ibn Ali, the Emir of Mecca, planned to organise a revolt to free the Arabs from the Ottoman yoke.[41] Being aware of the Arabs' incapability of fighting alone, he asked for Britain's aid.[42]

Reluctant at the beginning, Britain finally accepted to offer help after considering the usefulness of an Arab uprising in its war efforts. It thought that an Arab uprising would keep the Ottomans, who allied with Germany and the Central Powers during WWI, busy and thus make it easier for the Allied forces to defeat the Central Powers and win the war.[43] The Arabs defeated the Ottomans in 1918[44] and hoped to establish a free Arab nation in the region.

Their hopes faded away as Britain, and France, took profit from the decline of Ottoman Empire to settle in the Middle East. This settlement was secured by the "*Sykes-Picot Agreement*;" a secret

[41] O'Brien Browne, "Creating Chaos: Lawrence of Arabia and the 1916 Arab Revolt."
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.

agreement proposed by Georges Picot, first secretary of the French embassy in London, and Sir Mark Sykes, a young British politician serving on one of the British government's committees looking into the future of the Middle Eastern region after the decline of the Ottoman Empire, in the Autumn of 1916 so as to define these powers' spheres of influence in the Middle East after the expected downfall of the Ottoman Empire.[45]

Accordingly, right after the Arabs got their independence, France and Britain set about dividing the region to suit their needs. Under the League of Nations' Mandates System, the mandates of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, and the territory of Palestine were created. France was granted Syria and Lebanon while Britain took Iraq and Palestine.[46] As a mandatory power, Britain had the duty of providing "administrative advice and assistance" to the newly formed nations that, in theory, would soon be granted self-government.[47]This agreement marked the beginning of the establishment of a British Empire in the region.

However, it had also sown the seeds of solidarity amongst the Arabs who felt betrayed and fed them with nationalism and anti-Western sentiments against the newly forming British Middle Eastern Empire.When they decided to revolt against the Ottomans, the Arabs believed Britain would stick to her promises of self-government and thus were fighting for their independence. But, once the revolt over, their aspirations for freedom quickly faded away as they discovered that Britain was cheating on them and that it provided them with support only to weaken the Ottoman Empire, which sided with Germany during the First World War, to allow her and her allies to win the war.

Their hopes regarding a British pledge to honor its promises completely faded away when they discovered that the British were involved in similar promises with the Zionists. In fact, during WWI, in order to gain Zionist support, the British diplomat James Balfour issued his famous *Balfour*

[45]Karin Lovey, "The Sykes-Picot Agreement's Regional Moment: Drawing Lines of Development in a New and Open Space."

[46] Susan Pedersen, "The Meaning of the Mandates System: An Argument," accessed on https://aiscibhistory.wikispaces.com/file/view/meaningmandates.pdf.(December 25th, 2014).

[47] Ibid.

Declaration[48] of 1917; a declaration according to which the British government committed itself to the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.

Britain's double betrayal gave a new touch to Arab nationalism; it would no more be directed against the Ottoman Empire but against the Western powers, especially Britain. Ultimately, the Arabs began to have an ideology of Arab union to put future plans that might help them get rid of Western colonialism.[49] As Ahmad Mahmoud H. Gomaa notes, unity had never been the concern of the Arabs until the Sykes-Picot Agreement disillusioned them and confirmed that there would be no Arab independence unless the Arabs unite.[50]To use his words, "the "common enemy" pushed the Arabs to think about unity as a necessity for getting independence from the Western domination, in particular the British domination."[51]

As the major colonial power in the Middle East, Britain soon became aware of the threats represented by the growing Arab nationalism and recognised that a rapid action was needed to secure its interests in the region. This resulted in "a pretended sympathy towards Arab nationalism to secure a way to reinstall itself in the region."[52]As such, several plans from British officials were proposed so as to conserve the Middle East. These plans were, however, unsuccessful. Indeed, in the aftermath of 1945, Britain was compelled by the devastating effects of WWII to grant independence to most of its

[48]Under the *Balfour Declaration*, the Crown of England promises to facilitate the creation of a Jewish "national home" in Palestine while protecting the civil and religious rights of the area's existing population as well as the rights and political status enjoyed by the Jews in the countries they come from. Martin Gilbert, "'An Overwhelmingly Jewish State'- From The Balfour Declaration To The Palestine Mandate," accessed on http://jcpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Kiyum-gilbert.pdf (December 27th, 2014).

[49] Thomson Gale, "Competing Visions: Zionism, Nationalism, Pan-Arabism, and Islamism," accessed on http://www.encyclopedia.com/politics/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/competing-visions-zionism-nationalism-pan-arabism-and-islamism. (January 8 th, 2015).

[50]Ahmad Mahmoud H. Gomaa, The Foundation of the League of Arab States: Wartime Diplomacy and Inter-Arab Politics, 1941 to 1945, (Bungay Suffolk: Richard Clay, the Chaucer Press Ltd., 1977), p.150.

[51]Ibid.

[52]JohnDarwin, The End of the British Empire: The Historical Debate, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1991), p.64.

colonies. In the Middle East, it had given up almost all of its empire, except Palestine, in less than two decades.[53]

Right upon independence, in addition to the problem of how well to establish powerful national self-ruling governments, the Arab states faced a new ordeal which was "the fragmentation of the Arab world by the European imperialist powers and their policies of portioning off countries in the region to serve their interests."[54] Britain, joined by France and, later on, the United States of America, endeavoured to keep foot in the region to safeguard their interests.

This situation ushered in a long period of unrest not only among the Middle Eastern countries but sometimes even within the countries themselves. Indeed, some fervent Arab nationalists organised Military Coups to overthrow pro-Western governments and their leaders.[55] The leaders of these Military Coups "argued that the Arabs had to fight the West and made big promises for the efficacy of anti-imperialism, revolution, Arab socialism, and activist Pan-Arabism."[56] The best example is Egypt.

Though formally independent, Egypt was still under British influence and control. The British kept control nearly over every single aspect of the country that was in their interest but not in the best interest of the Egyptians. Additionally, they interfered in domestic politics and undermined the parliament in order to protect their interests. As William L. Cleveland notes, the British maintained direct control over four main areas in Egyptian society including

> security of imperial communications of Egypt, the defense of Egypt against foreign aggression or interference, the protection of foreign interests and foreign minorities, and Sudan and its future status.[57]

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[53] John Darwin, The End of the British Empire: The Historical Debate, p.64.
[54] Rashid Khalidi, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism: Introduction,"in The Origins of Arab Nationalism, eds., Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih and Reeva S. Simon, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 50.
[55] Barry Rubin, "Pan-Arab Nationalism: The Ideological dream as Compelling Force" in Journal of Contemporary History (26:3/4), Sep. 1991, p. 540.
[56] Ibid.
[57] William L. Clevelandquoted in Rashid Khalidi, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism: Introduction,"in The Origins of Arab Nationalism, eds., Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih and Reeva S. Simon, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 50.

The "constant struggle between the Egyptians and the British surrounding how free Egypt really was"[58] continued until 1952; a year during which the British-backed Egyptian King was overthrown by a group of military officers called the "Free Officers Corps."[59] This Military Coup was led by an army officer named Gamal Abdel Nasser who would soon bring a tremendous political change into the Middle Eastern region due to his policies.

➢ Nasser and Arab Nationalism

One of the movements that marked the 1950s and early 1960s in the Middle East is that of Arab nationalism. Also referred to as Pan-Arabism, Arabism or Nasserism, it is defined by numerous scholars as "the idea that Arabs are people linked by special bonds of language, history and religion and that their political organization should in some way reflect this reality.[60] In its simplest terms, it is a "political unity between the Arab countries in the Middle East."[61]

Contrary to what some have assumed, Arab nationalism does not refer to the creation of a single Arab state. Rather, it refers to the fact that there must be a connection between Arab, especially Middle Eastern, countries at all the levels. Accordingly, it requires these states to turn to one another for assistance whether economic, social or political rather than relying on support from Western governments.[62] One of the most fundamental tenets of this ideology is that Arabs ought to unite to form a powerful united nation to counter Western imperialist influence in the region and reclaim the former glory that the region had enjoyed before it was eclipsed by the Western imperial powers.[63]

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[58] Robert Eugene Danielson, "Nasser And Pan-Arabism: Explaining Egypt's Rise In Power," accessed on http://edoc.bibliothek.unihalle.de:8080/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/HALCoRe_derivate_00003450/Nasser%20and%20Pan-Arabism.pdf. (January 9th, 2015).

[59] Ibid.

[60] Rashid Khalidi, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism: Introduction,"in The Origins of Arab Nationalism, p.vii.

[61] Adeed Dawisha,Arab Nationalism in the 20th Century: From Triumph to Despair, (Trenton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p.4.

[62] Robert Eugene Danielson, "Nasser And Pan-Arabism: Explaining Egypt's Rise In Power."

[63] Thomson Gale, "Competing Visions: Zionism, Nationalism, Pan-Arabism, and Islamism."

Under the ideology of Arab nationalism, according to Adeed Dawisha, any leader in the Arab world must meet four main goals: "proper observance of Islam, pursuit of Arab unity, expulsion of foreign influence and progress and social justice."[64] The first leader to champion these goals was Gamal Abdel Nasser who so successfully carried the torch of this movement that it is currently referred to as "Nasserism."[65]

As a fervent advocate of the Pan-Arab ideology, Nasser believed that the only way for the Arab countries to get free from Western domination and to be strong was to unite and rely on one another rather than relying on the West for support.[66] Added to this is a personal ambition of leading the Arab world. Indeed, he was able to see Egypt's potential in taking a leading role in the Middle East due to its strategic geographical situation and economic and military strength which were far more advanced in comparison with other countries in the region. As Nasser declared

> Existence cannot come out of nothing. We cannot come out looking stupidly at a map of the world not realizing our place in it and the role determined to us by that place neither can we ignore that there is an Arab circle surrounding us and that circle is as much a part of us as we are part of it.[67]

He took profit from the Arabs' growing anti-British sentiment in the aftermath of their humiliating defeat in Palestine in 1948 that resulted in the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel on Arab soil[68] and advocated Arab nationalism as the best way to distance Egypt and the other Arab nations from Western powers. To begin to accomplish his aim, he established the program "Voice of the Arabs" in July 1954.[69] Broadcast to numerous Arab countries, this program discussed Arab issues

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[64] Adeed Dawisha quoted in Barry Rubin, "Pan-Arab Nationalism: The Ideological Dream as Compelling Force," p. 540.
[65] Thomson Gale, "Competing Visions: Zionism, Nationalism, Pan-Arabism, and Islamism."
[66] Robert Eugene Danielson, "Nasser And Pan-Arabism: Explaining Egypt's Rise In Power."
[67] Gamal Abdel Nasser quoted in William Roger Luis and Roger Owen, eds., Suez 1956: The Crisis and Its Consequences, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 23.
[68] Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, "Palestine, Israel, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Primer," accessed on http://web.stanford.edu/group/sper/images/Palestine-Israel_Primer_MERIP.pdf. (January 5th, 2014).
[69] James Jankowski, Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic, (Denver: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2002), p.55.

and concerns about Western influence. It called for the liberation of Palestineand galvanised Arabs in North Africa, Iraqand Yemento rise up against colonial and monarchical rule.[70]

In an additional step, he increased the circulation of Egyptian newspapers to Arab countries, especially Syria, Jordan and Lebanon in order to keep the local populations informed and to influence their Arab issues of concern.[71] He achieved another success when he obtained the agreement of the members of the Arab League of Nations for a resolution calling for greater Arab cooperation.[72]

Throughout his presidency, all his speeches and public rhetoric took on the tone of Arab nationalism and resonated all over the Arab World. He drilled into the minds of the Arab populations the idea that cooperation and unity was needed for defense against the Western powers as well as for mutual benefits.[73] As an example, in a speech he gave in July 1957, he declared

> Arab nationalism is a weapon for every Arab state. Arab nationalism is a weapon employed against aggression. It is necessary for the aggressor to know that, if he aggresses against any Arab country, he will endanger his interests.[74]

He issued many provocative statements concerning the destruction of Israel, a state that he viewed as an extension of Western colonialism in Arab soil, to arouse Arab sympathies. He would also try to make his dream of a united Middle East concrete when he organised the creation of the United Arab Republic; a political and economic alliance between Egypt and Syria.[75]

Nasser's challenging policies earned him the contempt of Western countries that came to consider him as a threat. For instance, in Britain, Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd made his country's view of him explicit when he said

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[70]James Jankowski, Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic, p. 55.
[71]Robert Eugene Danielson, "Nasser And Pan-Arabism: Explaining Egypt's Rise In Power."
[72]James Jankowski, Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic, p. 57.
[73]Robert Eugene Danielson, "Nasser And Pan-Arabism: Explaining Egypt's Rise In Power."
[74]Gamal Abdel Nasser quoted inJames Jankowski, Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic, p.155.
[75]Thomson Gale, "Competing Visions: Zionism, Nationalism, Pan-Arabism, and Islamism."

> Western position in the Middle East will be jeopardised if Nasser gets away with his action … We will be at the mercy of a man who has shown himself irresponsible and faithless …[76]

Nasser's Pan-Arab ideology and his anti-Western doctrine influenced a whole generation of Arab nationalists. Nonetheless, his policies have also led to international crisis such as the Suez Crisis of 1956.

➢ The Suez Crisis and the Decline of the British influence in the Middle East

Right upon his accession to power, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser issued a number of new policies to meet the social needs of the Egyptian population including food, health- care, education and low cost housing. He also turned to the agricultural sector as an additional source of domestic revenue. In order to make irrigation more available to the Egyptian farmers, he proposed the building of the Aswan High Dam.[77]

To collect the necessary funding for the project, Nasser asked for the financial assistance of the United States of America. The latter initially agreed and an offer to help Egypt, through the World Bank, was made by the US government on December 16, 1955.[78] However, President Dwight D. Eisenhower soon withdrew the funding as a reaction to Nasser's conditions and, above all, his rapprochement with the Soviet Union. As Eisenhower wrote in his diary

> When we made our first offer … to help build the Aswan Dam, it was conceived of as a joint venture of ourselves and the British … Egypt at once did two things:
> (1) They sent back to us a whole list of conditions that would have to e met before they go along with this plan and some of these conditions were unacceptable;
> (2) They began to build up their military forces by taking over equipment provided by the Soviet, and they went to such an extent that we did not believe they would have a sufficient balance of resources left to do their part in building the Dam.
> We lost interest and said nothing more about the matter.
> Suddenly … Nasser sent us a message to the effect that he had withdrawn all the conditions he had laid down, and was ready to proceed under our original offer. Since

[76] Selwyn Lloyd, Suez 1956, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 190.
[77] Robert Eugene Danielson, "Nasser And Pan-Arabism: Explaining Egypt's Rise In Power."
[78] Rose McDermott, Risk taking in International Politics: Prospect Theory in American Foreign Policy, (Ann Arbor: the University of Michigan Press, 1998), p. 137.

> conditions had changed markedly and we had thought the whole project dead, we merely replied that we were no longer interested.[79]

In response to the United States' refusal to finance his project, on July 26, 1956,[80] Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal; a canal which connected the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea allowing ships to travel between Europe and South Asia without navigating around Africa and through which "about two-thirds of Western Europe's total oil supplies transited."[81] By nationalising the canal, he would tax the ships using it and thus create another source of revenue that would be used to finance the building of the dam. Nevertheless, in addition to the consequences aspired by Nasser, the nationalisation of the canal had far reaching consequences; it led to an international crisis.

Though it existed within Egyptian territory, before its nationalisation, the Suez Canal was operated by the Canal Company; a company that "was owned by an international group that functioned under the Constantinople Convention of 1888."[82]Outraged, France and Britain, which "felt they held historically justified rights in controlling the Canal Company,"[83]invaded Egypt with the support of Israel.

The ostensible reason for the invasion was to reassert international control over the canal. There was, however, an underlying aim; that of toppling Nasser who was much disliked in the West because of his anti-Western positions including his policies of positive neutralism, his recognition of Communist China, his assistance to Algerian rebels against the French and his "public scolding of the West in the name of Arab nationalism."[84]

Though successful, the two countries were soon obliged to abandon their operations. This was mainly due to the intervention of the Soviet Union's Primer Nikolai Bulganin who threatened to use

[79]Dwight D. Eisenhower quoted in Rose McDermott,Risk taking in International Politics: Prospect Theory in American Foreign Policy, p. 138.
[80]Rose McDermott, Risk taking in International Politics: Prospect Theory in American Foreign Policy, p. 135.
[81]Ibid 137.
[82]Ibid136.
[83]Ibid.
[84]Keith Wheelock, Nasser's New Egypt: A Critical Analysis, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1960), p.195.

nuclear weapons against the two countries unless they withdrew from Suez[85] and the US president Eisenhower who refused to deliver the French and the British "any oil or allow any financial assistance until they had withdrawn their troops from the area."[86]

This failed "military venture" had negative repercussions on Britain. At the internal level, politically, it almost led to a political crisis. It hindered the close terms which the ruling "Conservative Party" and the leaders of the opposition "Labour Party" maintained during times of crisis as several ministers resigned in protest of the campaign.[87] The relationship between the two parties became strained as both sides grew more suspicious about each other. It also ended the career of the Prime Minister Anthony Eden. He was succeeded by Harold Macmillan who, as Henry Kissinger commented, had to confront the "painful reality that his country was no longer a world power."[88]

Economically, the loss of control over the Suez Canal signified the loss of Britain's most strategic trade sea route to the Indian subcontinent and most critical waterway for the transportation of Middle Eastern oil. Consequently, it suffered serious financial troubles as the canal was one of its main sources of revenue. In sum, "the British endured the fall of their cabinet, a severe oil shortage, and an almost complete collapse of their banking system as a result of their military involvement in Suez."[89]

At the international level, the aftermath of the crisis witnessed the collapse of British power and influence in the Middle East. It shattered the relationship between Britain and Egypt and signaled the beginning of the fall of its hegemony in the region. Most of all, its disgrace and alliance with the Arabs' bitter foe Israel led to the appearance of a wave of anti-British sentiments all over the region. In the aftermath of the crisis, it failed to establish an appropriate plan to contain the rise in power of non-collaborating Arab nationalists all over the Middle East. This failure tolled the bells of decline of its status as a major Western power in the region.

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[85] Rose McDermott, Risk taking in International Politics: Prospect Theory in American Foreign Policy, p. 141.
[86] Ibid.
[87] T. O. Lloyd, Empire to Welfare State: English History 1906-1979, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 342.
[88] Henry A. Kissinger, Henry Kissinger: Diplomacy, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), p.595.
[89] Rose McDermott, Risk taking in International Politics: Prospect Theory in American Foreign Policy, p. 136.

Most importantly, contrary to what Britain and its allies aspired to, the crisis prompted Nasser to an unprecedented status as an "Arab hero." He boldly defied Western imperialist powers and his subsequent victory characterised him as an "icon" in both the Arab and third-world countries which saw his triumph as an inspiration during their pursuit for unity and independence. It also fueled his ideology of Arab nationalism. Right upon the end of the crisis

> many countries in the Middle East sent letters of support and congratulation to Egypt. Even the council of the League of Arab States declared the solidarity of Arab governments with Egypt.[90]

In the aftermath of Suez, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia signed a new "Arab Solidarity Pact" in 1957;[91] a pact in which these countries committed themselves to providing an annual subsidy of 12.5 million Egyptian pounds."[92]

➢ The Arab Cold War[93]

As already pointed out, right upon his accession to power, Nasser made no secret about his desire to unite the Arabs and distance them the furthest possible from the West. To achieve this aim, he soon "began preaching the evils of Western imperialism and its linkage to Zionism in order to cement allegiance"[94] to his ideology of Arab Nationalism.Nonetheless,rather than uniting the Arabs, his ideology seemed to divide them; to use the words of Barry Rubin: "Arab disunity, then, was not the result of treason but of geopolitical realities, then inevitable fears or ambitions of regimes and individuals. Pan-Arabism furnished an area for these conflicts."[95]

The Anglo-French Israeli aggression against Egypt during the Suez Crisis led to the appearance of a wave of anti-Western sentiments. There were a number of nationalist uprisings in many Middle

[90]James Jankowski, Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic, p.83.
[91]Ibid 88.
[92]Ibid.
[93]Malcolm H. Kerr, The Arab Cold War: Gamal Abd al-Nasir and His Rival, 1958-1970, (London: Oxford, 1971), p .v.
[94]Brooke Holliday Hunter, "American Commitment to Middle Eastern Stability and Containment."
[95]Barry Rubin, "Pan-Arab Nationalism: The Ideological Dream as Compelling Force,"in Journal of Contemporary History(3:4), September, 1991, p. 537.

Eastern countries. Mainly led by Army officials, these uprisings took the form of Military Coups that sought to overthrow pro-Western governments.[96] This fact caused great political turmoil and internal division mainly in Jordan and Lebanon.

Indeed, in Jordan in 1957, a group of Nasserist Jordanian insurgents backed by Egypt and Syria organised a Military Coup in order to overthrow the pro-Western King Hussein.[97] This latter had, however, survived the Coup and ultimately dissolved the parliament, declared martial rule and either arrested or sent his political opponents to exile.[98] In Lebanon, President Camille Chamoun's pro-Western policies angered a large part of the local population that favored a rapprochement with Nasser. Ultimately, in May 1958, a group of military forces rose in an open rebellion and received a substantial material aid over the border from Syria and Egypt which at that time were united as one nation called the United Arab Republic.[99]

In addition to aforementioned crises, strong rivalries arose between Nasser and Arab leaders. These animosities, that plagued the Arab world, revolved around those Arab leaders who championed Pan Arabism and those who were opposed to it. This led to the division of the Middle East into two conflicting blocs. On the one hand, there were the traditional regimes, mainly Saudi Arabia and Jordan, which were more oriented towards Islam and in keeping friendly relations with the West to safeguard their interests. On the other hand, there were the newly formed military regimes in Egypt, Iraq and Syria which were oriented towards a separation of religion from sate affairs and a complete separation from the West. [100]

Rivalries also arose about the question of who would be the centre of the Arab world. This question arose though,

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[96]Barry Rubin, "Pan-Arab Nationalism: The Ideological Dream as Compelling Force," p. 540.
[97]Avi Shlaim, Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace, (New York: Random House Digital, Inc., 2009), pp.132-133
[98]Nasser H. Aruri, Jordan: A Study In Political Development (1921-1965), (Toronto: Springer, 2009), p.139.
[99]Paul E. Salem,"Superpowers and Small States: an Overview of American-Lebanese Relations," accessed on http://www.lcps-lebanon.org/pub/breview/br5/psalembr5pt3. htm. review. (January 15th, 2015).
[100]Barry Rubin, "Pan-Arab Nationalism: The Ideological Dream as Compelling Force," pp.535-551.

> the activated masses were serving notice on their leaders that a meaningful program of Arab nationalism must hinge on the reform of Arab society and not in feudal, tribal or dynastic interests.[101]

With the largest Arab population and economy, a dominant cultural position in the Arab world, and the most developed state structures of any other Arab country, Nasser wanted Egypt to be the heart of the Arab world. Additionally, as the founding father of Arab Nationalism, he believed he should be the leader of any formed Pan-Arab state.

He would, however, contend with Iraq and its political ideology of "*Ba'thism*."[102] Both ideologies stressed the need for an Arab socialist revolution that would bring about independence from Western imperialism.[103]They, however, differed on the issue of who would be the "heart of the Arab world." Clearly then, which country would be at the centre of the Arab world and which larder would run the Pan-Arab state constituted a real obstacle to unity as every single sate and leader in the region saw itself as the fittest. This situation drove the region into unrest. Indeed,

> Internal disputes and conflicts were not unusual for the Arabs, it became common to see: "direct military interventions, assassinations, kidnappings, bombings, sabotage … and support for political opponent of rival regimes.[104]

This was attributed to profound mistrust and inability to offset tensions through accommodations, even over the Palestinian question.

Despite intense Arab summiting and deliberations it all came to naught. All what has been said above may be summed in the following statement by Malcolm H. Kerr in which he numbers the three central examples that effectively portray the Arab Cold War that, at times, escalated from words to military and other types of interventions

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[101] Farah.Caesar. E. "The Dilemma of Arab Nationalism," in Die Welt Des Islams, (8:3), 1963, p. 160.

[102] Ba'thism or "*al-ba'ath*" in Arabic means "resurrection" or "renaissance." It is a movement that was seeking to establish ethnic Arab liberation against the foreign Turkish and European forces that were alien to the Arab lands and bring about a revival of the great Arab culture. Jan Stadler, "On Ba'thism –Part I- Origins and Beliefs," accessed on http://www.tradyouth.org/2015/05/baathism-1/ (December 14th, 2016).

[103] Roger Owen, State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East, 3rd ed., (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 66.

[104] Ibid.

1) The competition for Leadership of the Arab world after the emergence of a military regime in Cairo in 1952 under Nasser's leadership, and between Nasser, the Pan-Arab leader and one of the architects of the non-aligned nations movement at the height of the global cold war era, and Iraqi prime minister Nuri al Said; this rivalry was transformed into open hatred between the anti-Nasserist Iraqi leader Abdel Karim Quassem and Egypt. 2) Harsh rivalries between Hashemite Jordan's King Hussein and the Lebanese government and Nasser's efforts to undermine their moderate regimes. 3) Built-in tensions between Nasser and the new radical regimes of the early and mid 1960s in Syria, Iraq and Yemen.[105]

Nowhere is the failure of Nasser's Pan- Arab ideology best evidenced than in the failure of Egyptian-Syrian unification known under the appellation of the United Arab Republic.

➢ The Failure of the United Arab Republic (U.A.R.)

In 1954, the Ba'ath Party, a conservative political party established in Syria in 1947 that sought a rebirth of Arab power through its motto *"Unity, Freedom, Socialism,"*organised a Military Coup that overthrow the military government that was in place.[106] Henceforth, Syria had been ruled by a democratic civilian government that was far from the influence of the Soviet Union. However, in early 1957, went through an internal crisis that allowed the highly organised Communist Party to take the upper hand in the government. [107]

Realising that the country was close to a "Communist takeover," a Syrian delegation including the president Shukri Al-Quwatli and the Prime Minister Khaled Al-Azem convinced the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser that only a union between the two countries would end the Communist threat in Syria. Nasser accepted and ultimately organized a merger between the two countries. The protocols were signed on February 1st, 1958[108] giving birth to what came to be called: United Arab Republic (U.A.R.) or "*Al-Jumhuriyah Al-Arabiyah Al-Muttahidah*"as it was called in Arabic.

[105] Malcolm H. Kerr, The Arab Cold War: Gamal Abd al-Nasir and His Rival, 1958-1970, p.v.
[106] Elie Podeh, The Decline of Arab Unity: The Rise And Fall of the United Arab Republic, (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), p. 38.
[107] Ibid 36.
[108] Ibid xii.

Upon the establishment of the U.A.R., Syrian politicians believed Nasser would rely on the Ba'ath Party in controlling Syria. They were, however, wrong as it was not Nasser's intention to share power with them. Indeed, soon after he was elected president of the union, he devised a provisional constitution in which he proclaimed a National Assembly which was composed of four hundred Egyptians representatives and only two hundred Syrian ones. He also disbanded existing political parties including the Ba'ath Party. Furthermore, though allowed to hold prominent political positions within the government, former members of the Ba'ath Party were denied higher positions which were all hold by Egyptian officials.

In sum, what Nasser did was to squeeze prominent Syrian opposition leaders, who could have ideas about how Syria would be run within the union, out of the government. In addition to his political policies, without consulting Syrian economic officials, he issued a set of economic reforms that, he hoped, would bring the Syrian economy in line with Egyptian one. To achieve this aim, he embarked on an unprecedented wave of nationalisation including banks, insurance as well as all heavy industries. [109]

Nasser's policy of an unequal share of power in the favor of Egypt soon caused Syrians to oppose it. Syrian army officers resented being subordinated to Egyptian ones and the Egyptian-style of land redistribution irritated the farmers who believed it was threatening the Syrian agriculture. Additionally, members of the Ba'ath Partydisliked the fact that Nasser was appointing Egyptian officials to address problems in Syrian rather than appointing Syrians who were more aware of them. In sum, Syrians sought Egypt's help in order to prevent a Communist takeover of their country but it seemed to them that they had invited an Egyptian takeover by approving the union.

Without any close allies to watch over Syria, Nasser was blind to this situation and to the growing unrest of the Syrian army. On September 28th, 1961 a group of Syrian military officers staged

[109] Robert Stephens, Nasser: a Political Biography, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), p. 631.

a Military Coup that overthrew the government and ultimately declared Syria's independence from the U.A.R.[110] The leaders of the Coup were willing to re-negotiate a union under which Syria would be put on an equal foot with Egypt but Nasser refused; the United Arab Republic was officially dissolved.

The great gap and lack of agreement between the Arab states was fueled by the Cold war; mainly in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis. The crisis was further proof that France and Britain had lost their European superpower status and that Britain, most specifically, had lost its privileged status as the dominant Western power in the Middle East. In its aftermath, a wave of pro-Soviet sentiment stared to appear in the region due to the Soviet Union's strong indignation and use of violent rhetoric to end the aggression against Egypt.

This reality deeply worried the United States that sought to contain the Soviet ideology of Communism wherever it started to expand. It marked a transitional point from European imperialism to superpower hegemony in the region and thus marked the beginning of a new era in international politics bringing the Cold War into the Middle East.

➢ The Cold War Further Divides the Middle East

At the end of the Second World War, the United States of America and the Soviet Union emerged as two major global adversaries. Incapable of getting in a war that would result in a global disaster, the two countries got involved in another kind of war; *the Cold War*; a war of ideologies between US or Western Capitalism and Soviet or Eastern Communism. Henceforth, for nearly half a century, the Cold War rivalry "created a glacial divide that loomed over international relations."[111]

The US/Soviet rivalry extended across the globe as both countries wanted to expand their ideologies and get as many countries as possible under their sphere of influence. Consequently, it "provoked a high degree of polarisation as states and political parties" all over the world aligned

[110] Elie Podeh, The Decline of Arab Unity: The Rise And Fall of the United Arab Republic, p. xii.
[111] Rashid Khalidi, Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), p. 1.

themselves with the two powers "exacerbating and aggravating preexisting local conflicts or producing new ones," thus "envenoming the political atmosphere in numerous countries."[112] This situation also led to a number of international crises.

In order to prevent a worldwide expansion of each other's ideology, the United Statesand the Soviet Union became vigilant watchers of each other's behaviour all over the world. The Middle Eastern region was, however, of a very particular concern. The devastating effects of WWII prompted France and Britain to grant independence to their colonial holdings in the region. This vacuum of power profoundly troubled the United States and the Soviet Union and transformed the Middle East into an area of intense rivalry as both sides wanted to control its precious energy resources, mainly oil, and have the monopoly by preventing the emergence of rivals.[113]

Having become aware of the long-term strategic value of the Middle Eastern oil,the United States was the first to put foot in the region. Indeed, in 1944, it signed an agreement with Great Britain called: "the Anglo-American Petroleum Agreement"[114] by which they agreed over the control of the oil of the Middle East. It ultimately took the monopoly as the first beneficiary from the Middle Eastern oil. This position was, however, threatened by the Soviets who took profit from the quickly growing Arab-nationalism and its subsequent call for alignment against the West to penetrate in the region and ultimately spread their ideology of Communism there.

- **The Soviet Agenda in the Region**

During the Cold War, the central strategic agenda of the Soviet Union in the Middle East was to neutralise the American strategic advantage in the region. To achieve this aim, it expanded its reach

[112] Rashid Khalidi, Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East, p. 1.
[113] Brooke Holliday Hunter, "American Commitment to Middle Eastern Stability and Containment," accessed on http://brookehollidayhunter.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/American-Commitment-to-Middle-Eastern-Stability-and-Containment.pdf. (January 20th, 2015).
[114] Yergin Daniel, The Prize: The Epic Quest For Oil, Money,& Power, (New York: Simon &Shuster, 2008), p. 50.

throughout the region by establishing naval ports and military bases.[115] These latter allowed the Soviets to increase their geostrategic strength. They also allowed them to redress a great source of their weakness; Western control of the Mediterranean that allowed the USA to maintain a permanent and proximate threat to the vulnerable Soviet territory.[116]

Additionally, in order to extend its ideological domination, the Soviet Union adopted a new policy which consisted in offering both economic and military aido the newly emerging Middle Eastern nations.It nurtured local Communist movements and showed support for the anti-Israeli nationalist states of the region.[117] In this regard, beginning from 1955, they found a promising start and fertile ground in Egypt and Syria.Indeed, as Golan Galia notes, the Soviets

> by meeting Abdel Nasser's need for massive deliveries of modern arms in 1955 and by taking up the role of arms supplier and protector of Syria in addition to Soviet political support in response to the Suez Crisis reaped substantial strategic dividends.[118]

The Suez crisis, which the Soviet president at that time Nikita Khrushev termed as an "historic turning point"[119] for his country, was a bonus for the Soviet Union as it consolidated "its credentials as an anti-imperialist friend of the Third World."[120] Indeed, the Soviet support for Nasser allowed it to set a strong foothold in the region bringing a number of the region's nations under its sphere of influence; as David Lesch argues: "Syria and other Arab countries were forced into making a choice between East and West and the Anglo-French invasion made them choose the East."[121] The increased appeal for Socialist ideology and thought in the Middle East was seen by the Soviet officials as an opportunity to extend their influence in the region.

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[115] Sean Paul Ashley,"Cold War Politics in the Middle East," accessed on http://www.e-ir.info/2012/08/30/cold-war-politics-in-the-middle-east/. (January 20th, 2015).
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Galia Golan, "Soviet Power and Policies in the Third World: The Middle East,"in The Adelphi Papers, (19:152), 1979.
[119] Henry A. Kissinger,Henry Kissinger: Diplomacy, p.548.
[120] Steven Z.Freiberger, Dawn over Suez: the rise of American Power in the Middle East, 1953-1957, (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1992), p.192.
[121] David Lesch, Syria: the Fall of the House of Assad, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p.212.

In addition to the aims mentioned above, the Soviets had another ambition. Recognising the necessity of a prolonged entrenchment in the Middle East to achieve long-term ambitions of hegemony, they "sought to prevent the settlement of conflicts that arouse between the regional states thereby assuring the Soviet Union of continued access to the region."[122] It is worth noting here that, while they considered the non-settlement of these conflicts as beneficial for them, the Soviets also sought to prevent their escalation to the level of superpower confrontations as they feared military confrontation with the United States.[123]In sum, through the provision of arms and financial aid, the Soviets ultimately managed to expand their ideology in the Middle Eastern region; as shown in the creation of local communist movements in countries such as: Iraq, Syrian and Lebanon.[124]

➢ The American Agenda in the Region

In the aftermath of WWII, the Middle East became an area of intense preoccupation to the United States that considered it as lacking "the 'natural deterrents' to 'communist exploitations' such as 'modern' social systems, 'flourishing' economies, and 'democratic structures."[125] Against the agenda of Soviet power projection and the integration of Middle Eastern countries into its sphere of influence, the United States adopted a policy of containment. It sought to deny the Soviet Union access to the Middle East and inhibit the expansion of its ideology there.[126]

As already mentioned, in 1956, the Suez crisis undermined the Western influence in the region and strengthened the relationship between Egypt and the Soviet Union that, as William E. Griffith affirms, appeared as "the only effective guardian of the Arab countries against a satanic conspiracy between Israel and the West."[127] It soon became clear for the United States that this connection

[122]Bernard Reich, and Alexander J. Bennett,"Soviet Policy and American Response in the Middle East," in Journal of East and West Studies(13/ 2), 1984, p. 85
[123]Ibid.
[124]Sean Paul Ashley, "Cold War Politics in the Middle East."
[125]Salim Yakub, Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East, p.122
[126]Sean Paul Ashley, "Cold War Politics in the Middle East."
[127]William E. Griffith,"Soviet Influence in the Middle East," in Survival: Global Politics and Strategy, (18:1), 1979, p. 2.

between Nasser and the Soviet Union would lead the other Arab nations to follow his step and thus fall under the Communist influence.

The radicalisation of Arab nationalism and the concern of the latter becoming the gateway of Communism to the Middle East deeply worried the American administration. It most specifically worried the US president Dwight D. Eisenhower who mistrusted Nasser and believed he was "unwittingly becoming a tool of Soviet expansion."[128] On January 5th, 1957, he presented a doctrine of his own called "the Eisenhower Doctrine"[129] as a new strategy for dealing with Middle East and Nasser most specifically.

The following excerpt from the speech he delivered before the members of the Congress outline the three major goals of his doctrine

> The action which I propose would have the following features. It would, first of all, authorize the United States to cooperate with and assist any nation or group of nations in the general area of the Middle East in the development of economic strength dedicated to the maintenance of national independence. It would, in the second place, authorize the Executive to undertake in the same region programs of military assistance and cooperation with any nation or group of nations which desires such aid. It would, in the third place, authorize such assistance and cooperation to include the employment of the armed forces of the United States to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations, requesting such aid, against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism.[130]

In sum, it declared the United States' intention to offer increased economic and military aid to Middle Eastern countries and to protect the territorial integrity and political independence of those countries from the threat of "international Communism" using US troops if necessary.

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[128] Salim Yakub, Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East, p.122.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Paul Halsall, "Modern History Sourcebook: President Eisenhower: The Eisenhower Doctrine on the Middle East, A Message to Congress, January 5, 1957," accessed on http://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1957eisenhowerdoctrine.html (December 12th, 2014).

In his doctrine, Eisenhower reaffirmed former US President Harry Truman's belief that the "national integrity" of foreign states is "directly related" to the security of the United States. He also accredited the intertwined nature of US foreign relations to the United Nations and the global commitment to a new system of collective security it fostered.[131] He further applauded the progress of the United States in its "support of free nations and peace" which championed "notably against the menace of international Communism worldwide" and then declared that

> it was essential that the United States manifest its determination to collaborate with the nations of the Middle East area which desire the assistance against external menaces.[132]

From the American perspective, then, the primary goal of this policy was to counter the threat of the Soviet Union and its ideology of Communism in the Middle East. It had, however, an unspoken goal which, according to Salim Yakub, consisted in isolating Nasser who was seen by Eisenhower as an "unwitting agent of Soviet expansionism" and containing his ideology of Arab nationalism which he considered as the source of the Communist takeover in the region.[133]

In order to achieve the doctrine's goals, the American President and his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles sought to counteract one of the most fundamental principles of the Pan-Arab ideology, namely "positive neutralism" which they considered was leading to a Soviet takeover in the region.[134]Accordingly, rather than dealing directly with Nasser, they decided to rely on conservative Arab countries in the Middle East which were opposed to Communism and the ideology of Arab nationalism.[135]

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[131] Edward H. Judge and John W. Langdon, eds., The Cold War: A History Through Documents, (Trenton: PrincetonUniversity Press, 1999), p.98.
[132]Ibid.
[133]Salim Yakub, "Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East."
[134]Robert J. McMahon, "The Illusion of Vulnerability: American Reassessments of the Soviet Threat, 1955-1956," in International History Review, (18:3), 1996, p.614.
[135]Ibid.

They aimed at uniting the conservative regimes, strengthen them and encourage their pro-Western tendencies through economic as well as military help. By doing so, they wanted to solidify their relations with these countries and hopefully convince them to align with the United States in the Cold War. Consequently, the United States embarked in an unprecedented involvement in the Middle East.It did so through a two-dimensional approach.

First, it committed itself to provide a firm support for the anti-Communist conservative governments in the region. Though a fervent supporter of democracy all over the world, it made no difference to the United States whether these governments were theocratic or autocratic as long as they were anti-Communist and willing to side with it in the Cold War.[136]Second, it required that for the achievement of the American strategic agenda in the region, all means could be deployed. Therefore, economic and military assistance, money distribution as well as bilateral and multi-lateral pacts between the United States and the regional conservative leaders were all used as means of promoting American ideals in the region.[137]

During the 1950s and early 1960s, "The Eisenhower Doctrine" confirmed the US continuing commitment to aid any foreign state threatened by international Communism. It had, however, an implied goal; that of watering down Nasser's efforts at uniting the Arabs. Indeed, this doctrine aimed at aligning conservative Middle Eastern states together and making them collaborate to stand to Pan-Arabism which was in the American perspective the source of Communist expansionism in the region. Most of all, it fueled rivalries between Nasser and conservative Arab leaders and thus further shattered the relationships between the Middle Eastern countries. It led to a number of internal crises within a number of Middle Eastern countries.

[136] Mohamed El Mansour, "The US-Middle East Connection: Interests, Attitudes and Images," accessedon http://acc.teachmideast.org/texts.php?module_id=3&reading_id=1037. (January 20th, 2015).
[137] Ibid.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter we tried to shed light on the major historical developments that occurred in the Middle East during the 1950s. Most particularly, we highlighted the Western influence in the region and its consequences. We showed that, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the European imperial powers, France and Britain, were compelled by the devastating effects of the war to grant independence to all their colonies in the region.

Once independent, these former colonies aimed at establishing national governments free of Western influence. This was, however, not an easy task as the former European imperial powers wanted to keep foot in the region to safeguard their interests. When they, more or less, succeeded in eliminating European imperialists, the division between them deepened. This was mainly due to Nasser's Pan-Arab policies that divided the Arabs rather than uniting them. They divided the Middle East into two blocs, pro and anti- Nasserist, and led to a number of internal crises and political turmoil in some countries. They also established strong rivalries among Arab leaders about the question of who would be the heart of the Arab world.

As Britain's influence declined, the United States and the Soviet Union competed to bring the Middle Eastern countries under their sphere of influence. This situation transformed the region into a field a political turmoil and sharply divided the Arabs. This historical background is necessary for our analysis as, as will be shown mainly in the fourth chapter, director David Lean keeps the situation of the Arab countries and Britain's status in the Middle East during the 1950s and the early 1960s in mind while producing his film.

Chapter Two: A Double Rendering of the Arabian Desert

Introduction

As already stated, our aim in the present dissertation is to study *Lawrence of Arabia* in the light of postcolonial theory. To achieve this aim, we have divided our work into two main parts; a contextual part and an analytical part. The contextual part consists of a historical background wherein we have provided an overview of the historical context under which the film was produced. The analytical part consists of three chapters each one dealing with the analysis of one important component of the film.

Of interest to us in the present chapter is to examine the depiction of the film's setting; the Arabian Desert. More precisely, we aim at demonstrating that director David Lean does not present his audience with an "objective image" of this part of the world. Rather, he presents them with a "subjective image" that is highly influenced by the European Orientalist discourse that constructs the Orient as a polar image of the Occident according to two discourses; the historical Orient filled with exotic and romantic splendor and the Orient trapped in a state of perpetual danger. To achieve this objective, our chapter will be divided into two sections; the first one is entitled "The Arabian Desert as an 'exotic' place" while the second one is entitled "The Arabian Desert as a 'dangerous' place."

A Double Rendering of the Arabian Desert

> For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them"). This vision in a sense created and then served the two worlds thus conceived. Orientals lived in their world, "we" lived in ours. The vision and material reality propped each other up, kept each other going. A certain freedom of intercourse was always the Westerner's privilege; because his was the stronger culture, he could penetrate, he could wrestle with, he could give shape and meaning to the great Asiatic mystery, as Disraeli once called it.[138]

The above quote amply sheds light on the fact that Orientalism, as a Western hegemonic discourse, has contributed to the creation of an imaginary dividing line that divides the world into two

[138] Edward Said, Orientalism, pp. 43-44.

opposite areas, namely, the "Occident" and the "Orient" or the "West" and the "East." Additionally, as "the possession of greater power generally invests the knowledge of the more powerful with greater authority than those of the powerless,"[139]the West created universal "Orientalist assumptions"[140] about the East that soon became ingrained within the Western mind.

To be more explicit, as exploration of non-European territories began to accelerate as part of Europe's imperialistproject, interest began to grow in the newly discovered areas. The Orient, as these areas became commonly referred to, and its people arouse the curiosity of the Europeans. To satisfy this curiosity, a large number of Europeans, including politicians, historians, artists, travelers and most of all novelists, went on discovery journeys to the Orient and recorded their experiences there.

For different reasons, in their description of the Oriental space, its people and culture, these Orientalsit writers "deliberately quitted the domain of the truthful"[141] to that of the imaginary. Indeed, "rather than giving factual accounts, they made sense of their experiences" in Oriental lands "by relying on a combination of myth and personal perception of reality."[142] Lacking in terms of documented history, the Orient provided a "blank screen"[143] on which the Westerners wereable to project an image that presents it according to highly imaginative terms; most of the time in accordance with Eurocentric conceptions.

In this context, Edward Said uses the term "imaginative geography"[144]to refer to the Orient as a space that is distinct from the Occident. It isspace thatloses its objective meaning and becomes a site for Western Orientalsit imaginations that construct it according to two major discourses "oscillating

[139]Joanna Liddle & Shirin Rai, "Feminism, Imperialism and Orientalism:the challenge of the 'Indian woman'," accessed on https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/people/rai/publications/feminismimperialism_/femiimperialoriental.pdf (March 16th, 2015).
[140] Edward Said, Orientalism, p. 207.
[141]Ewout Decoorne, "Perpetuating the African Myth: Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darknessand J.M.G. Le Clézio's Onitsha," accessed on http://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/002/060/329/RUG01-002060329_2013_0001_AC.pdf (March 16th, 2015).
[142]Ibid.
[143]Ibid.
[144]Edward Said, Orientalism, p. 57.

between admiration and repulsion."[145]One of these discourses is that wherein the Western imagination constructs the Orient as an "exotic locale;"[146] the discourse of "exoticism"which Graham Huggan defines as follows

> … the exotic is not, as is often supposed, an inherent *quality* to be found 'in' certain people, distinctive objects, or specific places; Exoticism describes, rather, a particular mode of aesthetic perceptionone which renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to its immanent mystery.[147]

This discourse appeared in Europe by the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It was embodied in "the new literary practice that took shape with romanticised and idealised notions" of places and cultures that Europeans considered to be foreign as well as different from theirs.[148] In this new literary practice, that became commonly referred to as the literature of exoticism or the "exotic fiction"[149] as Edward Said calls it in his book Orientalism, the Oriental space "was wonderfully synonymous with the exotic, the mysterious, the profound" and "the seminal."[150]

Indeed, European Orientalsit writers wrote sensationalist tales within which they depicted the Orient in artificial and highly exaggerated terms.They created fictions and fascinated the readers at home with fanciful tales of imaginative far-off places, exotic landscapes, impressive wilderness, extravagant palaces, sensual harems …etc. In their narratives, the exoticism of the Orient does not lie solely at the level of its external beauty but also at a more abstract level; it represents a welcoming place for a variety of "escapist desires."[151]

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[145] Ewout Decoorne, "Perpetuating the African Myth: Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness and J.M.G. Le Clézio's Onitsha."
[146] Edward Said, Orientalism, p.118.
[147] Graham Huggan, The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins,(New York: Routledge, 2001), p.13.
[148] Robin Anita White, "19th Century and 20th Century French Exoticism: Pierre Loti, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Michel Leiris, and Simone Schwarz-Bart," accessed on http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-06092004-172114/unrestricted/White_dis.pdf(April 2nd, 2015).
[149] Edward Said, Orientalism,p. 252.
[150] Ibid 51.
[151] Ewout Decoorne, "Perpetuating the African Myth: Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness and J.M.G. Le Clézio's Onitsha."

In other words, it is depicted as a place of open possibilities wherein the Western self, that feels constrained and trapped in its society, can re-define itself through the realisation of those forbidden desires that have been banished by the Western civilisation. It is a place where it gets the possibility to come into contact with all what it has learnt to banish; the unconscious, instincts, spontaneity …etc, in one word, the primitive lying in the heart of every human being. It becomes, then, fascinated by the wilderness which stands for everything the Western civilisation has rejected. As Marianna Torgovnik puts it

> The primitive is the sign and symbol of desires the West has sought to repress – desires for direct correspondences between bodies and things, direct correspondences between experience and language, direct correspondences between individual beings and the collective life force. It is the sign and symbol of desire for a full and sated sense of the universe.[152]

Yet, these "romantic representations of the Orient"[153]are accompanied by its depiction as an "extremely obscure" location; as Edward Said puts it: "the motif of the Orient as insinuating danger."[154] As with its representation as an exotic place, the representation of the Orient as dangerous lies at two different levels. At an external level, in Oriental locales, many dangers threaten the Westerners. Among them figure the numerous physical illnesses such as "Malaria" which they contract either through physical contact with the natives or the effect of the hot climate to which they are not used.

At an abstract level, numerous Orientalist writers reduce the Orient to a merely metaphorical setting in which the "mental disintegration" of the Western mind takes place. To be more explicit, it is a place where excessive freedom and the total absence of social values and moral regulations can lead the Westerners towards primitivism and moral degeneration.

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[152] Marianna Torgovnik, Primitive Passions: Men, Women and the Quest for Extasy, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1998), p. 24.
[153]Edward Said, Orientalism,p.118.
[154]Ibid 57.

As previously mentioned, the Orient has inspired an "ambivalent mythmaking"[155] in European Orientalsit literature having been invented as a "highly exotic" as well as an "extremely obscure" location. Starting from the early twentieth century, Hollywood film industry has reinforced this trend. Indeed, just as this double representation of the Orient was used by European writersas a means of marketing the Orient to the Western readers during Europe's' heyday of imperialism in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, it has been adopted by Hollywood directors in the same way to promote their films. To use Matthew Bernstein's words

> With the help of the new medium, the filmmakers were able to combine the established visual sphere of Orientalism with the form of storytelling – and thus strengthened the popularity of Orientalist imaginary in the public opinion.[156]

David Lean is one of those Hollywood directors who have inherited and embellished European Orientalsit discourse. Indeed, a close inspection of his film *Lawrence of Arabia* reveals it to be a projection of the deeply held and reinforced popular exotic as well as obscure images of the Orient from the printed page onto the screen. As will be demonstrated in the forthcoming paragraphs, Lean delivers this double character of the Arabian Desert through several methods.

Section One: The Arabian Desert as an "Exotic" Place

In *Lawrence of Arabia*, the exoticism of the Arabian Desert is, first and foremost, displayed in its image. Indeed, all through the film, Lean's spectacular visuals provide the audience with an image of this place as vast and alluring with a huge power of attraction;

> his elegantly tracking camera capturing the grandeur and bareness of the desert and his slow dissolves and subliminal editing suggesting its illogical continuity and dreamlike texture.[157]

[155] Ewout Decoorne, "Perpetuating the African Myth: Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darknessand J.M.G. Le Clézio's Onitsha."
[156] Matthew Bernstein, "Introduction" in Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film,p. 3.
[157] Michael A. Anderegg, "Lawrence of Arabia: The Man, The Myth, The Film,"pp. 299-300.

To enhance the "exotic image" of the desert, Lean makes use of exotic music which, according to Fred Karlin and RayburnWright, is used in films for two primary reasons: first, "to suggest the film's locale," and second, "to characterize the people in the storyand to express the overall dramatic theme."[158] To be more explicit, composers use this kind of music in films, first, to create spectacle, and, second, to enhance the film's themes and messages by making them more dramatic through the use of music.

Accordingly, film directors makeuse of exotic music so as toevocate distance and thus create an impact of authenticity which allows their audience's mind to move beyond the scope of their ordinary lives into new frames.Lean uses this music not only to sustain the exotic nature of the desert but also to captivate his audience; he wants to transport them by communicating them a sense of distance.

Snapshot 01: the Exotic Desert Sunrise.

Lean provides the viewers with a fascinating spectacle at the moment of their first glimpse of the Arabian Desert. The sequence, genuinely edited by the film's editor Anne V. Coates, occurs in Dryden's office just before Lawrence accepts the mission of going into the desert in a fact-finding mission. Supported by a stunning music, "the sequence begins with a close-up of Lawrence; he lights a

[158]Fred Karlinand Rayburn Wright,On the Track: a Guide to Contemporary Film Scoring, (New York: Routledge, 2004), p.68.

match and, as he blows it out, Coates cuts to a desert sunrise."[159] As shown in the above snapshot, "the sun peeks behind the desert horizon, the sand blazing in deep oranges as the yellow orb rises."[160] This gorgeous sequence reveals the immensity and stark beauty of the desert's landscape.

Another sequence which evokes the desert's exoticism is the one revealing Lawrence with his Arab guide Tafas' first journey into the desert. At that moment, sensuous score begins to play, giving this part of the world a distinctly exotic aura. Composer Maurice Jarre's musical rhythm gives voice to both Lawrence and the desert. On the one hand, without a word spoken, it immediately presents the desert as a mysterious and unknown land. On the other hand, it speaks to Lawrence's marvel at its vastness and stunning beauty.

Snapshot 02: The "Vast" and "Exotic" Arabian Desert

For the rest of the film, "Jarre's sweeping musical orchestrations blend with Lean's expansive visual images shot in front of exotic backdrops to evoke the exoticism of the Arabian Desert."[161] This blend created an unforgettable synergy of sight and sound; through spectacular visuals supported by stunning music the listening experience was as enjoyable as viewing the film. It instills in the Western

[159] Brian Eggert, "The Definitives: An Ongoing Series of In-Depth Essays and Appreciations On The Very Best Of Cinema," accessed on http://www.deepfocusreview.com/reviews/lawrenceofarabia.asp(January 25th, 2015).
[160] Ibid.
[161] Brian Eggert, "The Definitives: An Ongoing Series of In-Depth Essays and Appreciations On The Very Best Of Cinema."

audience's mind, an audience far removed from the landscape, a sense of amazement and curiosity. It also contributes to an overarching image of the desertas a vastly different and separate realm from that of its Western viewers.

In the Orientalsit discourse, the majority of the exotic and romantic appeal associated with the Oriental land, people, and culture is related to the Orient's particular relationship with the concept of time in the Western imagination. This particularity commonly manifests itself through the Western obsession with portraying this part of the world as a historical entity; "a place of ruins."[162]This fixation on the Orient of the past not only historicises it but also places it in a vacuum where time and development stand still. This timelessness operates as a significant factor behind the "exotic" appeal of this part of the world as there was a tendency to attach images of glamour and extravagance to the representation of the historic Orient.[163]

Snapshot 03: Lawrence, Colonel Brighton, Sherif Ali and Prince Feisal in the tent.

In *Lawrence of Arabia,* Lean reflects this particularity in the "Tent Scene." As shown in the above snapshot, within this scene, clichéd images in the extravagantly decorated, candle-lit tent of Arabs lying on carpets and animal hides while a Sheikh recites verses of the Holly Qur'an directly

[162]JohnMcLeod, Beginning Postcolonialism, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 44.
[163]Tiina Tuominen, "'Down into the Valley of Death': The Portrayal of the Orient in the Interwar Fiction of Agatha Christie," accessed on https://tampub.uta.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/84235/gradu06437.pdf?sequence=1(June 10th, 2015)

offer an exoticimage of the desert and its culture to the viewer. This image is further exaggerated in the conversation that takes place between Lawrence and Prince Feisal as the others leave the tent.

In this conversation, after discussing plans about how best to seize the strategic port of Akaba, Lawrence expresses a desire for Arab greatness. In response, Prince Feisal recounts the splendor of the Andalusian city of Cordova a long time ago;

> Do you know, Lieutenant, in the Arab city of Cordoba were two miles of public lighting in the streets when London was a village? ... Nine centuries ago ... I long for the vanished gardens of Cordoba.[164]

This reminiscence about the Arabs' glorious past adheres to what has already been mentioned about the Western preoccupation of portraying the Orient as a place of ruins.

In addition to its association with the past, another element that exoticises the Orient within the Western Orientalsit discourse is the kind of motivations that lie behind the personal decisions to travel to it and the "anticipatory feelings" it establishes in the Western character.[165] These feelingsvary slightly among the Westerners regardless of their status as one of the most important aspects surrounding their fascination with the Orient is the convention of regarding it as a source of freedom and adventure.

For those Europeans, who feel constrained by their society's norms and ideals and who feel the need to bring some change into their prosaic lives, the Orient represents a welcoming land for a variety of escapist desires. As to the anticipatory feelings it establishes, "the mere stating of Oriental places' names is sufficient in providing the feeling of enchantment."[166] Lean reflects these two elements in his film through his characterisation of his protagonist's experience in the Arabian Desert.

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[164] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, (Los Angeles: Columbia Pictures, 1962), 44:47.
[165] Tiina Tuominen, " 'Down into the Valley of Death': The Portrayal of the Orient in the Interwar Fiction of Agatha Christie,"
[166] Ibid.

The film's protagonist T. E. Lawrence is a British military officer stationed in the British Military Intelligence Department in Cairo during WWI where he is assigned to the Geographical section to make maps of strategic areas. At the outset, he is presented as a well-learned and "overweening"[167]individual whose ambition and aspirations for greatness and recognition are easily noticed. He seems to be stuck in his office confined to a life of routine. He is very unhappy by his actual job and expresses his unhappiness when he tells his comrade while describing his office: "this is a nasty, dark little room. We are not happy in it."[168]

His chance to bring some change into his boring life comes when Mr. Dryden, a British politician, convinces General Murray to send him on an excursion to Arabia to assess the state of the Arabs' uprising against the Turks. Lawrence accepts his mission with great enthusiasm. While anticipating his adventure, he demonstrates an apparent sense of satisfaction and excitement. He relishes the opportunity of finally leaving his office to live a new experienceand tells Mr. Dryden that it is "going to be fun."[169] The latter retorts: "only two kinds of creature get fun in the desert; Bedouins and Gods."[170] Despite this comment, Lawrence, who is neither a Bedouin nor a God, reaffirms his initial statement with conviction: "No, Dryden. It is going to be fun!"[171]

Once in the desert, he initially lives a romantic experience. As a "military adviser" working under the aegis and direction of the Arab Bureau, his primary function is to "monitor the Revolt and funnel back data to be digested and compiled at the Savoy."[172]In other words, his mission consists in carrying out an appraisal of the military situation by assessing the capabilities of the Arab army and its leaders and drawing up a clear snapshot of the Turkish forces and their dispositions. Nevertheless, his

[167] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 7:50.
[168]Ibid 5:20.
[169]Ibid 12:24.
[170]Ibid 12:27.
[171]Ibid 12:37.
[172]Bruce Westrate, Imperialists All: the Arab Bureau and the evolution of British policy in the Middle East, 1916-1920, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1983), p.1.

mission becomes far more than a simple information- gathering one as he gets involved in planning, overseeing and executing the day-to-day operations of the revolt.

When he meets Prince Feisal, Lawrence impresses him with his knowledge of the Arab culture and ease with the desert. Then, going against the orders of his superior Colonel Brighton, he convinces him of attacking the strategic port city of Akaba by approaching it from behind, through the merciless Nefud Desert, with the element of surprise. Ultimately, with fifty of Prince Feisal's men under his command, they survive the journey. But, as they arrive on the other side of the desert, they discover that one of the men, named Gasim, is lost. Without hesitation, he braves the desert once more, saves the man, and returns a hero.

As a sign of admiration the Arabs offer him inclusion as one of them by calling him "El Aurens" and giving him the robes of a Sheriff. Lawrence accepts his Arabic title "El Aurens" and the Arab dress he is given. Henceforth, he is shown to live more and more as the natives. In other words, he resolves his complicity with the desert by "going native;" a process which is defined as

> The colonizers' fear of contamination by absorption into native life and customs. The threat is particularly associated with the temptation posed by inter-racial sex, where sexual liaisons with 'native' peoples were supposed to result in a contamination of the colonizer's pure stock and thus their degeneracy and demise as a vigorous and civilized (as opposed to savage or degenerate) race. But 'going native' can also encompass lapses from European behavior, the participation in 'native' ceremonies, or the adoption or even enjoyment of local customs in terms of dress, food, recreation and entertainment. [173]

According to this definition, "going native" is a process of self-transformation in which the Europeans can find themselves engaged in by the mere contact with the natives. Its symptoms are: the withdrawal to primitive life, the rejection of culture in favor of nature, the adoption of native habits to the detriment of cultivated manners, the assimilation within the Oriental environment and miscegenation. It is a process that can be either voluntary or involuntary, feared or fancied and one that

[173] Bill Ashcroft et al, Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies, (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 115.

can result from the contact with native people but also from the mere plunging into an alien environment.

Snapshot 04: The "Exotic" Image of Lawrence Sitting on a Camel Back Wearing Arab Robes.

The most evident sign of Lawrence's cultural appropriation of Arabia in terms of being a lasting image for the viewer is the wearing of Arab robes which, as shown in the above snapshot, arebeautiful robes of spotless white with an agal made of gold tassels, a gold belt round his waist in front of which was a dagger put in a curved gold scabbard and a white burnoose. It is also displayed in his actions and way of living; he travels on camel back, eats and drinks as the Arabs do, lives by their social standards, and leads battles for their cause adopting their battle and post-battle traditions. He even tries to institute an Arab local government in Damascus to allow them organise themselves in their newly gained freedom.

More interestingly, he starts using the personal pronoun "we" whenever he speaks about himself and the Arabs. For instance, in a conversation that takes place between him and Colonel Brighton in the Arab Bureau in Cairo after the successful taking of Akaba, he pronounces the pronoun five times in less than one minute; "*We'*ve taken Akaba … *We* have … *We* have … *We* took them

prisoners … *We* killed some."[174] His very use of "we" clearly shows that he identifies with the Arabs and considers himself as one of them.

Contrary to the Arab Bureau where he was under-estimated by his superiors, in the Arabian Desert, he is given the opportunity to put his knowledge of warfare into practice and prove his capacities. He succeeds and gains recognition from the Arabs who not only accept him as one of them but also offer him a privileged position by making him their leader. He loses himself in the confidence spawned from repeated military victories and is led to believe he is not a common man. This is best evidenced when he tells Ali before embarking on an espionage mission in Deraa: "Whatever I ask them [the Arabs] to do can be done … Do you think I'm just anybody? Do you?"[175]

At his highest point, the adoring Arabs' adulation and unwavering loyalty cause his mind to give way to "messianic delusions." This is shown when he tells one of the Arabs "Moses did"[176] as an answer to his question about whether he would cross the Sinai Desert to go back to the Arab Bureau's headquarters in Cairo to report their victory at Akaba and ask for ammunition. This answer clearly suggests that he regards himself as a prophet or a messiah; as Moses was.

This fact is sustained in a conversation between General Murray and Colonel Brighton. Speaking about Lawrence, Brighton tells Murray that the Arabs "think he's a kind of prophet."[177]But Murray interpolates him saying: "they do or *he does*?"[178]clearly making reference to the fact that, apart from what the Arabs might think of him, Lawrence does view himself as a prophet.

After agreeing to let him set off on his mission, General Murray, who probably considers Lawrence to be "less masculine" than his comrades, remarks: "Who knows? It might even make a man

[174]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 1:57:00.
[175]Ibid 2:33:23.
[176]Ibid 1:45:23.
[177]Ibid 2:32:25.
[178]Ibid 2:32:27.

of him."[179] Once in Arabia, Lawrence does even better than this. Indeed, as Michael A. Anderegg states: "along the way, he is tempted by "Godhood," a temptation that transcends "manhood" entirely and ends by making a mockery of Murray's straightforward wish."[180] According to Anderegg, this theme of Godhood

> manifests itself in Lawrence's increasing isolation, in his donning of spotless white robes which give him visual predominance over the parti-colored Arabs, in the worshipful attitudes of his followers, and, most notably, in his abrogating to himself the right to execute a man ostensibly.[181]

In sum, as a European who has been confined to a life of routine and who has been feeling ill-at -ease within his environment, in the desert, Lawrence gets the possibility to free himself and to live exiting experiences. Initially presented as a "clown"[182]and a "half-witted"[183] Lieutenant with ill-fitting uniforms and casual unmilitary behaviour whichearn him the contempt of his superiors, mainly General Murray who makes his view about him explicit when he tells him that he is the kind of creature he is unable to stand,[184]he transforms into a hero whom the Arabs nearly deify. He achieves all his aspirations and seems to have finally found a place where he feels comfortable and happy.

The last element through which Lean delivers the exotic image of the Arabian Desert is his characterisation of Arab women as being "mysterious and exotic." In the Orientalsit discourse, the Orientalistsdivided the world into two groups, the Westerners and the Orientals, and defined each group in terms of essentialist dichotomies within which the Orientals were subjected to a process of Othering and homogenisation. While Eastern men were presented in a very negative way so as to construct an image of them as fanatic, villainous, barbaric … etc, Orientalsit representations of Eastern womenwere two-fold.

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[179] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 10:34.
[180]Michael A. Anderegg, "Lawrence of Arabia: The Man, The Myth, The Film," p. 290.
[181]Ibid.
[182]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 7:34.
[183]Ibid 9:53.
[184]Ibid 10:24.

On the one hand, one specific feature of the representation of Oriental women is the excessive sexual titillation caused by their description; namely that they are preoccupied with sex. Since the Westerners were not permitted entry to the Eastern harems due to Islamic customs, they

> drew erroneous conclusions regarding uncontrolled male sexuality and repression of Eastern women who they believed were forced to live in seclusion in a segregated, polygamous culture (and) incorporated aspects of their sexual fantasies into their writings in which they visualised the harem as being either a prison of unwilling sexual captives or bordellos filled with wanton female accomplices.[185]

The orientalsit depictions of Eastern harems and seraglios intensified the deep-seated Western beliefs that Eastern women were nothing more than chattel for men's use and sexual gratification. Such fanciful representations demonstrated their supposed sexual deviancy and intense desire which, in turn, renderedthem objects of entertainment for Western men who could enjoy them at any timethey wished.

On the other hand, Orientalsit representations were deployed to convey a particular image of Eastern women, Arab ones in particular, as passive beings incapable of raising their voices and representing their emotions. They were believed to be mere submissive recipients of their society's patriarchal domination. These representations were, then,used to justify the Western colonial presence in the Orient; most specifically to sustain a perceived need for intervention for Eastern women's emancipation within the Western mind.

In addition to that, because of the Islamic custom of veiling, Arab women were believed to be mysterious. In *Lawrence of Arabia*, Lean reflects this second trope of characterisation. What is worth noting is that,though consisting of most of the traditional orientalsit imagery, Lean's representation of the Arabian Desert refrains from one typical trait common to the depiction of the exotic Orient, namely eroticisation which became particularly "visible in the portrayal of harems and sensual belly

[185] Diane M. Huddleston, "The Harem: Looking Behind the Veil," accessed on http://digitalcommons.wou.edu/cgi/vewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=hisn(May 13th, 2015).

dancers."[186] It is rather characterised by the lack of female presence,probably because it is an epic; a film genre in which male characters are dominant.

Indeed, though running for over three hours, the film has no female speaking part and scant female on-screen presence. They are virtually invisible and are only captured in brief non-speaking sequences. They exist in the world of the film only as swathed masses bidding farewell to the Arab men departing to war, as the anonymous victims of the Tafas massacre, and in a very brief glimpse inside Auda Abu Tayi's tent. This effacement of women is of course entirely faithful to the film's source text's story,Seven Pillars of Wisdom,in which they took no role.

As an example, in one of the few passages wherein they are mentioned, Lawrence speaks about Arab women saying

> When looked at from this torrid East, our British conception of woman seemed to partake of the northern climate which had also contracted our faith. In the Mediterranean, woman's influence and supposed purpose were made cogent by an understanding in which she was accorded the physical world in simplicity, unchallenged, like the poor in spirit. Yet this same agreement, by denying equality of sex, made love, companionship and friendliness impossible between man and woman. Woman became a machine for muscular exercise, while man's psychic side could be slaked only amongst his peers. Whence arose these partnerships of man and man, to supply human nature with more than the contact of flesh with flesh.[187]

This quote amply sheds light on the fact that, in the Arab sphere, women did not share equal rights with their male counterparts. In terms of their relationship with men, it is suggested that they were considered as mere sexual objects as Arab man's desires could only be satisfied with his fellow man. They were absent all through the story and played no significant role during the revolt.

The one and only time women are noticedin the film, it is through the sound of their voices. As Lawrence and his Arab men head off to battle, they hail them with the Zaghreet, "the celebratory

[186] ZacharyLockman and Rogan Eugene L. Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism, p. 70.
[187] T. E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, p. 397.

trilling sound women make by rippling their tongues on the roofs of their mouths,"[188] making a sound that is loud and overwhelming. They communicate in a strange and kind of "primitive" manner with their men; which makes Lawrence curious. Ali explains the significance of this sound stating that the women are wishing them good luck. The sound is strange, loud, and deafening to the Western ear accentuating the exoticism of the desert culture.

Snapshot 05and 06: The "mysterious" and "exotic" Arab women

As illustrated in the above snapshots, Arab women appear standing on the tops of cliffs watching the men ride. Covered in black from "head to toe," the camera shows them as outcrops. Lean's choice of showing them as being completely veiled is not haphazard.In the Orientalist discourse, the recurrent figure of the veiled woman can be seen as a metaphor for the mystery of the Orient itself; a mystery which requires a process of Western unveiling for comprehension. This is exactly the case in *Lawrence of Arabia*. The veiled womenLean captures act as a metaphor for their land; they are as mysterious as the desert. They dissolve in the desert and become merely part of the exotic scenery.

[188] Jack G Shaheen, Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People,(New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), p.290.

Section Two: The Arabian Desert as a "Dangerous" Place

As already mentioned, the construction of the Orient within the Orientalsit discourseinspired an ambivalent mythmaking in the Western imagination that oscillated between a highly romantic image of it as an "exotic" locale, on the one hand, and a highly obscure image of it as an "extremely dangerous" locale, on the other hand. At an abstract level, this double representationreflected an equally ambivalent relation with freedom; the escapist desire for liberation from Western constraints versus the fear of excessive freedom that leads to primitivism and moral degeneration.

To be more explicit, once in Oriental space, the Westerner seems to go through a journey of self metamorphosis. This metamorphosis corresponds to the dual rendering of the Orient; it can lie at the heart of the discovery of the instincts instead of the Western intellectual cultivation but it can also instigate a moral degeneration as every form of moral regulation fades away. In other words, living among the natives gives the Westerners the opportunity to free themselves from the restraints of their society and renew contact with those elements which are parts of their selves but which have been repressed and condemned.

However, alienated from their society and its principles, they become vulnerable to the impact of the native environment where there exist no moral values, no social institutions, no police to fear and no authority to obey. They forget themselves, lose their inhibitions and give up willingly to their most hidden desires.To put it in one word, they "degenerate." In this context, numerous Orientalists reduce the Orient to a merely metaphorical setting in which the mental disintegration of the Western mind takes place.

In *Lawrence of Arabia*, Lean systematically uses this Western notion of the Orient as an evil place where there exists no social orderand where the darkest side of the human nature can be played out. He reflects this obscure side through Lawrence's experiences in the desert and his deep self-

transformation. It is mainly reflected in the contradictions within Lawrence's personality which begin to appear by the end of the first part of the film; exactly as he meets his superior General Allenby.

After the seizure of Akaba, joined by his two Arab servants Daud and Ferraj, Lawrence trudges the Sinai Desert to the Arab Bureau in Cairo. Upon his arrival, the following conversation takes place between him and his superior General Allenby

> General Allenby: I want you to go back and carry on the good work.
> Lawrence: No. Thank you, sir.
> General Allenby: Why not?
> Lawrence: Well, I, it's … I killed two people. I mean two Arabs. One was a boy. That was … yesterday. I led him into a quicksand. The other was a man. That was before Akaba, anyway. I had to execute him with my pistol. There was something about it I didn't like.
> General Allenby: Well, naturally.
> Lawrence: No. Something else.
> General Allenby: That's all right. Let it be a warning.
> Lawrence: No. Something else.
> General Allenby: What, then?
> Lawrence: *I enjoyed it.* [189]

Lawrence confesses that he has killed two Arabs, Gasim whom he has executed to settle a tribal feud and Daud who died in a quicksand, and that he remains disturbed by this fact.

Thinking that he is probably feeling guilty, General Allenby tries to calm him down but Lawrence interpolates him saying that he "enjoyed" what he did. When flashing back to the scene of Gasim's execution, one remembers that Lawrence pulls the trigger not once but six times. This fact suggests that he, probably, so enjoyed the killing that he could not stop pulling the trigger. Another important point to notice is that the way Lean stages the execution scene is particularly telling. As the snapshot bellow shows, Lawrence executes Gasim in the middle of the desert surrounded by a crowd of Arabs who do not take any action to stop him. Two interpretations may be attributed to this scene.

[189] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 2 :00: 27.

Snapshot 07: Lawrence executing Gasim.

First, a clear connection is established between the desert and the murder. As an Oriental space the Arabian Desert is not only a location wherein the events take place but a "character" that plays an important role. It is not only an exotic location but also a wild and obscure one that operates as the main factor behind the murder. Because of its savage atmosphere, it exercisesa negative effect on Lawrence venting his deepest instincts; in this case his ability to murder. Second, the Arabs' inaction may be related to the fact that, as Orientals, they dissolve in their environment and become part of the savage setting that negatively impacts Lawrence's character.

Lean's choice of staging his protagonist performing an execution wearing Arab robes is also done in purpose. Moments earlier, while still wearing his British military officer uniform, Lawrence risked his life and trudged the desert to rescue Gasim. By choosing to show him killing an individual wearing Arab dress, Lean informs the audience that by putting on the Oriental dress it is not onlyLawrence's outward appearance that changes but also his character. In this situation, the clothes he wears play a significant role.

Indeed, as an important part of the Arabian culture, the Arab robes trap the essence of the Arabian Desert and become the signifiers of both the pleasures and dangers of this part of the world.

They possess the power to transform and bring the qualities of the "Other" into their Western wearer. It becomes clear, then, that by putting on Arab garb, Lawrence has taken on the "barbaric" trait inherent in the Arabs, and has, thus, become a killer.

He finds himself deeply embarrassed by the fact that he took pleasure in killing a fellow; an act that the "old Lawrence" would certainly have despised as a sign of barbarity. Having come to enjoy bloodshed, he knows that the Orient is progressively corrupting him and starts becoming infused with neurosis.He asks for not being sent back into the desert but has the bad luck of meeting Allenby. Indeed, contrary to General Murray who underestimated him and dismissed him as the kind of creature he couldn't stand, Allenby immediately recognises Lawrence's military value. He realises that his status among the Arabs is too useful a weapon to cast aside.

Furthermore, Allenby discovers Lawrence's Achilles' heel; vanity. Dismissing all his concerns, he started flattering him by eliciting complements from Colonel Brighton, Mr. Dryden and an officer named Mr. Perkins. Then he holds a public conference expounding his genius to the entire staff. Flushed by adulation, Lawrence decides to go back into the desert to carry the work he started. It is exactly at this point that there a break in the film's tone occurs.

Lean marks this break in the film's tone by introducing the character of the American journalist Jackson Bentley. The latter meets Prince Feisal after the seizure of Akaba and tells him that he is in Arabia because he wants a story to be told. Then, the following conversation takes place between them

> Bentley: Your people do think very highly of Major Lawrence?
> Prince Feisal: Oh, yes. And the rightly. In this country, Mr. Bentley … the man who gives victory in battle is prized … beyond every other man.
> Bentley: … It's just that I heard in Cairo that … Major Lawrence has a horror of bloodshed.
> Prince Feisal: That is exactly so. With Major Lawrence, mercy is a passion … I'll do everything I have said … if you tell me truly the nature of your interest …in my people and Major Lawrence.
> Bentley: It's very simple, Sir. I'm looking for *a hero*… I've been sent to find material to show our people that this war is … to show it in its more adventurous aspect.

> Prince Feisal: You look for a figure who will draw your country towards the war … *Lawrence is your man*.[190]

This conversation summarises Lawrence's state during the first part of the film. He is merciful and dislikes bloodshed. Under his leadership, the Arabs achieve repeated military victories and this owes him their respect and a privileged position among them. Logically, then, when Bentley confesses that he is in search of a hero, Prince Feisal tells him that Lawrence is his man.

In the rest of the film, as Bentley constructs his romantic image by interviewing Lawrence and having him pose before his camera, Lawrence's image and situation are shown to become more dramatic. To use the words of Michael A. Anderegg, "the intense young hero of the film's first half turns into the cynical and vainglorious poseur of the second half while the audience buys popcorn in the lobby."[191] As the story unfolds, his choice of living among the Arabs in the primitive surroundings of the desert proves to have disastrous effects on his character as his "exotic dream" increasingly transforms into a nightmare. A number of incidents occur that call into question not only his motives but also his sanity; one of these incidents is the "Deraa episode."

One of the most traumatic episodes in *Lawrence of Arabia* is Lawrence's capture at Deraa. Before taking the road to Damascus, he decides to enter the city of Deraa, an important railroad junction that he hopes to raid, on an espionage mission. Unfortunately for him, while scouting in town with Sherif Ali he is captured by Turkish soldiers who recognise he is not an Arab. He is subsequently taken to the Bey who stripes him down to the waist and pinches his pale flesh. When Lawrence jerks his knee into him, the latter has him beaten. The camera cuts to Sherif Ali waiting outside for hours when, suddenly, Lawrence is thrown in the mud.

[190] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 2:12:22.
[191] Michael A. Anderegg, "Lawrence of Arabia: The Man, The Myth, The Film," pp. 291-292.

Snapshot 08: The Turkish Bey Pinching Lawrence's Skin

In Seven Pillars, T. E. Lawrence describes this event graphically in five pages in chapter LXXX and makes it clear that he has been raped;

> …They took me upstairs to the Bey's room; or to his bedroom, rather. He was another bulky man, a Circassian himself, perhaps, and sat on the bed in a night-gown, trembling and sweating as though with fever…At last he looked me over, and told me to stand up: then to turn round. I obeyed; he flung himself back on the bed, and dragged me down with HIM in his arms. When I saw what he wanted I twisted round and up again, glad to find myself equal to him, at any rate in wrestling. He began to fawn on me, saying how white and fresh I was, how fine my hands and feet, and how he would let me off drills and duties, make me his orderly, even pay me wages, if I would love him…Finally he lumbered to his feet, with a glitter in his look, and began to paw me over. I bore it for a little, till he got too beastly; and then jerked my knee into him…He leaned forward, fixed his teeth in my neck and bit till the blood came. Then he kissed me.[192]

He emphasises this fact when he says: "… how in Deraa that night the citadel of my integrity had been irrevocably lost."[193] Though he does not explicitly show the rape scene, Lean provides signs that make it clear to the audience that Lawrence has not only been tortured but also raped. As an example,as he pinches his fair skin, the Bey is shown to be leering at him; the camera captures his wet lips.

[192]T. E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, p.344.
[193]Ibid 347.

As they come back to the Arabs' camp, the following conversation takes place between Lawrence and Ali

> Lawrence: I am going, Ali.
> Ali: Why?
> Lawrence: Why? … I've come to the end of myself, I suppose.
> Ali: And the end of the Arab Revolt?
> Lawrence: I am not the Arab Revolt, Ali. I'm not even Arab.
> Ali: A man can be whatever he wants. You said.
> Lawrence: I'm sorry. I thought it was true.
> Ali: You proved it.
> Lawrence: "Look, Ali. Look. [Pinching the white fair skin of his chest] That's me. What colour is it? That's me. And there's nothing I can do about it."
> Ali: A man can do whatever he wants. You said.
> Lawrence: He can … but he can't want what he wants. [Pinching the white fair skin of his chest] This is the stuff that decides what he wants … *any man is what I am* … look,Ali, I think I see a way of being just … ordinarily … happy.
> Ali: [Pointing at the Arabs] And these … having led them here, have you no care of them?
> Lawrence: You lead them. They're yours. Trust your own people. And let me come back to mine.[194]

Lawrence is no more the "egomaniac" and ambitious character he used to be. He loses all the confidence and pride acquired in his military achievements. Most importantly, he comes to recognise that he is neither an Arab nor "uncommon" but just an ordinary man. He is uneasy, suspect and feels under threat having taken an identity that is not his; the reason why he asks Ali to let him go back to his people. This incident traumatises him and leaves him with deep psychological scars. As will be shown in the forthcoming paragraphs, it becomes the key to all of his subsequent actions.

After this traumatic experience, Lawrence decides to go back to Jerusalem to meet General Allenby. Once in Jerusalem, he finds Prince Feisal in Allenby's office. To his astonishment, Mr. Dryden tells him that Britain and France have signed an agreement by which they would divide Arabia after the end of the revolt. As Prince Feisal leaves, the following conversation takes place between him and Allenby

> Lawrence: … The truth is *I'm an ordinary man*. And I want an ordinary job, Sir. That's my reason for resigning. It's personal.
> General Allenby: … Are you mad?
> Lawrence: No, and if you don't mind, *I'd rather not go mad*.

[194] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 2:44:07.

> General Allenby: Look, Lawrence. I'm making my big push on Damascus the 16th of next month …and you are part of it. Can you understand that? You're an important part of the big push!
> Lawrence: [sweating and squeezing his hands] I don't want to be part of your big push!
> General Allenby: What about your Arab friends?
> Lawrence: I have no Arab friends! I don't want to have Arab friends! … *I just want my ration of common humanity.*[195]

This conversation probes Lawrence's psychic state. After the Deraa episode, he comes across as a broken and neurotic individual. Furthermore, he feels betrayed as he learns about the secret agreement signed between Britain and France. He feels he has been fighting in a battle that has nothing to do with him and that he has been used as a "pawn" in his country's imperialistic design in the region. After all this, he comes to admit that he is just an ordinary man wanting an ordinary job and most of all, his "*ration of common humanity*."

Exhausted and afraid of going mad, Lawrence desperately asks for resignation but Allenby plays again on his Achilles' heel. Again, flushed by his superior's compliments and predictions of a glorious status, he accepts to participate in the big push on Damascus and goes back into the desert where he is welcomed by the Arabs as a hero. Nevertheless, exhausted and infused with neurosis, he would soon lose control.

The final revulsion of Lawrence's neurosis is in a bloody massacre he launches against Turkish troops on the road to Damascus. Strikingly shot by Lean, this sequence closely follows Seven Pillars of Wisdom's graphic description in chapter CXVII

> The Arabs told us that the Turkish column—Jemal Pasha's lancer regiment—was already entering Tafas. When we got within sight, we found they had taken the village … and were halted about it. Small pyres of smoke were going up from between the houses … We rode past the other bodies of men and women and four more dead babies, looking very soiled in the daylight, towards the village; whose loneliness we now knew meant death and horror. By the outskirts were low mud walls, sheepfolds, and on one something red and white. I looked close and saw the body of a woman folded across it, bottom upwards, nailed there by a saw bayonet whose haft stuck hideously into the air from between her naked legs. She had been pregnant, and about her lay others, perhaps twenty in all, variously killed, but set out in accord with an

[195] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 2:50:17

> obscene taste … The Arabs were fighting like devils, the sweat blurring their eyes, dust parching their throats; while the flame of cruelty and revenge which was burning in their bodies so twisted them, that their hands could hardly shoot. By my order we took no prisoners, for the only time in our war … In a madness born of the horror of Tafas, we killed and killed, even blowing in the heads of the fallen and the animals; as though their death and running blood could slake our agony.[196]

On the way to Damascus, Lawrence and his men meet a garrison of Turkish soldiers fleeing after having raided a local village named Tafas. Upon seeing the image of the mutilated bodies of the village's inhabitants, Lawrence seems to be very upset but very confused as to what to do at the same time. The Arabs do, however, not think twice. Vengeful, they take their swords and prepare to attack the Turks. Once Tallal, who as Auda declares is from the ravaged village, is killed, Lawrence orders to attack the Turks shouting: "No prisoners! No prisoners!"[197] instigating a slaughter.

As the camera captures him, Lawrence is shown as a crazy individual taking part in the carnage. Berserk, herandomly shoots any Turkish soldier who crosses his path, many after surrendering, with "maniacal glee and manifestly enjoys the bloodbath."[198]Worse, when he has no more bullets to put in his gun, he takes his dagger and starts stabbing the soldiers. Horrified,the American journalist Jackson Bentley stumbles onto the scene of carnage. He disgustedly points his camera at Lawrence, probably suggesting that he is the one responsible of the carnage, saying: "oh, you rotten man. Here, let me take your rotten bloody snapshot for the rotten bloody newspaper."[199]Similarly, Sherif Ali is aghast at Lawrence's behaviour.

Two explanations may be offered to this episode. One the one hand, taking into consideration what happened at Deraa, Lean seems to be providing a Freudian explanation toLawrence's behaviour. Traumatised and psychologically broken, Lawrencelashes out in a bloody massacre in vengeance of his degradation and abuse by the Turkish Bey. On the other hand, he incriminates the Arabs and, most of all, their environment and shields Lawrence from responsibility.

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[196]T. E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, pp. 448-500.
[197]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 3:02:32.
[198]Gene□□□D□.□□□□Phillips, Beyond the Epic: The Life and Films of David Lean, p. 276.
[199]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 3:07:26.

As a European civilised man, Lawrence embarks on his mission to Arabia determined to be successful. He arrives there as a representative of a highly sophisticated culture and the benevolent intentions of the West; intentions to enlighten the natives and to construct a method to help them. Unfortunately for him, "the more he penetrates the landscape, the more he seems to absorb it into himself."[200] When the protections of the Western civilisation are removed and the wilderness takes possession of him the outcome is disastrous. He trespasses the line between civilisation and primitivism and falls prey to the savage desert which awakens in him his most obscure instincts leadinghim towards a horrific process of degeneration.

To be more explicit, living among the natives, in the primitive surroundings of the Arabian Desert, wipes out all Lawrence's links with the civilisation of rationality, morality and restraint transforming him into a native as well. The audience is, then, certainly not looking at him disgustedly but rather sympathetically. He is considered as an "innocent" white man who falls prey to the savage environment is which he immerses himself for the sake of helping the natives get rid of their miserable conditions.

In Freudian terms, with no *super-ego*[201]to impose limits on his behaviour, in a primitive place where there exist no laws, no values, no moral ideals, his *ego*[202]is no longer able to control his bloody impulses. Consequently, he gives up to his primitive instincts and his "savage nature" bubbles to the surface. In one sentence, his neurosis reaches a fatal climax and his apocalypse of mind leads him into degeneration.

Lean symbolises his protagonist's degeneration in a clever way. At the end of the "Tafas Massacre" scene, Lawrence isolates himself from the other men and observes himself in the reflection of his dagger's blade. This is exactly what he did when he donned the Arab dress Ali offers him the

[200]Michael A. Anderegg, "Lawrence of Arabia: The Man, The Myth, The Film," p.292.
[201]In psychoanalysis, it is the part of the human mind which knows what is right and what is wrong according to the rules of the society and which opposes the desires of the *id* by enforcing moral restrictions.
[202]In Psychoanalysis, it is the part of the human mind which tries to match the hidden desires of the unconscious mind with the demands of the society

first time in the film. It is our belief that Lean makes him repeat the same action at the end of the massacre's scene to accentuate the difference in his character that results from the negative influence the Arabs and their environment have exercised on him.

On the right Snapshot 09 showing Lawrence lovingly looking at his reflection in the blade of his dagger wearing spotless Arab robes after the "saving Gasim" scene. On the left snapshot 10 showing Lawrence horrifyingly looking at his reflection in the blade of his dagger wearing Arab robes soiled by blood after the "Tafas Massacre" scene.

As snapshots 09 and 10 illustrate, the first time, Lawrence is relatively still an "innocent Westerner." He risks his life to rescue Gasim and his conduct wins him the respect of the Arabs as well the as the sympathy of the audience. As a sign of admiration, he is given spotless white Arab robes whereupon he is shown playing around in the sand childish, carefree and, most importantly, totally in love with himself. He looks proudly atthe blade of his dagger and "studies the image reflected back to him in puzzled admiration, not quite believing that he has been able so thoroughly and drastically to change his identity."[203]

The second time, the context is, however, completely different. He launches a bloody massacre and ends the scene blood-soaked and mentally broken having reached the apotheosis of his degeneration. He looks at his reflection and seems to not recognise himself having turned into an

[203]Michael A. Anderegg, "Lawrence of Arabia: The Man, The Myth, The Film," pp. 299-300.

uncontrolled and completely "degenerate" individual. His white robes are now "soiled with blood and the face" he"submits to reflective scrutiny seems to be that of a madman."[204]

The "Tafas Massacre" scene also symbolises Lawrence's moral decline by contrasting his behaviour with that of Sherif Ali. As already mentioned, at the outset of the film, Lawrence is fashioned as a traditional British military officer who embarks on a fact-finding mission to Arabia so as to bring some change to his boring life. Upon his arrival there, Lawrence witnesses an incident wherein his Bedouin guide is killed by Sherif Ali for drinking from a well that does not belong to his tribe. As a "civilised" European, Lawrence feels disgusted and admonishes Ali's behaviour. Obviously, then, the distinction between the "benevolent" Westerner and the "barbarian" Other is established early in the film.

As the story unfolds, the two characters develop inversely. One the one hand, the more exposure to Western influence, the more "civilised" Sherif Ali's behaviour becomes. One the other hand, the more exposure to Oriental influence, the more "uncivilised" Lawrence's behaviour becomes; he degenerates to embody all those bad characteristics that he once attributed to the Arabs. This fact is evidenced in the "Tafas episode." Indeed, as Lawrence gleefully kills Turkish soldiers, Ali becomes his conscience admonishing him to avoid bloodshed and to remember what his goal is.

At the outset of the film, one of Lawrence's defining traits is his masochist behaviour. This side of his character is displayed in the trick he performs in front of his puzzled comrades. He lights a match and blows it out using his fingers without being hurt. When one of his comrades tries to do it he gets hurt and asks Lawrence what the trick is. The latter proudly answers: "The trick is not minding that it hurts."[205] Once in the desert, however,

> by stages both the pain and the pleasure increase to an extent Lawrence could not have foreseen. When pain and pleasure, even at their most intense, can no longer be

[204] Michael A. Anderegg, "Lawrence of Arabia: The Man, The Myth, The Film," pp. 299-300.
[205] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 06:51.

> distinguished from each other, Lawrence has reached the breaking point: beyond it lies madness. [206]

To use Richard Aldington's words, Lawrence's journey into the Orient seems as a return to a primitive place where

> he responds to the pressures of the circumstances by abandoning the standards and morality appropriate to his upbringing and embracing those of another and alien culture.[207]

As the primitive takes possession of him, he becomes no longer a hero but a degenerate individual who has a string of abominable actions and failure to his credit.

By showing Lawrence "effortlessly carving his way through the rugged desert as if it's his own playground sandbox," Lean conveys Lawrence's "early romanticism of the desert, his yearning for adventure and his sightseer's naiveté."[208] At the outset of his adventure there, Lawrence treats the desert as if it's a "fantasy camp;" getting so lost in the vastness of his surroundings that he becomes blind to their inherent danger.[209]However, the desert soon reveals its "obscure nature" infusing him with neurosis and terror; a state that, we believe, is best displayed in the image bellow.

Snapshot 11: Lawrence's Face Capturing the Entire Horror of the Arabian Desert.

[206]Michael A. Anderegg, "Lawrence of Arabia: The Man, The Myth, The Film," p. 291-292.
[207]Richard Aldington, Lawrence of Arabia: A Biographical Enquiry, (Chicago: Regnery, 1955), p. 68.
[208] Jason Bellamy And Ed Howard, "The Conversations: *Lawrence of Arabia*," accessed on http://www.slantmagazine.com/house/article/the-conversations-lawrence-of-arabia(December 18th, 2014).
[209]Ibid.

Conclusion

Throughout his film, director David Lean has presented his audience with a typically Orientalsit double representation of the Arabian Desert. On the one hand, at an external level, through a combination of visual imagery and sweeping musical orchestrations, he delivered an image of the desert as an "exotic," "beautiful," "attractive,"and "unrestrained" place. At an abstract level, it represents a welcoming site for Lawrence's escapist desire for adventure, spatial freedom, and recognition. It is a place where he feels in control; he frees himself from the restraints imposed on him by the European civilisation and gets the opportunity to achieve his aspirations for greatness and recognition. In sum, it is a place wherein he lives an "exotic dream."

On the other hand, it is also a "vast," "savage," and "highly obscure" environment that poses a threat to Lawrence. It takes possession of him and awakens his deepest instincts leading him towards degeneration. It is a place wherein he becomes very vulnerable and suffers from a moral and psychological decline that, in addition to his actions, is symbolised by the gradual soiling, bloodying and rendering of the spotless Arab robes he has donned earlier in the film.

All in all, it is a typically Orientalist dual rendering that oscillates between an idealised image of the desert as a place in which Lawrence wills himself into greatness and becomes an inspirational leaderand a highly dramatised image of it as a place in which he suffers from a psychological dilemma when the harshness of the desert "erodes him of his humanity" [210]and brings out in him a horrifying addictive love for slaughter.

[210]David Murphy, Lawrence of The Arabian Desert. Leadership – Strategy –Conflict, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2011), p. 44.

Chapter Three: The Representaion of the Arabs as the "Other"

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have dealt with the film's depiction of the Arabian Desert. Throughout our analysis, we have shown that director David Lean offers a dual rendering of this part of the world. It is an "exotic" place wherein Lawrence, as a Western man, goes on a journey of self-discovery. He gets the opportunity to free himself from his society's constraints, proves his capacities and becomes an inspirational leader. However, it is also a "dangerous" place wherein he faces constant danger.

After having dealt with the film's setting, of interest to us in present chapter is to deal with its characters; the Arab characters more precisely. We intend to show that director David Lean does not represent this group of people objectively but rather in a typically Orientalist way that associates them with a set of negative images that maintain them in an utter inferior position vis-à-vis their Western counterparts; mainly Lawrence. To achieve this aim, we will proceed by analysing some selected scenes as well as some representative Arab characters, namely Auda Abu Tayi and Sherif Ali.

The Representation of the Arabs as the "Other"

As stated in the research methodology section, Edward Said defines Orientalism as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident."[211] This style of thought was supported by a large body of European Orientalist writers who established a clear dividing line between the Westerners and the Orientals within their writings; a line which, according to Stuart Hall, serves as

> part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. It sets up a symbolic frontier between the normal and the deviant, the normal and the pathological, the acceptable and the unacceptable, what 'belongs' and what does not or is 'other', between insiders and outsiders, Us and Them.[212]

[211] Edward Said, Orientalism, p. 2.
[212] Stuart Hall, Representation and Signifying Practices, (London: Sage, 1997), p. 285.

This dividing line led to the establishment of the logic of "Manichean binary opposition"[213] within which these two groups of people, as well as their respective cultures, are representedin accordance to two different discourses.

On the one hand, the Orientals are represented in accordance withan "Orientalsit discourse"which tends to essentialise the Orient as a homogenous entity without appreciating the cultural differences and historical specificities of its people. Indeed, they are subjected to a process of "racial stereotyping;" a process through which the Europeans were able to prove their superior knowledge of the natives and, thus, disarm them of the control of their own representation.[214]This process characterises them as a homogenous masspolarised by their oppositeness to the Westerners and represents them as carrying all the dark traits of humanity.

On the other hand, the Westerners are represented in accordance witha "Eurocentric discourse;"a discourse which Ella Shohat and Robert Stam define as a construct that

> sanitizes Western history while patronizing and even demonizing the non-West. It thinks of itself in terms of its noblest achievements — science, progress, humanism- but of the non-West in terms of its deficiencies, real or imagined."[215]

This discourse is related to the fixity of the Orientalsit discourse as it naturalises itsworldview of binaries. Eurocentrism and Orientalism are, then, sibling discourses which have a slightly different emphasis; "colonialist discourse justifies colonialism likewise imperialism, whereas Eurocentrism "normalises" the hierarchical and universal truths provided by colonialism and imperialism."[216]

To be more explicit, Eurocentric ideology is the fundamental idea lying beneath the whole structure of Orientalism; it functions as a base for Orientalsit knowledge which consists of a wide range of universal assumptions seeking to uphold the myth of Western superiority. It does not only

[213]Edward Said,Culture and imperialism, p. 110.
[214]Stella Regis Tove, Imagining the Other: The Representation of the Papua New Guinean Subject, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), p. 19.
[215]Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media, (London: Routledge, 1995), p.3.
[216]Ibid 2.

view everything by the standard of European values but also the Europeans as the only qualified race in the world. As will be demonstrated throughout this chapter, within *Lawrence of Arabia*, Lean employs both discourses. On the one hand, the Orientalist discourse isvisible in his characterisation of the Arabs.The Eurocentric discourse, on the other hand, is visible in his characterisation of his protagonist Lawrence and the English characters in general.

The first scene within which Lean establishes a dividing line between the Arabs and the Europeans is the "Tent Scene."Introduced by an old man reading verses of the Holy Koran, Sherif Ali enters and a conversation takes place between Prince Feisal, Lawrence, Colonel Brighton and him. The purpose of the conversation is to find a strategy for how well the English can further provide the Arabs with supplies needed in their uprising against the Turks. Prince Feisal proposes to be supplied through the city of Akaba that he hopes to get hold of with the help of the English Navy. However, Colonel Brighton strongly dismisses this idea asserting that the navy is engaged elsewhere and that the Arabs must fall back on Yenbo if they want to be supplied.

Even though Prince Feisal is the person with the highest position in the tent, one gets the impression that the person with true power, or at least a clear sense of superiority, is Colonel Brighton. Indeed, Prince Feisal seems to be powerless and unable to convince Colonel Brighton who is addressing him in a non-diplomatic language and correcting his way of thinking; "put that out of your mind, Sir![217] ... I must ask you not to speak like that!"[218]"You're ungrateful"[219] and showing him that his point of view is the correct one.

This fact is clearly evidenced when he insists that what the Arabs really need is "discipline" not weapons in response to Prince Feisal's claim that his men should be provided with guns and artillery to be able to fight the Turks;

[217]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 39 :52
[218] Ibid 40 :10.
[219] Ibid 40 :20.

> Your men need training far more than guns, sir … We will teach them [the Arabs], to fight a modern, mechanised army … Dreaming won't get you to Damascus, sir, but discipline will. Look, sir, Great Britain is a small country; it's much smaller than yours; a small population compared with some; it's small but it's great, and why? … Because it has discipline![220]

Interestingly, the way Colonel Brighton addresses Prince Feisal resembles that of a teacher who is giving his student a lesson on "discipline" and the role it played, and is still playing, in making Britain a "great" country especially in the military field. This implies that he perceives the Arabs as "bloody savages,"[221] the term he used to portray them after Lawrence told him that an Arab killed his guide, who will only shed blood if provided with modern weaponry because they are "undisciplined."

It becomes clear that Colonel Brighton diminishes the Arabs and perceives himself, as well as his nation, as being superior. The viewer, who has possibly never had a direct contact with the Middle Eastern region before, gets to understand that the Westerner is allowed to treat even the most powerful Arab authorities in a disrespectful and dominating manner. He also gets to understand that the Arabs are no more than a group of backward people unable of thinking logically to find solutions to their problems.

Despite the fact that he was commanded to keep quiet, Lawrence enters the discussionand starts presenting his thoughts at which Prince Feisal seems to be utterly interested

> The desert is an ocean in which no oar is dipped and on this ocean the Bedu go where they please and strike where they please. This is the way the Bedu have always fought. You're famed throughout the world for fighting in this way and this is the way you should fight now! ... I'm sorry, sir, but you're wrong. Fall back on Yenbo, sir, and the Arab Rising becomes one poor unit in the British Army.[222]

He disagrees with Colonel Brighton and feels that the Arabs must continue fighting as they are accustomed to rather than adopting the European style of modern warfare. He also considers that falling back on Yenbo is a mistake. In the private conversation that takes place between him and

[220]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 39: 21.
[221]Ibid 31 :26.
[222]Ibid 42 :05-45 :37.

Prince Feisal after Ali and Colonel Brighton leave, Prince Feisal reminisces about the glorious past of the Arabs nine centuries ago

> Prince Feisal: [After Ali and Colonel Brighton leave]Do you know, Lieutenant, in the Arab city of Cordoba were two miles of public lighting in the streets when London was a village?
> Lawrence: Yes, you were great.
> Prince Feisal: Nine centuries ago.
> Lawrence: Time to be great again, my lord.
> Prince Feisal: Which is why my father made this war upon the Turks.My father, Mr. Lawrence, not the English. But my father is old and I...I long for the vanished gardens of Cordoba. However, before the gardens must come the fighting. To be great again, it seems that we need the English, or...
> Lawrence: ...Or?
> Prince Feisal: What no man can provide, Mr. Lawrence. We need a miracle.[223]

As the above conversation shows, it is suggested that "to be great again" will require either the English or a miracle.

Concerned, Lawrence spends the night outside in the desert thinking of a plan to help Prince Feisal. In the morning, he finally gets an idea; to attack the Turkish stronghold of Akaba by approaching it from behind through the Nefud Desert with the element of surprise. This would forestall the need for British involvement by sea and guarantee the success of the operation as the Turkish large guns at Akaba are facing the sea. According to Lawrence, the Turks would never foresee such a step as the Nefud Desert is considered to be "impassable;" as Ali describes it: "it is the worst place God created."[224]Prince Feisal assents and lets him lead the charge with Ali and fifty of his men.

This scene tells much about both Lawrence and Prince Feisal. Although the highest authority among the Arabs, Prince Feisal is clueless as to what to do to win the war against the Turks. He confirms Colonel Brighton's view of his people as being "incapable" of taking Akaba and is near to submit to the latter's request to fall back on Yenbo though aware that this step is only beneficial to the English.

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[223]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 42 :05-45 :37.
[224] Ibid 49 :00.

It is Lawrence, not Prince Feisal or Ali, who proposes that the Arabs use their knowledge of the desert as an advantage in their war effort. This suggests that the Arabs are devoid of intelligence. Indeed, if they were "intelligent" or at least had "functioning minds," they could have thought of using their natural environment for their benefit instead of begging the English to supply them with arms to fight in a way to which they are not used.Lawrence has to carry out the job for them due to his practical English mind.

In answer to Prince Feisal's query about Yenbo, Lawrence says: "I think it is far from Damascus!"[225] Through this sentence, which he describes as "falling like a sword in their midst"[226] in Seven Pillars of Wisdom, the message that he wants to deliver is that if the Arabs hope to succeed in their war, they must reach the city of Damascus; the capture of which holds the promise of an independent Arabia.

This, in turn, instills the impression that Lawrence is the sole arbiter of the Arabs' desires and that he is the only one who can interpret their aspirations in the viewers' minds. After all, even Prince Feisal who is the leader of the uprising could not think of such an aim. It becomes clear that the Arabs are associated with an inability to function without the guidance and assistance of a Western authoritative figure. This, in turn, produces knowledge of them as "dependent" and unable of acting on their own.

One typical Orientalsit binary opposition is the one sustaining that "whereas Western people have individuality and agency, the native is mainly instinctive rather than learned."[227] One of the most efficient ways of representing the natives as instinctive, in a harmonious relationship with the natural world and its laws,is the reduction of their behaviour to a series of natural responsesto the environment wherein they live. In the film, this fact is best illustrated in the "Saving Gasim Scene."

[225]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*,40 :58.
[226]T. E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, p. 86.
[227]Ella Shohat and Robert Stam,Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media, p. 38.

After he convinces Prince Feisal that the only way to take the strategic port of Akaba is to attack it from behind, Lawrence, Ali and fifty Arabs set out on camel back to cross the merciless Nefud Desert. On their arrival at the other side of the desert, Daud, one of Lawrence's servant boys, points to a camel without a rider.It is soon revealed that his rider, whose name is Gasim, is lost. Lawrence and Ali discuss the matter

> Lawrence: What happened to him?
> Sherif Ali: God knows.
> Lawrence: Why don't you stop?
> Sherif Ali: For what? He [Gasim] will be dead by midday.
> Lawrence: We must go back.
> Sherif Ali: What for? To die with Gasim? In one hour comes the sun. In God's name, understand! We cannot go back!
> Lawrence: I can …
> Sherif Ali: If you go back, you kill yourself, is all! Gasim you have killed already.
> Lawrence: Get out of my way.
> One of the Arabs: Gasim's time is come, Aurens. It is written.
> Lawrence: Nothing is written!
> Ali: Go back, then! What did you bring us here for with your blasphemous conceit! Hey? English blasphemer! Akaba? Was it Akaba? You will not be at Akaba, English! Go back, blasphemer, but you will not be at Akaba![228]

Lawrence proposes that they stop and go back to save Gasim but Ali refuses insisting that it is too dangerous. He implores him not to go back into the desert arguing that Gasim will certainly die andthat he will only be killing himself if he takes such a step. Nevertheless, Lawrence ignores Ali's warnings and immediately sets out to find the man. Time passes and the sun beats down. After a while, carrying Gasim with him, Lawrence appears riding to the camp where he is welcomed by a crowd of cheering Arabs who behold him with awe and reverence.

This scene shows how the situation is handled by both sides. The Arabsseem to really not mind the loss of one of their kin. To them,nothing can be done because what has just happened "*is written*" by God and thus impossible to be changed. If Gasim is lost in the desert, it is because his fate is to die there. Their belief in God's will makes them believe that they are not in a position of changing his destiny as well as theirs. This explains why Ali calls Lawrence "a blasphemer" when he insists on

[228]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 1:04 :17.

going back into the desert. To him, by doing so, Lawrence is challenging God's will; an act that is considered as an offence for a people who consider themselves as "God's servants" and rely on his will in every step they take.

Ali directs his gaze to Akaba and indicates his determination to carry out the expedition without Gasim. To Lawrence, this behaviour is, however, completely unacceptable. He is willing to face whatever envisioned dangers to save a human life. Hence, he lets human compassion overrule and decides to cross the desert once more to rescue Gasim. He succeeds and returns to the camp where he is hailed as a hero by the Arabs who surround him as he sits proudly on his camel.

Snapshot 12: Lawrence Asserting His triumph Over Fate After Saving Gasim.

As Ali approaches him and passes him water, Lawrence looks intensely at him and says: "*Nothing is written*!"[229]alluding to his triumph over fate.As when he tells him: "I shall be at Akaba. That is written. In here"[230]pointing to his forehead, here Lawrence's mindset is clearly distinguished from that of the Arabs. From their reaction, it comes to light that the Arabs have a fatalist mindset. The general consensus in their culture is that one's fate is prewritten by God and that no one can change it. This belief, which their lives are built upon, is, however, torn apart by Lawrence.

[229]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 1:14:16
[230] Ibid 1 :05 :35.

Indeed, he refuses to succumb to this fact that is passively accepted by the Arabs considering himself as the most important agent with regard to his fate. He succeeds in rescuing Gasim and his heroic conduct wins him admiration and respect. Even Ali, who accused him of blasphemy, ends up by admitting that "for some men nothing is written unless they write it."[231] His feelings towards him change from dislike to appreciation.

In this scene, through their different perceptions of Gasim's fate, a clear distinction is made between Lawrence and the Arabs, namely Ali, as well as their respective cultures. On the one hand, there are the passive, selfish, cold-heartedand fatalist Arabs whose culture is built upon complete submission to God's will. It is governed by the laws of nature; this is particularly the case with the circulation of life and the Arabs' perception of death as a triviality. On the other hand, there is the kind-hearted, active, brave and compassionate English man whose culture champions individual agency and values human life more than anything else.

Dramatically, this scene serves two main purposes. First, it marks Lawrence's full acceptance by the Arabs; especially Ali who soon becomes his inseparable companion. Second, it highlights his triumph over fate. Ignoring Arab fatalism, he proves he can overcome all odds through determination. This minor triumph sets the stage for greater victories at Akaba and Damascus.

Another common Orientalist binary opposition is the one related to the idea of the "accuracy of mind."Within this context, Lord Cromer (1841-1917), one of the colonial experts whose writings have contributed considerably in the tradition of British Orientalism, claims

> Accuracy is abhorrent to the Oriental mind (…) want of accuracy, which easily degenerates into untruthfulness, is in fact the main characteristic of Oriental mind. The European is a close reasoned (…) he is a natural logician (…) the mind of the Oriental, on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description. Although the ancient Arabs acquired in somewhat higher degree the science of dialectics, their descendants

[231] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 1 :15 :36.

> are singularly deficient in the logical faculty. They are often incapable of drawing the most obvious conclusions.[232]

In other words, while the Western mind is considered to be accurate, and logically reasoning, the Oriental mind is believed to be inaccurate; depraved of any sort of logic and reasoning. Within the film, nowhere is this dichotomy best evidenced than in the "Shooting in the Desert Scene."

As Lawrence and Ali are planning the attack against Akaba, they hear a gun shot. They run towards to the camp where they find the men gathering around a dead body. Lawrence, not knowing whathappened, runs to an Arab who explains that one of the Harith has killed one of the Howeitat in a tribal feud. When he asks him about the reason, he says: "Theft? Blood feud? It makes no matter why"[233] in an answer that gives the audience the impression that this kind of incidents are common amongst the Arabs. Murder is so common that its reasons are unknown; if known they change nothing since the fate of the killer is the same.

Auda takes his gun and prepares to revenge his tribe. He is, however, stopped by Lawrence who apparently has a better solution

> Lawrence: I didn't come here to watch a tribal bloodbath. The law says the man must die. If he dies, will that content the Howeitat?
> Auda: Yes.
> Lawrence: Sherif Ali, if none of Lord Auda's men harms any of yours will that content the Harith?
> Sherif Ali: Yes.
> Lawrence: Then, *I will execute the law.* I have no tribe and no one is offended.[234]

As this conversation illustrates, Lawrence resolves to pacify the feud by killing himself the wrongdoer. The man is revealed to be Gasim; the man he risked his life to save earlier in the film. Nevertheless, he pulls the trigger allowing the two tribes to join forces and successfully take Akaba.

In this situation, Lawrence and the Arabs are presented with a problem. Their reactions are different and this tells much about their characters. "He killed. He dies"[235] declares Auda who rushes

[232] Edward Said, Orientalism, p. 38.
[233] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 1:35 :51.
[234] Ibid 1 :35 :58.

to kill Gasim. This implies that the Arabs are fiercely and impulsively acting. They are incapable of finding solutions to their conflicts without using violence. They behave according to a "blood for blood" philosophy in which murder is the only way to solve conflicts and restore peace. The audience gets an image of them as "barbaric" and "merciless" and of their justice as "primitive;"it is not like the "developed" Western justice in which people who have committed crimes go on trial before being judged.

Thanks to his European mindset Lawrence analyses the situation and finds that Auda's action will only make the situation worse. He realises that it could lead to bloodshed as Ali's men may feel offended and thus attack Auda's. Therefore, he decides to kill himself Gasim. His point of view is that since he belongs neither to the Harith nor to the Howeitat there will be no risk of vengeance. In this way, the problem will be settled and the two tribes will be able to unite to achieve their aim. This reaction indicates that, contrary to the Arabs, Lawrence is "rational" and able of long-term thinking.

Another scene within which the Arabs and Lawrence are contrasted to each other is the "Train Raid Scene." In this scene the Arabs, under Lawrence's orders, derail a Turkish train transporting soldiers and supplies. To celebrate their victory, they gather and follow Lawrence as he walks through the crowd along the train. As he salutes his men, a young Turkish soldier is seen pointing his gun towards him. He shakes and only hits him in the arm. Lawrence falls to the ground but is soon standing up. He stays immobile and looks at the soldier who is finally killed by Auda.

Like in the previous scenes, in this scene Lawrence and the Arabs stand in two opposing poles. As they succeed, the Arabs do not turn to Ali or Auda, or even to each other, to celebrate. Instead, they gather around Lawrence and cheer him. The knowledge that is produced here is that from all the people in the crowd the only hero is Lawrence. If the Arabs have succeeded, it is not thanks to them

[235] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 1:35:40.

but to Lawrence. He has carried out the hard work of finding a strategy that would allow the Arabs to win the war; they have only executed the plan he has worked out.

While analysing a film, understanding cinematography, "the process of taking ideas, words actions, emotional subtext, tone and all other forms of non-verbal communication and rendering them in visual terms,"[236]is important as it plays an important role in the story telling and the representation of characters. In this scene, to celebrate his victory, Lawrence jumps on top of the derailed train.

Snapshot 13: Lawrence standing on top of the derailed Turkish Train.

As snapshot 12 shows, the camera angle changes and Lawrence is, now, looked at from a "low-angle shot."[237] This change in the camera movement does not occur in vacuum but in purpose. Indeed, Lean is giving a certain image of both sides by positioning them differently. Shot from a low angle shot, Lawrence is seen in a superior position; he stands on top of the train and "looks down" at the Arabs. On the other side, shot from a "high-angle shot,"[238] the Arabs are seen in an inferior position. They are "looking up" at Lawrence and this stresses his superiority; he is a man to look up to.

[236]Blain Brown, Cinematography : Theory and Practise: Image Making for Cinematographers and Directors,2nd edition, (Oxford: Elsevier, 2012), p.2.
[237]Ibid 22.
[238]Ibid.

It is interesting to note that within this scene clear symbolic values of divinity are ascribed to Lawrence's persona. When the Turkish soldier shoots him, he does not move; which stresses the association of his portrayal to divinity. He stares death into its eyes but seems immortal. Additionally, when Brighton asks him if he is badly hurt he looks at his injury unworriedly and tells him: "Not hurt at all. Didn't you know? They can only kill me with a golden bullet;"[239] which highlights the fact that he thinks of himself as a "deity."

Snapshot 14: Lawrence posing as a "deity" on a wrecked Turkish train.

It seems that Lean shares this view as he establishes Lawrence's growing view of himself as a "God-like" figure through subtle, intentional symbolism. As the above snapshot illustrates, having the camera angle combined with the snapshot of Lawrence walking victoriously on the train, illuminated by the sun positioned behind him like a halo, with his spotless white Arab robes, he exhibits an aura of power, divinity and control.

In the knowledge system of Orientalism, the West puts itself in the dominant position of the active knowing subject, while the Orient is located in the inferior position of the passive known subject. Based upon this positional inequality, the West has endowed itself with the unchallenged power of observing, studying, writing, and most of all, speaking for the Orient which, on the other

[239] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 2:21:27.

hand, can only lie there waiting to be studied and written about by its superior counterpart. As Said argues

> To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, tohave authority over it. And authority here means for "us" to deny autonomy to"it"-the Oriental country-since we know it and it exists, in a sense, as we know it.[240]

Said's claim is further evidenced by Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia who assume that in the Western consciousness, the designation of the term "Oriental" already implies a range of knowledge and an intellectual mastery over that which is named.[241]In the film, this fact is best evidenced in the sequence in which the American reporter Jackson Bentley interviews Lawrence after the latter, and the Arabs, successfully derail a Turkish train.

As he takes rest, Lawrence is approached by Bentley and the following conversation takes place between the two

> Bentley: What, in your opinion, do these people hope to gain from this war?
> Lawrence: They hope to gain their freedom … freedom.
> Bentley: "They hope to gain their freedom." There's one born every minute.
> Lawrence: They're going to get it. *I'm going to give it to them.*[242]

Bentley wants to know what the Arabs aspire to gain from the war they are fighting against the Turks. His question is, however, not addressed to one of the Arabs but to Lawrence. This goes hand in hand with the Orientalist assumption that the natives are unable of speaking for themselves. Arguably, it is the job of the white man to speak on their behalf.

As a Westerner, Bentley believes he won't get an answer from the Arabs so he asks Lawrence as he is the only one who knows what the aim of the war is. In this situation, Lawrence is playing the role of an intermediary between Bentley and the Arabs. The very use of the object pronoun "*them*" implies that the Arabs, as the Orientals, are the observed subjects, and that out there is a sovereign

[240]Edward Said,Orientalism, p. 32.
[241]Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, Edward Said: The Paradoxes of Identity, (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 57.
[242]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 2 :22 :41.

Western "*I*", in this case Lawrence, who can speak and make assertions about them as a knowing subject.

When Lawrence tells him that the Arabs aspire for freedom, Bentley stops writing. He seems to be unbelieving that they are able to do such a thing but Lawrence assures him that this is what the Arabs really want. Most importantly, he tells him that he is the one who is going to make it happen. Here, Lawrence's way of thinking is typically Orientalist. For him, the Arabs are not powerful enough to gain their freedom alone. Thus, he puts on himself the burden of fighting for them and leading them towards freedom.

This fact is evidenced in another scene. After he and the Arabs take Akaba, Lawrence decides to go back to the Arab Bureau's headquarters in Cairo to report the news to his superiors and ask for ammunition. When Ali looks confusingly at him, he says: "Look, Ali. If any of your Bedouin arrived in Cairo and said: "We've taken Akaba!" the Generals would laugh."[243] In other words, he is telling him that the general view in the Arab Bureau is that the Arabs are not able to achieve such a success on their own. However, if it is him who says it, the Generals will certainly believe him. Again, Lawrence assumes the role of fighting for and speaking on behalf of the natives.

In addition to the aforementioned scenes, Lean delivers his Orientalsit view of the Arabs through his characterisation of two representative Arab characters, namely Auda Abu Tayi and Sherif Ali Ibn El Hussein.

- **Auda Abu Tayi: the Typical Oriental Character**.

> Auda was simply dressed, northern fashion, in white cotton with a red Mosul head cloth. He might be over fifty, and his black hair was streaked with white. But he was still strong and straight, loosely built, spare, and as active as a much younger man. His face was magnificent in its lines and hollows ... He had large eloquent eyes, like black velvet in richness. His forehead was low and broad, his nose very high and sharp, powerfully hooked: his mouth was rather large and powerfully mobile: his beard and

[243] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*,1 :43 :18.

> moustaches had been trimmed to a point in Howeitat style, with the lower jaw shaven underneath.[244]

It is in these words that Lawrence describes Auda Abu Tayi; one of Seven Pillars' and *Lawrence of Arabia*'s most captivating figures. The first time he meets him, he behaves in an unfriendly way threatening to shoot Ali and his men for drinking from his wells. Then, as the story unfolds, the audience discovers more about his character through his actions and words.

Snapshot 15: Auda Abu Tayi Leader of the Howeitat Tribe played by Anthony Quinn

Despite his considerable bravery, combat experience and position among his men, Auda is presented as a man who does not have any nationalist feelings. This is best evidenced when he tells Lawrence: "The Arabs? The Howeitat, Ageyil, Ruala, Beni Sahkr, these I know. I have even heard about the Harith. But the Arabs? What tribe is that?"[245]when the latter tells him that they are leading the expedition against Akaba in the name of the Arabs. In addition to this, several scenes make it obvious that it is greed and eagerness for monetary gain, not honour or love of his country, which dictate his behaviour.

[244]T. E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, p. 221.
[245]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*,1 :28 :22.

In the conversation that takes place between him and Lawrence while dinning in his camp at Wadi Rumm,he is revealed to be a corrupt man who accepts money from the Turks so as not to fight them

> Auda: They [the Turks] pay me, month by month … 100 golden guineas.
> Lawrence: 100, 150, what matters? It's a trifle. A trifle which they take from a great box they have … in Akaba.
> Auda: In Akaba? You trouble me like women.[246]

Only when Lawrence tells him that the Turks have more gold than what they give him at Akaba does he accept to join the revolt. This, in turn, illustrates his predisposition to behave only for his personal interests.

Once at Akaba, he is very upset that there is no gold; he does not care about the fact that the seizure of this strategic port represents an important step in the Arabs' way towards freedom because all what matters is gold. The same thing happens during the train raid. Indeed, feeling unsatisfied by the objects his men find inside the derailed Turkish train, he seeks a more honourable gain by attacking a train carrying horses. Pleased with his bounty, he takes his men home without even asking Lawrence what the next step in the revolt is.

Along with his portrayal as a "mercenary," at times in the film, Auda is also portrayed as a "dimwit." In the train raid, he exchanges two lamps for a broken clock and breaks the American journalist Jackson Bentley's camera thinking, as Lawrence explains, that this thing "will steal his virtue."[247] Inside the Arab National Council in Damascus he behaves childishly when, as a five years boy would do, he tells Lawrence that Ali insulted him.

Nonetheless, nowhere is his stupidity better displayed than in the sequence where Lawrence makes him believe that the Crown of England will pay him five hundred golden guineas as a reward for his participation in the expedition against Akaba; "the Crown of England ... promises to pay ... 500

[246] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 1 :30 :28.
[247] Ibid 2 :19 :10.

golden guineas ... to Auda Abu Tayi ... signed in His Majesty's absence ... by me."[248] The audience would certainly laugh at him as the least intelligent among them knows that Lawrence cannot issue a promise and sign it in the place of his country's king. To put it concisely, throughout the film, Auda is presented as the typical Oriental character; he is corrupted, greedy, merciless and a "dim-witted outlaw."[249]

- **Sherif Ali Ibn El Hussein: "Almost the same but not quite"[250]**

Snapshot 16: Sherif Ali Ibn EL Hussein of the Harith Tribe played by Omar Sharif.

> He was of middle height, thin, and looking already more than his thirty-seven years. He stooped a little. His skin was sallow, his eyes large and deep and brown, his nose thin and rather hooked, his mouth sad and drooping. He had a spare black beard and very delicate hands … He was physically splendid: not tall nor heavy, but so strong that he would kneel down, resting his forearms palm down on the ground, and rise to his feet with a man on each hand. In addition, Ali could outstrip a trotting camel on his bare feet, keep his speed over half a mile and then leap into the saddle … No one could see him without the desire to see him again; especially when he smiled, as he did rarely, with both mouth and eyes at once. His beauty was a conscious weapon. He dressed spotlessly, all in black or all in white; and studied gesture.[251]

Unlike Auda and all the other Arab characters, in the film Sherif Ali, whom Lawrence describes in the above words in Seven Pillars, is not a static character. The first time the audience sees him is in

[248] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 1:44:39.
[249] Jack G. Shaheen, Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People, p.290.
[250] Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture, (London: Routledge, 1994), p.86.
[251] T. E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, pp. 338-437.

a scene in which he cold-heartedly executes Lawrence's Bedouin guide Tafas for drinking from his tribe's well. Feeling disgusted, Lawrence admonishes his behaviour and accuses him of being a "murderer." Initially, then, Ali is presented as a barbarian and the relationship between him and Lawrence is one of mutual dislike. Nonetheless, after Lawrence heroically rescues Gasim from the merciless Nefud Desert, things start to change.

In the evening, as they sit by a fire, the following conversation takes place between Ali and Lawrence

> Sherif Ali: El Aurens. Truly, for some men nothing is written unless they write it.
> Lawrence: Not El Aurens. Just Lawrence.
> Sherif Ali: El Aurens is better.
> Lawrence: True.
> Sherif Ali: Your father too, just Mr. Lawrence?
> Lawrence: My father is Sir Thomas Chapman.
> Sherif Ali: Is that a lord?
> Lawrence: A kind of lord.
> Sherif Ali: [proudly] Then when he dies, you too will be a lord.
> Lawrence: No.
> Sherif Ali: Ah, you have an elder brother.
> Lawrence: No.
> Sherif Ali: But then, I do not understand this. Your father's name is Chapman.
> Lawrence: [pained] Ali, he didn't marry my mother.
> Sherif Ali: I see.
> Lawrence: I'm sorry.
> Sherif Ali: It seems to me that you are free to choose your own name, then.
> Lawrence: Yes, I suppose I am.
> Sherif Ali: El Aurens is best.
> Lawrence: All right, I'll settle for El Aurens.[252]

As they discuss his name, Lawrence reveals an awkward detail about his family; he does not carry his father's name because the latter did not marry his mother. Ali does not mock him. Instead, he suggests that Lawrence, thus, gets to choose his name and insists that the best is "El Aurens;" the name the Arabs have chosen for him. He is so awed and impressed by Lawrence's heroic deed that he offers him inclusion as one of the Arabs by burning his British military officer uniform and offering him the robes of a Sheriff.

[252]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 1: 15:36.

Henceforth, the two men become close friends and their relationship transforms from a strictly "Us" Vs. "Them" dichotomy into one of interaction and mutual influence. Interestingly, from the moment he becomes Lawrence's companion, a positive change in Ali's character starts to appear. Indeed, initially fashioned as a cruel and barbaric native whom the Western viewer looks at disgustedly, he gradually transforms into a new form of Arab.

This positive change is, however, not attributed to Ali's personal effort but to the reforming work Lawrence has accomplished. All through his transformation, he is shown to be coached and guided by Lawrence who, as the bearer of civilisation, plays the role of a "mentor"and undertakes the heavy task of teaching, and most importantly, "civilising" him. In other words, as a benevolent Westerner, Lawrence has pity of his native companion and thus bestows on himself with the "White Man's Burden" which Rudyard Kipling defines as follows:

> The task of child rearing and dealing with the natives differed slightly, and despite their endearing qualities when compared to children, natives were still not to be trusted. Their way of life conflicted with Western civilisation and ultimately needed to be reformed.[253]

The more exposure to Western influence, the more "civilised" Ali's behaviour becomes. He is drawn out of the Orientalist discourse that regards the Arabs as a group of "passive" and "inactive" people and begins to be considered as an individual who seeks to use his powers for the greater good of the Arabs. He also comes to hate bloodshed; a fact that is best displayed in the "Tafas massacre episode." Indeed, as Lawrence prepares to launch an attack on retreating Turkish soldiers, he becomes the voice of humanity and reason admonishing him to avoid bloodshed and to remember what his goal is saying: "Damascus, Lawrence. Lawrence, not this. Go round. Damascus, Lawrence, Damascus. Enough. Enough! Make them stop."[254]

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[253]Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," in European Imperialism 1830-1930, eds., Alice L. Conklin and Ian Christopher Fletcher, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), pp. 58-59.
[254]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 3:01:33.

Most of all, Ali starts to be indoctrinated to the West's ideology and its political system. Indeed, stung by Lawrence's charge that the Arabs are little people and that they would not become great until they put their differences aside as Europeans presumably do in their parliaments, he starts learning the art of Western politics. This is evidencedwhen Jackson Bentley finds a children's book on parliament among his objects. In response to Bentley's comment about the rapidity by which he learns, Ali tells him: "I have a good teacher."[255] This answer is particularly telling; it means that as an "Oriental," Ali is fully aware he is not able to raise himself on his own. He needs Lawrence's presence toassist him and teach him the bases of a better future.

In another scene, at the town hall amidst the noises of the Arab tribes arguing about how well to run the city of Damascus, Ali is provoked to anger by Auda Abu Tayi. He hurries to action, but for Lawrence's advice, "If you answer, there will be bloodshed,"[256] he calms down and 'humbly' asks for apology. Ali seems, then, to be on the right path to become fully "civilised." Nonetheless, near the end of the film, he proves to be incapable of reaching such a status. As the Arabs abandon the city, Auda finds Ali and asks him about Lawrence. The discussion turns wrong and Ali is so irritated that he produces his dagger and threatens Auda asking him to take his hands away from him. This action says much about his character and position.

What Ali has been engaged in is what Homi Bhabha refers to as "Mimicry;" a process which he defines as "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite.*"[257] In other words, it is the Oriental's efforts to mirror back an image of the Westerner by mimicking or copying the latter's language, clothes, manners, ideas, etc…It is a process that results from the Europeans' attempts to reform the natives in colonial domains which is itself born out of their necessity to assert their power and sense of superiority.

[255] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 2 :20 :13
[256] Ibid 3 :11 :29.
[257] Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 86.

Along with this definition, Bhabha stresses the fact that mimicry involves a process that is deliberately planned as incomplete and imperfect.It emphasises the power of the Western culture to convert the "Other" but at the same time makes it safe from questioning its identity by retaining some part of otherness within the Oriental subject. The mimic man is, then, "the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English."[258]The structure of mimicry is, then, ambivalent as it is engaged in both reforming the Orientals and showing the characteristics that inhibit them from becoming fully reformed at the same time; "the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference."[259]

In Ali's case, after Lawrence's reforming efforts, he is elevated above his inferior status as the "Other" in proportion of his adoption of Western standards. He displays some civilised behaviours and becomes gradually acceptable to the Western viewer. Nevertheless, his innate backwardness, his own mind and the circumstances in which he lives leave the process of his transformation incomplete. As such, he will never be Lawrence's equal; he will always be his inferior Oriental Other.

From the scenes and characters that we have analysed, it becomes clearthat Lean draws a clear diving line between Lawrence and the Arabs.Within this dichotomy, while Lawrence is depicted in terms of individuality and agency, the Arabs are depicted as a homogenous group of people sharing the same stereotypical racial characteristics. This representational trope is directly related to, Albert Memmi's "mark of the plural" theory which sustains that the Orientals are not referred to in individualistic terms but as masses of people who are all the same; "'They are this.' 'They are all the same.'"[260]

[258]Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture, p. 87.
[259]Ibid 86.
[260]Albert Memmi, The Colonizer and the Colonized,(London: Earthscan, 2003), p. 129.

Indeed, contrary to the Arabs who are all "irrational," "aberrant," "backward," "crude," "despotic," "inferior," "inauthentic," and "passive," Lawrence is an individual who is "rational,""developed,""humane," "superior,""authentic," "active," and "creative." His formidable powers of persuasion are illustrated in situations where he manages to transform into allies men who initially opposed him. He wins Prince Feisal's respect and support in spite of the fact that the latter claims not to believe theuprising to succeed. He persuades Ali to join him even though he initially insists that Lawrence is mad. He also manages to secure the support of Auda who initially confronts him with belligerence.

Through his intelligence and courage, he gains a legion of followers and surfaces as a leader sent from the heavens to defy what is written through will and determination. He congregates an army out of nowhere, unites the warring tribes and leads them into an unthought-of victory at Akaba and then gives them Damascus; the sign of their freedom. To put it in one sentence, he is the leader with charisma, character and credibility who could run a local uprising into a mass movement for national determination.

He is so aggrandised that his assumption to leadership is unchallenged. His self-appointed command is expressed in his rallying speeches and courageous actions. All through the film, he is the only character who provides information about the proposed yoke of the Arabs; his voice is the only one heard as he is their spokesman. The Arabs do not make sense on their own; any sense of their struggle is mediated through Lawrence.

As the "white savior of the oppressed,"[261]Lawrence is the centre of consciousness and attention marginalising the Arabs who are relegated as the "passive supporting cast"[262] in their own struggle. He assumes responsibility for the uprising working all through the way to make it successful.

[261]Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media, p. 206.
[262]Ibid 179.

Accordingly, as the Arabs abandon Damascus and go back into the desert, it is his disappointment that is emphasised not the Arabs'

> The Arab Revolt acquires meaning only as Lawrence designs meaning for it; In any event, what matters to Lawrence is thatas a white expert, the legatee of years of academic and popular wisdom about theOrient, he is able to subordinate his style of being to theirs, thereafter to assume therole of Oriental prophet giving shape to a movement in "the new Asia." And when,for whatever reason, the movement fails (it is taken over by others, its aims arebetrayed, its dream of independence invalidated), it *is Lawrence's* disappointment thatcounts.[263]

Although one can see Lawrence and the Arabs bonding and even though one could consider the relationship between some of the Arabs and him as friendship, as in the case of Sheri Ali, who has the upper hand is never really questioned. This goes hand in hand with Said's statement:

> In quite a constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand.[264]

Conclusion

It becomes clear from our analysis that Lean's representation of the Arabs is one that falls within Edward Said's "Us" Vs. "Them" dichotomy. He adopts a negative reductionist view and refers to the process of "othering" whereby the Westerner, as the "Self," is centred, glorified and made visible while the Orientals, as the "Other," are marginalised, vilified and made invisible.From the film's outset until its end, he establishes a clear dividing line between Lawrence and the Arabs.

On the one hand, through an essentialist and totalizing representational mode, the Arabs are depicted as primitive people who are lacking in culture, civilisation, military organisation, intelligence,discipline, morals…etc.The audience is never presented with information about their intentions and motivations because they are alienated and condemned to immobility and silence. As

[263]Edward Said, Orientalism, p. 242.
[264]Ibid 7.

the “Other” they serve as a device and metaphor for Lawrence’s personal struggles and make him feel like a hero giving him a sense of purpose he couldn’t achieve among his peers in Europe.

Against this Orientalist representation of the Arabs stands aEurocentric view of Lawrence who is ascribed the very European traits of civilisation, superiority, dominance, rationality, agency, courage and benevolence. He is the Western authoritative figure who stands by the natives’ side, speaks for them, organises their affairs, settles their conflicts and fights for their goals more than they do themselves.In one sentence, he is the sole commander having the final word in every issue.

Chapter Four: The Film's Hidden Imperialsit Agenda

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have dealt with the film's representation of the Arabs. Throughout our analysis, we have shown that director David Lean presents the audience with a typically orientalsit representation of this group of people. He describes them as a homogenous group of people sharing the same racial stereotypes. They are primitive, backward, inferior, and completely dependent on Lawrence who is their leader and savior.

After having dealt with the film's characters, of interest to us in the present chapter is to deal with the film's most fundamental theme which is Imperialism. More precisely, we intend to show that *Lawrence of Arabia* is not a cinematic production that is solely meant for entertainment but an ideologically loaded one carrying overt political connotations. In other words, we intend to show that director David Lean subtly captures the political context in the Middle East during the 1950s and early 1960s and incorporates a hidden imperialistic agenda under his film's apparent layer of epic adventure.

To achieve this aim, he createsseveral historically inaccurate scenes that further worsen thenegative image of the Arabs already existent in Seven Pillars of Wisdom.Accordingly, our chapter will be divided into two sections. The first section, entitled "Altering History," informs the reader about the added sceneswhile the second one, entitled "Altering history in purpose," is an attempt to discover the possible messages lying under these scenes.

The Film's Hidden Imperialist Agenda

Section One: Altering History

➢ Scene One: Ali at the Well

As mentioned in the previous chapters, Lawrence is sent on a fact-finding mission to Arabia to assess the state of the Arabs' uprising against the Turks. Once there, his first encounter with the desert and its inhabitants is in a scene that has become iconic in the film. After a long journey, he and his

Bedouin guide Tafas stop at a well to rest, water the camels and refill their canteens. When it seems that they have quenched their thirst and begin to feel better, an image appears in the horizon. They freeze and stare at the object that is slowly approaching. It gradually takes shape and appears to be a man on a camel back. Frightened, Tafas takes the gun Lawrence offered him moments earlier and prepares to shoot the manbut is shot dead before he can do it.

This scene draws on an incident that occurred in Seven Pillars of Wisdom, but the two depictions could not be more discrepant. Indeed, contrary to the film's depiction, no Bedouin guide is killed at the well and Lawrence does not begin his adventure with "an angry tirade on desert customs that, in reality, would have won him no friends and might have gotten him killed."[265] In his narrative, T. E. Lawrence recounts the story in chapter X saying

> Quite close to the north bank of the Masturah, we found the well … As we watched, two riders, trotting light and fast on thoroughbred camels, drew towards us from the north … They halted beside the well; and the more splendid one slipped gracefully to the ground without kneeling his camel, and threw his halter to his companion, saying, carelessly, 'Water them while I go over there and rest'. Meanwhile the other rider stood by, vacantly holding the halters, waiting perhaps for the Harb to finish watering their herd before taking his turn. The young lord cried What is it, Mustafa? Water them at once'. The servant came up to say dismally, They will not let me'. 'God's mercy!' shouted his master furiously, as he scrambled to his feet and hit the unfortunate Mustafa three or four sharp blows about the head and shoulders with his riding-stick 'Go and ask them.' Mustafa looked hurt, astonished, and angry as though he would hit back, but thought better of it, and ran to the well. The Harb, shocked, in pity made a place for him, and let his two camels drink from their water-trough. They whispered, 'Who is he?' and Mustapha said, 'Our Lord's cousin from Mecca'… Ten minutes later I heard a chuckle from old Tafas, and saw wrinkles of delight between his grizzled beard and moustache. 'What is upon you, Tafas?' said I. 'My Lord, you saw those two riders at the well?' 'The Sherif and his servant?' 'Yes; but they were Sherif Ali ibn el Hussein of Modhig, and his cousin, Sherif Mohsin, lords of the Harith, who are blood enemies of the Masruh. They feared they would be delayed or driven off the water if the Arabs knew them. So they pretended to be master and servant from Mecca.[266]

As the above quote amply demonstrates, the real Sherif Ali travelled with his cousin Sherif Mohsin. Being the blood enemies of the Masruh tribe, once at the Masturah well, the two switched identities and pretended to be master and servant from Mecca in fear of being driven away from the

[265] Jack G. Shaheen, Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People, p. 289.
[266] T. E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, p. 53.

well by the Masruh. Far from the film's deadly encounter, Lawrence treated this incident humorously. He also showed that the Bedouins allowed common use of desert wells even among unfriendly tribes.

➢ Scene Two: Meeting Prince Feisal

The first and most important step in Lawrence's mission in Arabia consists in finding Prince Feisal; the uprising's instigator. The first time he meets him is in a scene that will shape the rest of the events within the film. Inside a tent, a meeting is organised the aim of which is to find a strategy for how well the English can aid the uprising. Colonel Brighton emphasises the importance of discipline disputed by Sherif Ai who wants modern weaponry and Prince Feisal who doubts its value.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Lawrence enters the discussionand proposes that the Arabs continue fighting as they are accustomed to rather than adopting the European style of modern warfare. He also tells Prince Feisal that the best way to advance in the uprising's effort is to take hold of thestrategic Turkish stronghold of Akaba by approaching it from behind through the Nefud Desert. He gets Prince Feisal's assent and ultimately starts an expedition against Akaba with Ali and fifty of his men.

This episode is mentioned in Seven Pillars of Wisdom, but, in the film, its content is distorted. Indeed, the decision to attack Akaba was taken after an agreement made between Prince Feisal and Auda Abu Tayi; as Constantine Santas puts it

> The expedition against Aqaba, a key first episode in the film, is only one chapter in the massive Lawrence account of the war, and it is instigated by the joint agreement between Prince Feisal and Auda Abu Tayi, and not inspired in a vision sequence during Lawrence's first night at Prince Feisal's camp.[267]

[267] Constantine Santas, The Epic Films of David Lean, p. 30.

➢ Scene Three: Meeting Auda Abu Tayi

After rescuing Gasim, Lawrence accepts the Arab robes Sherif Ali offers him as a sign of admiration for his heroic action. Then, he rides away from the other men to enjoy his spoils and, without a mirror, pulls his dagger to observe himself in the reflection of his blade. As he plays around in the sand lovingly inspecting his shadow, he is found by an Arab who introduces himself as Auda Abu Tayi the leader of the Howeitat tribe.

Furious at finding them drinking from his wells, he confronts Ali and his men with belligerence and threatens to shoot them. Fortunately, Lawrence intervenes and a shooting is avoided. More than this, he manages to secure a dinner invitation for his men from Auda. While dining, he convinces him to join the expedition by playing on his pride and proposing to pay him much more gold as the Turks give him. He accepts, and ultimately, the two tribes join forces and set out for Akaba.

This scene is pure Hollywood. Indeed, contrary to Lean's dramatic encounter, within Seven Pillars, Lawrence met Auda at Rabegh at the same time as Prince Feisal before the decision to attack Akaba was taken. Additionally, through his description of the way the two men were talking, it is suggested that they were not enemies at all. Most importantly, he made it clear that Auda was open to join the revolt from its outset; as he says in chapter XXXVIII

> We had heard much of Auda, and were banking to open Akaba with his help; and after a moment I knew, from the force and directness of the man, that we would attain our end. He had come down to us like a knight-errant, chafing at our delay in Wejh, anxious only to be acquiring merit for Arab freedom in his own lands. If his performance was one-half his desire, we should be prosperous and fortunate. The weight was off all minds before we went to supper.[268]

➢ Scene Four:Damascus and the Arab National Council

After the "Tafas Massacre" episode, the Arabs carry on the way to Damascus. Once they occupy the city, Lawrence intends it to be the seat of a governing council to lead the Arabs in their

[268] T. E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, p. 166.

newly gained independence.As the first meeting he organises in order to set a strategy for how well to rule the city turns into chaos, he tries helplessly to restore order. Unable to rule the city, the Arabs ultimately abandon it as the day ends and drift aimlessly to the desert. As they leave, the British send engineers to restore the city's basic utilities and doctors to help the Turkish wounded. The film ends with Lawrence leaving Damascus

Historically speaking, the Damascus scenes are the worst as they reveal false and demeaning images. In Seven Pillars, Lawrence's version of post-war Damascus is far from being a chaotic one. In reality, the Arabs "quickly collected the nucleus of a staff and plunged ahead as a team"[269]creating a police force, fire brigades, mechanics and sanitation committees. Lawrence's men, in addition to the Syrian residents of the city among whom were engineers and doctors, participated in restoring the city's basic utilities. This is best evidenced in the following excerpts taken from chapter CXX

> We passed to work. Our aim was an Arab Government, with foundationslarge and native enough to employ the enthusiasm and self-sacrifice of therebellion, translated into terms of peace … History told us the steps were humdrum: appointments, offices, anddepartmental routine. First the police. A commandant and assistants werechosen: districts allotted: provisional wages, indents, uniform,responsibilities. The machine began to function. Then came a complaint ofwater-supply. The conduit was foul with dead men and animals. Aninspectorate, with its labour corps, solved this. Emergency regulationswere drafted … We chose anengineer to superintend the power-house, charging him at all pains toilluminate the town that night. . The resumption of street lighting would beour most signal proof of peace. It was done … Nuri prepared scavenger gangs to make afirst clearing of the pestilent roads and open places, and rationed out hisdoctors among the hospitals, with promises of drugs and food next day, ifany could be found … Next a fire-brigade … Mechanicswere cried for; and trained men, pressed into service, sent down tocircumscribe the flames. Then the prisons. Warders and inmates hadvanished from them together. Shukri made a virtue of that, by amnesties,civil, political, military. The citizens must be disarmed—or at leastdissuaded from carrying rifles. A proclamation was the treatment, followedup by good-humoured banter merging into police activity. This would effect our end without malice in three or four days.[270]

Lawrence describes raucous scenes of Arabs packed in the town hall arguing over Damascus's governance. The real cause was, however, neither their incompetence nor their inability to compromise but Abd el-Kadr. The latter and his brothers launched several attempted coups to undermine Prince

[269]T. E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, p.514.
[270]Ibid 514-515.

Feisal's authority, resulting in several skirmishes with Prince Feisal's men. Kadr was eventually killed in November 1918 while imprisoned. The issue, therefore, was not tribalism but an ambitious man and his followers.[271]

Seven Pillars ends with Lawrence exiting Damascus as does the film. The situation left behind is, however,completely different. In his narrative, Lawrence writes

> Our aim was a facade rather than a fitted building. It was run up so furiously well that when I left Damascus on October the fourth the Syrians had their DE FACTO Government, *which endured for two years*, without foreign advice, in an occupied country wasted by war, and against the will of important elements among the Allies.[272]

As this quote evidences, Prince Feisal's government at Damascus remained in power not for two days but for two years. This fact is further sustained by a number of scholars and writers among which figure the scholar David Fromkin and the British novelist Gertrude Bell.

In Peace to End All Peace (1989) Fromkin writes

> The ruler of Syria was Faisal... On June 6, 1919, [Faisal] called into being a General Syrian Congress. Then, on 26 July 1920 the French occupied Damascus; on July 27 they ordered Faisal into exile.[273]

He also notes that "the French Foreign Minister proclaimed that Syria henceforth would be held by France."[274]For her part, Gertrude Bell, who resided in Damascus after its liberation, affirms

> [Under Faisal's rule] the Arab administration [in Syria] has presented an outward appearance of a nationalGovernment; public business has been kept going; tramways have run, streets have beenlighted, people have bought and sold, and a normal world has been obtained.[275]

[271]T. E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, pp.514-515.
[272]Ibid 515.
[273]David Fromkin quoted in Jack G. Shaheen, Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People, p. 291.
[274]Ibid.
[275]Gertrude Bell quoted in Jack G. Shaheen, Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People, p. 290.

Section Two: Altering History in Purpose

It is important to consider how well a film is true to the source from which it is adapted. Nevertheless, an insistence on fidelity in its traditional meaning i.e. "the fidelity of the adapted film in letter and spirit to its literary source" whichhas "unquestionably dominated the discourse of adaptation"[276] is not fruitful. This approach, leads to "the suppression of potentially more rewarding approaches" to the relationship between film and literature as it fails to recognise the fact that, though they share an intertext of meaning, a film adaptation and its source can never be the same.[277] It also "marginalises those production determinants which have nothing to do with the source but may powerfully influence the film."[278] Film adaptation should, instead,

> Be perceived as an intertextual practice, contributing to a dynamic interpretive exchange between the literary and cinematic texts, an exchange in which each text can be enriched, modified or subverted.[279]

A high level of "accuracy" isnot essential nor is it the most important aspect in viewing a film. Often a discrepancy between a filmic representation of a story and the story itself can be just as suggestive of the culture and context in which it is created as one that seems to fall more in line with history. Films can say as much about the environments in which they are produced as they do about the stories that they depict.Before analysing any given artistic work, it is important to bear in mind the historical circumstances under which it has been created as they contributed in a way or another in the shaping of its content and message.

Additionally, all films have social and political agendas as filmmakers want their productions to connect with the people in the audience, cater to their views, and instill in them certain beliefs, ideals and positions.Indeed, provided that ideologies exist within society, cinema is a prime vehicle to reflect

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[276] Christopher Orr, "The Discourse of Adaptation," in Wide Angle, (6/2), 1984.
[277] Brian McFarlane, Novel to film: an introduction to the theory of adaptation, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. 10.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Ilana Shiloh, "Adaptation, Intertextuality, and the Endless Deferral of Meaning," accessed on http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0705/08-shiloh.php(December 28th, 2014).

them as it is produced within that society.[280] To use the words of Graham Allen, in addition to entertaining people, "the job of a film is to impart a message, or ideology, to the audience."[281]

While dealing with adaptation, the issue is, then, "not whether the adapted film is faithful to its source but rather how the choice of a specific source and how the approach to that source serves the film's ideology."[282] In sum, in the discourse of adaptation,

> To say that a film is based on a novel is to draw attention to one element of its intertextuality, but it can never be the only one. Conditions within the film industry and the prevailing cultural and social climate at the time of the film's making (especially when the film version does not follow hot upon the novel's production) are two major determinants in shaping any film, adaptation or not.[283]

While analysing a cinematic adaptation, it is important to keep in mind one important question: "what key factors other than the source novel have exercised an influence on the film version of the novel?[284] Sometimes, filmmakers decide to portray a given place, culture or group of people in a certain way purposefully. They, then, let the viewer to discover the hidden messages and agendas they disseminate. Most of the time, for the sake of achieving their agendas, they offer millions of Americans, as well as hundreds of millions of people around the world, erroneous and demeaning images of certain places of the world and their inhabitants; as Professor Jack Shaheen claims

> The filmmakers' poisonous scenarios are not accidental but rather propaganda disguised as entertainment ... Though the majority of movie makers are fair-minded professionals, there are some who, in the interests of pursuing their own political or personal agenda, are willing to perpetuate hate.[285]

Lawrence of Arabia is no exception. Indeed, Lean's choice of departing from T. E. Lawrence's narrative in Seven Pillars of Wisdomis not haphazard but done on purpose.On the one hand, at a time when Arab Nationalism exerted a strong political influence in the Middle Eastern region, the film's denigration of Arab unity seems to carry overt political connotations. Upon close analysis, we are to

[280] Brian McFarlane, Novel to film: an introduction to the theory of adaptation, pp.10- 11.
[281] Graham Allen, Intertextuality, (London: Routledge, 2000), p.180.
[282] Christopher Orr, "The Discourse of Adaptation."
[283] Ibid.
[284] Brian McFarlane, Novel to film: an introduction to the theory of adaptation, p. 22.
[285] Jack G. Shaheen, Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a people, pp. 27-29.

draw inferences to the political context in the Middle East during the 1950s and the early 1960s, namely the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser's ideology of Arab Nationalism.

As it has been highlighted in the historical background, Nasser's Pan-Arab policies shattered the Arabs rather than uniting them. They divided the Middle East into two blocs, pro and anti-Nasserist, and led to a political turmoil and a number of internal crisis and in some countries. They also created strong rivalries between Nasser and Arab leaders about the question of who would be the heart of the Arab world. Indeed, which country would be at the centre of the Arab world and which larder would run the Pan-Arab state constituted a real obstacle to unity as every single state and leader in the region saw itself as the fittest.

This reality plagued the region and made unity impossible. Despite extensive Arab summiting it all came to naught. Consequently, the unitary type unions, notably the Egyptian-Syrian Union known under the appellation of the "United Arab Republic" were short lived, from February 1958 to September 1961, whereas other efforts towards partial Arab unity never got off the ground.

All these realities are displayed through the Arab-versus-Arab scenario that prevails throughout the film; mainly in three scenes. The first scene in which they are displayed is the "Ali at the Well Scene." The first time the audience sees him, Sherif Ali cold-heartedly kills Lawrence's Bedouin guide Tafas. Although he does not know him, Lawrence does not back down and confronts him. He feels disgusted and does not understand why he has executed his guide.

Snapshot 17: Sherif Ali Killing Lawrence's Guide Tafas.

Upon this incident, the following conversation takes place between the two

> Sherif Ali: He is dead.
> Lawrence: Yes. Why?
> Sherif Ali: *This is my well.*
> Lawrence: I have drunk from it.
> Sherif Ali: You are welcome … His? (Holding a cup used to drink water in his hands)
> Lawrence: Mine.
> Sherif Ali: Then, I will use it. Your friend … was a Hazimi of the Beni Salem … *He was nothing. The well is everything. The Hazimi may not drink at our wells. He knew that.*[286]

To Lawrence's surprise, Ali says that hekilled Tafas because he drunk from his Tribe's well; being a Hazimi, Tafas did not have the right to drink from a well that belongs to the Hashemite tribe. He allows Lawrence, a foreigner, to drink from the well rather than allowing his own landsman to do so. The contempt between the two tribes is so deep that Ali asks whether the cup he would use to drink water is Tafas' before using it. Only after Lawrence tells him that it is his does he use it. Worst, he kills and seems not to care at all; *"he was nothing. The well is everything.*"

Lawrence admonishes Ali's behaviour and accuses him of being a "murderer." Most importantly, he delivers a soliloquy in which he emphasises the Arabs' lack of unity and assigns them a set of negative characteristics such as greediness, barbarity and cruelty;"Sherif Ali, so long as the Arabs fight tribe against tribe, so long will they be a little people, a silly people, greedy, barbarous, and

[286]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 25:23.

cruel, as you are."[287] The image the audience gets from this incident is that the Arabs are no more than a group of selfish and cold-hearted people who kill each other over trivialities.

The second scene in which the Arab-versus-Arab scenario is displayed within the film is in the "Meeting Auda Scene." Upon finding them in the desert, Auda refuses to permit the use of his tribe's well to Ali and his men. After this, the two men confront each other

> Auda: *It is Auda of the Howeitat who speaks*.
> Ali: *It is Ali of the Harith who answers*.
> Auda: Harith. Ali. Does your father still steal?
> Ali: No. Does Auda take me for one of his own bastards?
> Auda: No. There is no resemblance. Alas, you resemble your father.
> Ali: Auda flatters me.
> Auda: You are easily flattered. I knew your father well.
> Ali: Did you know your own?[288]

In this scene, the Arabs are portrayed as not even being disciplined enough to confederate with their own landsmen without the help of a Westerner. The logic that stands behind unity is depicted to be unapparent to them; it is overshadowed by their incapability to overcome narrow-minded concepts such as greed, egoism, mistrust and tribal pride.

As shown in the confrontation between Ali and Auda, the Arabs introduce themselves by mentioning their names and the name of the tribe they belong to at the same time. This means that in Arabia, it is tribalism, and not nationalism, which is the dominant system. It is for this reason that the Arabs are devoid of the nationalist feeling of belonging to the same nation and, thus, are incapable of joining together even if it is for a common cause and the good of all.

The third scene in which the Arab-versus-Arab scenario is illustrated within the film is the one in which Ali and Auda confront each other as they abandon Damascus.

[287] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 28: 04.
[288] Ibid 1:22:48.

Snapshot 18: Sherif Ali and Auda Abu Tayi as they prepared to leave Damascus.

As the above snapshot shows, Sherif Ali, pulls a knife at Auda. After having fought together for two years, the two men end up quarrelling and threatening each other. The message that Lean aims at conveying through this scene is clear; whatever happens, this is how the Arabs have always been and will always be; irrational, divided and unable of self-rule hence their need for Britain's leadership and tutelage. Auda delivers a soliloquy that sums up the whole situation; "*I'll tell you thee what … being an Arab will be thornier than you suppose, Harith!*"[289]In the words of Steve Caton, "Factionalism is the last word."[290]

The aforementioned scenes are wholly fictitious. They, however, do illustrate the fantastically intricate network of rivalries and allegiances that existed between the various tribes in Arabia; a reality that made the task of forming a cohesive rebel army such a daunting one. These scenes probably make reference to the situation of the Middle Eastern countries that, as stated earlier, were in the same situation at the time of the film's production.

[289]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*,3 :17 :15.
[290]Steve C. Caton, Lawrence of Arabia: a film's anthropology, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999),p. 193.

Along with its political connotations, the imperialistic undertones of *Lawrence of Arabia* stand out clearly. As explained in the historical background,Britain's disgrace and alliance with the Arabs' bitter foe Israel during the Suez Crisis led to the appearance of a wave of anti-British sentiments all over the Middle Eastern region.In the aftermath of the crisis, it failed to settle an appropriate plan to contain the rise in power of non-collaborating Arab nationalists all over the region. This failure signaled the beginning of the fall of its hegemony in the region.

Accordingly, the film acts as propaganda for Britain's imperialistic designs and will at regaining its lost hegemony in the Middle East. Of course, the imperialism that is meant here is not the traditional one of direct colonisation and territorial expansion that existed in nineteenth century Europe.It is the new kind that emerged as a result of the mass decolonisation movement in the aftermath of the Second World War.

It is a new form of indirect domination that relies on other, less explicit, means to subjugate and maintain superiority over former colonies that came in the form of two-pronged mission. First, the exploitation of natural resources and expansion of new markets in colonies accelerated. Second, the push to introduce western civilisation increased drastically. [291]As a matter of fact, it also relies on the proliferation of Orientalsit and Imperialist discourses in the fields of politics, literature *and film*. Indeed, as Ella Shohat and Robert Stam put it: "the colonial/imperial paradigm did not die with the formal end of colonialism ... indeed; one could speak of a "submerged" imperial presence in many films."[292]

In Orientalism, Edward Said claims that

> The knowledge of the Orient created by and embodied within the discourse of Orientalism serves to construct an image of the Orient and the Orientals as subservient and subject to domination by the Occident.[293]

[291]A.N. Wilson, The Victorians, (New York: W.W.Norton, 2003), p. 488.
[292]Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, Unthinking Euro Centrism, p.103.
[293]Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, Edward Said: The Paradoxes of Identity, p. 61.

In other words, the Orientalist binary oppositions, within which, amongst other things,Oriental "backwardness" and "irrationality" are contrasted with Western "civilisation" and "rationality," are deployed to uphold the imperial project in the Orient.They all function as part of a cultural and geographical reductionism the subtext of which is a rationale for the subordination of the East.

Indeed, the construction of the Orient and its peoplein negative terms is used by European imperialists to implant a perceived necessity of an urgent need to help themin the Western mind. It seeks to create an urge of surrendering the Orientals to the rule of the West which will supposedly rescue them from their miserable conditions and reinstate them in civilisation. Due to their superiority and strength, the Europeans have the moral duty of exercising a firm but "beneficent tutelage" over the Orientals. In sum, theyjustify their imperialist behaviour on the basis of the humanistic ideas of the "civilising mission;"

> The grand project that has justified colonialism as a means of redeeming the backward, aberrant, violent, oppressed, undeveloped people of the non-European world by incorporating them into the universal civilization of Europe.[294]

In *Lawrence of Arabia*, Lean relies on the same process in order to deliver his imperialistic agenda. Indeed, all through the film, the image given is that ofbackward, irrational and divided Arabs who can't join together and who are always fighting against each other. Each time, it is Lawrence, as a representative of the West, who intervenesto settle their conflictsand avoid bloodshed. He speaks for them, fights for them, and tries to establish a local government for them in Damascus to allow them to rule themelves in their independence. To put it concisely, they do not make sense on their own and are thus completely dependent on Lawrence.

In addition to this, though they are bounding together, the audience can still distinguish an undercurrent of inequality in the relationship between Lawrence and the Arabs. Far from being an

[294] Antony Anghie, Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law,(Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 3.

equal one between two equal subjects, it is a relationship "between a strong and weak partner."[295] It is a relationship of power;one that Michael Foucault defines as

> a relationship between two free subjects, and this relation is unbalanced, so that one can act upon the other, and the other is acted upon or allows himself to be acted upon.[296]

Nowhere is the film's imperialistic agenda best displayed than in the "Damascus scenes." All through his time in Arabia, Lawrence has worked to unify the disparate Arab tribes. He arrives at Damascus ahead of General Allenby and attempts to establish what he calls: "The Arab National Council;"a kind of local government through which, he hopes, the Arabs will be capable of self-rule. Nevertheless, his hopes soon prove to be mere illusions as the meeting he organises turns into chaos.

Lean presents the Arabs as "untamed animals, stubborn, and unreasonable beings who fight among themselves."[297] Instead of behaving like "civilised" people by putting aside their differences and engaging in a serious debate to find solutions to the numerous problems the city is facing, they walk across the tables insulting each other. Even when faced with ordinary tasks such as operating the city's telephones, hospitals and water works, they quarrel.Lawrence calls for order by hanging his pistol on the table, but, on this occasion, it is beyond his capacity to organise them.

The reason of this failure is that the Arabs are inherently divided and thus incapable of cooperating. This is best evidenced in the answer Auda provides Lawrence with when the latter wants to know why the telephones have ceased working; "they will not work because they are given no electricity. *The electricity is in the care of the Harith*."[298] It is also due to their incapability to overcome narrow-minded concepts. This is shown, for example, when one of the Arabs refuses to ask

[295]Edward Said, Orientalism, pp. 39-40.
[296]Michel Foucaultquoted in D. Taylor, Michel Foucault: Key concepts, (Durham: Acumen, 2011), p.5.
[297]Jack G. Shaheen, Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People, p.290.
[298]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*,3 :11 :12.

his men to carry water to contain the fire that has broken out in one of the city's districts justifying this by the fact that his tribe, the Ruala, "do not carry water."[299]

Once more, Lawrence plays the role of the "benevolent Westerner." All through the scene, he is shown trying to restore order. He asks the Arabs to stop quarrelling and to remember what their aim is. He also asks them to put their tribal conflicts aside and calls for unity. Most importantly, he works to emphasie a collective Arab identity over tribal ones; "We here are neither Harith nor Howeitat … nor any other tribe, but Arabs of the Arab Council, acting for Prince Feisal."[300] Nonetheless, all his efforts come to naught in front of the Arabs' division and stubbornness. Here, the message Lean wants to convey is that the Arabs are "neither qualified nor worthy to govern civilized societies."[301]

Though he arrives at Damascus after the Arabs, General Allenby orders his troops, including the medical staff, to remain in quarters ignoring the growing humanitarian disaster at the city's hospitals.He, and his men, sit back and have only to wait for the incompetent and fractured tribes to obliterate the possibility of effective self-rule by quarrelling over trivialities. They don't take any action to force the Arabs out because they know it is just a matter of time before they abandon the city and go back into the desert; the only place where they fit.

The British are not wrong in their thinking. Indeed, as the power generators burn and the Ottoman soldiers perish in the unstaffed city's hospital, the Arabs recognise their incapability of self-rule. Ultimately, they drift aimlessly into the desert abandoning Lawrence who remains in the town hall still hoping to maintain control over the city on their behalf.

Before leaving, Sherif Ali tells Lawrence: "you have tried very hard to give us Damascus."[302] The latter answers: "it's what I came for."[303] These two sentences go hand in hand with Said's claim

[299]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia,* 3:12:42.
[300]Ibid 3:10:58.
[301]Jack G. Shaheen, Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People, p.290
[302]David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia,* 3 :16 :12.
[303]Ibid 3 :16 :15.

that the Orientalist discourse endeavours to make the natives believe in their innate inferiority and primitivism in an attempt to make them believe in the supposed philanthropy of the Western powers and ultimately get their consent for domination.

Indeed, what Ali does here is that, on the one hand, he recognises the Arabs' inability of achieving long-term goals without Lawrence. After all, without his help and guidance, they would neither have had the idea of crossing the Nefud Desert nor made it to Akaba. Most importantly, they would have neither thought about Damascus nor could have been able to take it. On the other hand, he knows that Lawrence's effort have come to naught because of the Arabs'backwardness and lack in rational Western manner in politics.

Lawrence, on his part, admits that he came to Arabia with the burden of helping the natives get rid of their miserable existence. As his plans fail, the failure is attributed to their behaviour. Inside the Arab National Council, what can be considered as a dominant representational feature is the characterisation of the Arabs as being "childish." This childish nature is displayed in their lack of agency, precision and professionalism even over simple tasks. It is, however, best displayed in the way they deal with each other.

Snapshot 19: The Arabs quarreling inside the Arab National Council.

As demonstrated in the above snapshot, the camera captures the members of the tribes acting as children. They adopt an unruly behaviour walking across the tables, squabbling meaninglessly, shouting at and insulting each other.What is worth noting here is that Lean's choice of characterising them as "childish" in this particular scene is not random but intentional.

In the Orientalsit discourse, the trope of representing the Orientals as "children" has its origins in justifying the colonisation of their lands. To be more explicit, what follows from the process of infantilisation, is the classification of the Orientals as being "politically immature."[304] This assumption is subsequently used by European imperialists as the basis for the justification of their submission to Western authority. To use Bill Ashcroft's words

> Europe as a parent had the moral responsibility to dominate as well as educate the child, the Orient. Childish innocence could be reformed into maturity through education and introduction to Western civilization; childish rebellion required strict control and authoritarian rule.[305]

To be more explicit, what happens in Damascus is a process of disempowerment; a process legitimated on the grounds of the Arabs' childish nature and their lack of a rational exercise of political power. It is followed by the empowerment of the British; judged to be more able to rule and more advanced in matters of technology and politics. The Arabs are too factional,incompetent and, most of all, immature to rule themselves; that they must be submitted to the British sphere of influence is, then, straightforward. As providers of peace and order, the British have the right to intervene and put the natives under their control.

As Prince Feisal arrives at Damascus to take his position as the leader of the Arab National Council, the following conversation takes place between him and General Allenby

> Prince Feisal: The powerhouse, the telephone exchange, these I concede. The pumping plant I must retain.
> Allenby: If you retain it, there will be no water.
> Prince Feisal: I shall be glad of assistance.

[304]Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media p. 140.
[305]Bill Ashcroft, On Post-Colonial Futures: Transformations of Colonial Culture, (London: Continuum, 2001), pp.36-37.

> Allenby: Then, you must bring down your flag.
> Prince Feisal: I shall not, and if your men attempt it, my men will resist it … it is widely known that the Arab Council took power in my name.
> Allenby: They have no power, it's illusory.
> Prince Feisal: Illusions can be very powerful … the world is delighted at the snapshot of Damascus … liberated by the Arab army.
> Allenby: Led, may I remind you, by a British serving officer … I thought I was a hard man, sir.
> Prince Feisal: You are merely a General, *I must be a king*.
> Mr. Dryden: It seems *we're to have a British waterworks … with an Arab flag on it.*[306]

In addition to reaffirming the view that the Arabs are not able to manage their affairs without the help of the British, it is our belief that this conversation is clearly making reference to Nasser and his views. All through the film, it seems that the character of Prince Feisal is an allegory to Nasser. He is not portrayed as the traditional Hollywood sheikhs such as Rudolph Valentino in George Melford's *The Sheik* (1921) and George Fitzmaurice's *Son of the Sheik* (1926).[307] The latter are portrayed as pursuing fun, lust and extravagance, very nervous, repressive of women and the farthest possible from emotions and romance, always captured in his tent where belly dancers perform to entertain and satisfy him.

Instead, he is portrayed as a respectful and well-learned man. He has knowledge of how Arabia was before the Ottomans colonise it and instigates the uprising hoping that the Arabs will one day be able to regain their lost glory. His rhetoric is displayed in all the scenes he appears in. As an example, as the American journalist Jackson Bentley interviews him, he shows his full awareness of the uprising's state; discussing the lack of artillery from the British, the efforts to destroy the Turkish railways, and the practices of war in the revolt.

[306] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 3:21:52.
[307] Jack G. Shaheen, "Hollywood's Muslim Arab," accessed on http://www.hartsem.edu/wp-content/uploads/shaheenart1.pdf (November 2nd, 2016).

Snapshot 20: Prince Feisal explicitly expressing his aspiration of being a King

As Nasser who, as mentioned previously, endeavoured to be the head of the Arab world, Prince Feisal aspires to be the leader of the Arabs in their independence. This desire is best evidenced in his declaration: "*I must be a king*."[308] As the above snapshot illustrates, his gaze while saying this sentence is one of determination. It means that he is ready to do whatever possible to achieve this aspiration; the same thing Nasser did while implementing his ideology of Arab Nationalism.

In place of the failed Arab National Council, he negotiates with Allenby to administer the city with British technical assistance; a relationship encapsulated by Dryden's submission to "*British waterworks … with an Arab flag on it*." Allenby describes Arab power in Damascus as "illusory" under such an arrangement. It is a compromise for the British but they have, nevertheless, imposed a form of control over the new government.

Again the context of the 1950s and the early 1960s in the Middle East seems crucial. As it has been highlighted in the historical background, in the aftermath of the Suez crisis Britain's influence in the region started declining. This was mainly because of Nasserist-inspired nationalist uprisings that aimed at getting rid of Western imperial influence in the region. These uprisings took the shape

[308] David Lean, *Lawrence of Arabia*, 3:23:30.

of"Military Coups"that sought tooverthrow pro-British leaders in a number of countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq.

Nonetheless, though they succeeded in toppling Pro-British leaders, the Middle Eastern countries' independence from the West was not fully accomplished as they still needed the British to run their economies. They especially needed Britain in the oil industrywhich was in the hands of the Americans and the British who, in 1944, signed "the Anglo-American Petroleum Agreement;"[309]an agreement by which they agreed over the oil of control the Middle East. It is our belief that Dryden's statement: "It seems *we're to have a British waterworks … with an Arab flag on it"*refers to this mode of informal influence which Britain exercised in the region through oil companies.

Conclusion

Though the film "may contain compelling cinematography and engrossing performances, as history,"[310] Lawrence of Arabia is full of historical discrepancies. This is due to the fact that the director David Lean alters and abuses T. E. Lawrence's narrative in Seven Pillars of Wisdom; adding or deleting at will and imposing orientalsit stereotypes. He does this for two main purposes. First, he does this to capture the political context in the Middle East during the 1950s and the early 1960s; mainly the state of division and strong animosities that the Arab countries and leaders in this region lived.

Second he alters history to deliver his film's imperialistic agenda. Throughouttherelationshipbetween Lawrence and the Arabs, he demonstrates the complete and utter inferiority of the latter and makes a case for expanding Britain's influence in the Middle Eastern region. The Arabs' aspirations for freedom are admirable but they will never be capable of self-rule because of their innate political incompetency, lack in rationality and inability of long-term

[309]Yergin Daniel, The Prize: The Epic Quest For Oil, Money, & Power, (New York: Simon &Shuster, 2008).
[310]Jack G. Shaheen, Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People, p.290.

thinking.It is also because they fight over trivialities and are not able to confederate with their own countrymen, even when it comes to achieving common aims, without the help of a Westerner.

The idea of the "White Man's Burden" is deeply rooted throughout the film. It is clear that the only character who is capable of "long-term thinking" is Lawrence. He does not lose sight of the Arabs' long-term goals and thinks in more complex and longer terms.Additionally, he is the one who each time intervenes to solve their conflicts, provides long-term solutions that are beneficial for both sides, and calls them to unite. The message that Lean wants to convey is that the Arabs are incompetent, dependent and incapable of self-rule; that they must be brought under British leadership is, then, inevitable.

General Conclusion

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The media play a pivotal role in every single society and their ubiquitous presence signifies their potential in transferring information about everyday issues to the masses. They not only transfer information but have also the ability to mold the viewers' perceptions about what should and what should not be viewed. Most importantly, they hold a powerful position in conveying, explaining and articulating specific discourses that help to represent or misrepresent any given culture or race.

Cinema can be especially revealing in this regard since it has always been a pervasive art-form and its power to penetrate all levels of society is undeniable. Films are, moreover, a multi-art medium combining music, drama and visual art. They, thus, can evoke the dress, speech, architecture, natural environment and even the physiognomy of another people and their culture. They cater to what is perceived as the prevailing popular taste and reflect record and codify one culture's image of another effectively more than any other medium.

Hollywood, as the home of US mass-produced cinema, is deemed as one of the greatest national and international entertainers to people of all ages, races, and ethnicities. Its profound influence on people is undeniable as it has the ability and power to allow audiences to generate thoughts, views and opinions based on what they perceive on the screen. It depicts numerous images of a variety of races throughout its films and millions of people in the United States of America as well as countries all over the world have grown up believing that they know other cultures through what they view on the big screen.

The huge power of influence it has, added to an increasing belief among scholars that it is about more than film, has seen the content of its films come under much scrutiny in scholarly works. This has been the case particularly in the field of postcolonial theory wherein analyses of leading

Hollywood features have exposed deep-seated instances of colonialist and imperialist models still being disseminated, and in many cases, justified to worldwide audiences.

In this dissertation, we have chosen David Lean's 1962 film *Lawrence of Arabia* as object of study. Our choice of this film is not haphazard. Because of Lean's incorporation of panoramic cinematography, it received a bulk of positive reviews from critics that considered it as an unprecedented artistic achievement. In an attempt to resist this tendency that resulted in a weak critical interrogation of its content, we endeavoured to show the hidden side that lies under its epic style. Accordingly, appropriating Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, we put it under scrutiny.

Like literature, cinema inevitably arises from a number of conflicting interests. It cannot be discussed separately from historical and political movements and events any more than it can be disassociated from the social and cultural milieu and interests of its creator. Hence, we devoted the first chapter of our dissertation to review the historical context under which the film was produced. As it deals with events in which both Britain and the Middle East are involved, our review concerned both the major developments that occurred in the Middle East in the aftermath WWII and Britain's connection to this region during the same period.

In the remaining chapters, we provided an analysis of the film. As cinema is not purely made of dialogue, throughout our analysis we did not only focus on the spoken words but also took note of "cinematography;" the different cinematic elements the director used, for example the way he positioned and dressed his characters, as they affect the story telling and the representation of the characters, their environments as well as their cultures.

Throughout our analysis, it became clear that the film equates Said's theoretical paradigm as it is full of Orientalist images, characters and themes. In terms of his depiction of the Arabian Desert, Lean reproduces the old "camel and tent" stereotype of the Orient. It is a space beyond civilisation where people live primitive and uncultured lives. Additionally, he offers a dual rendering of this

placeas both an “exotic” space where Western men go on journeys of self-discovery and a “hostile” and “dangerous” space where they are in constant danger.

His representation of the Arabs is one that falls within Edward Said’s “Us” Vs. “Them” dichotomy.It places the Arabs as a background marginalising them as a collective entity carrying all the dark traits of humanity whilst Lawrence is put in the centre as their leader. They are ascribed a set of negative characteristics that uphold them in an utter inferior position vis-à-vis Lawrence who, on the other hand, is ascribed a set of positive characteristics.One can, in short terms, recap their representation in few words: primitive, barbaric, irrational, inferior, incompetent and dependant.

In addition to the episodes he adapted from T. E. Lawrence’s narrative in Seven Pillars of wisdom, Lean adds several historically inaccurate scenes. He purposefully sacrifices historical accuracy to serve his film’s hidden imperialistic agenda. In all the scenes he added, the Arabs are uphold in a position of cultural, military and, most importantly, political inferiority.The whole storyline is strongly shaped by the idea that the Arabs are subordinate and dependant people badly needing to be subjected to Britain’s power.

If T. E. Lawrence’s Seven Pillarsof wisdomis considered by many critics to be an imperialist text written during Europe’s heyday of imperialism, Lean’s cinematic version of this narrative may well be considered as an arch-imperialist one that is produced during a time when Britain was facing an unprecedented decline of its influence in the Middle East.

In 1962, in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis that brought about this decline, the film’s message is clear;the poor directionless locals, fighting against each other over trifles, need Western leadership. It is amply evident that it acts as propaganda for Britain’s imperialistic designs in the region. By signifying the Middle Easterners as unable of self-rule and managing their own affairs, Lean seems to be offering propaganda of Britain’s aspirations to regain its declining influence there. In short,he aims at getting the audience’s consent for a British intervention in the region.

The film was produced against the background of decolonisation in the Middle East during the 1950s. It could have been a very good chance to reflect on the West's barbarous colonisation in the region and its nefarious effects on the native populations. Nonetheless, instead of condemning imperialism, the film represents it as being the correct and most appropriate method to set the Arabs right, to keep them in order and make them civilised rather than letting them kill each other over trivialities. The filmcould also have been a medium to provide support for the nascent nationalist feelings in the region. Nonetheless, instead of taking the lead, it seems to serve to deepen the orientalsit conceptions of this region and its people already existent in the Western mind.

Lean portrays the Arab Revolt as Lawrence's individual heroic adventure and ensures that the audience sees only his protagonist's role simply ignoring every other aspect and individual Arab role in the revolt. His version of the story is one in which the Arabs are only shadowy background. The real action takes place among the Europeans who find themselves surrounded by the forbidding desert and its hostile tribesmen; the challenge that will test their capacities. All in all, though it may be held by many critics as an unprecedented cinematic achievement, the very core of *Lawrence of Arabia* lies in its Orientalism and Imperialism.

As an Oscar winning film, it gained a prestigious position among the audience as a film worthy of being seen and was allowed a second circulation all through the world. It has become a historical source simply because of the great effect it has had in determining, in the West, the popular conception of Lawrence' role in the Revolt, the desert's culture and the entire Western understanding of the Arab Revolt.

It played a powerful role in both continuing and controlling the popular image of the "Lawrence legend." It also played a significant role in creating and reinforcing many of the Western misconceptions or "Orientalist stereotypes" concerning the Arab revolt, the Arabs and the Middle

Eastern region in general.In the Arab world, some countries banned it because of the insulting orientalsit images it carries.

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Résumé:

Cette dissertation a eu comme objet de discussion le filme de David Lean intitulé: *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962). Se basant sur la théorie de l'Orientalisme d'Edward Saïd, notre recherche a été conduite sur trois axes fondamentaux; la représentation du Désert Arabe comme une place dans laquelle les événements se sont déroulés, la représentation des Arabes et l'agenda impérialiste dissimulée dans le filme. Apres avoir analysé différentes scènes, personnages et dialogues, nous avons abouti a la conclusion que le filme est rempli de toutes sortes d'images, personnages et thèmes Orientalistes. D'une part, en tant qu'un espace Orientale, le Désert Arabe a étéreprésentéen deux manières. Il est une place « exotique » dans laquelle un jeune et indiscipliné officier Anglais obtient l'opportunité de devenir un héro. Au même temps, il est aussi une place « hostile » dans laquelle il est en constant danger. D' autre part, entant qu'Orientaux, les Arabes ont été associés à une série d'images négatives qui les maintiennent dans une position d'infériorité vis-à-vis des Occidentaux. En plus de ca, nous avons découvert que dans son adaptation du livre de T. E. Lawrence SevenPillars of Wisdom, le réalisateur David Lean a ajouté plusieurs scènes qui sont historiquement inauthentiques. A travers notre analyse de ces dernières, nous avons remarqué que les Arabes sont montrés soi comme des individus divisés qui ne cessent de se disputer ou comme des « subordonnés » qui sont dans un besoin désespéré d'être guidés par l'Occident. En prenant en considération le contexte historique durant lequel le film a été produit, il nous est apparu que ces scènes référent au contexte politique au Moyen Orient durant les années 1950 et le début des années 1960. Le réalisateur les a, en effet, ajouté a fin de servir l'agenda impérialiste de son filme.

Appendix of Chapter Two

Snapshot One:

*the Exotic Desert Sunrise

Snapshot Two:

*The "Vast" and "Exotic" Arabian Desert

Snapshot Three:

*Lawrence, Colonel Brighton, Sherif Ali and Prince Feisal in the tent.

Snapshot Four:

*The "exotic" image of Lawrence wearing Arab robes and sitting on a camel's back.

Snapshot Five:

*The "mysterious" and "exotic" Arab women

Snapshot Six:

*The "mysterious" and "exotic" Arab women

Snapshot Seven:

*Lawrence executing Gasim.

Snapshot Eight:

*The Turkish Bey Pinching Lawrence's Skin

Snapshot Nine

*Lawrence lovingly looking at his reflection in he blade of his dagger wearing spotless Arab robes after the "Saving Gasim" scene.

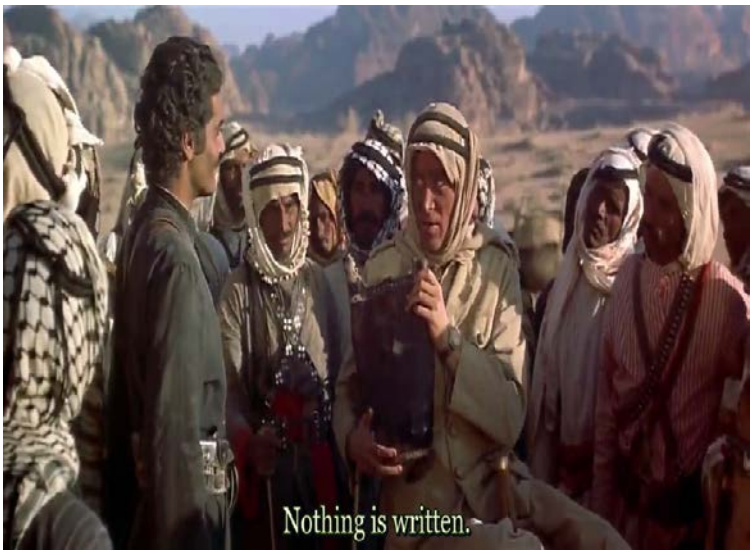
Snapshot Ten:

* Lawrence horrifyingly looking at his reflection in the blade of his dagger wearing Arab robes soiled by blood after the "Tafas Massacre" scene.

Snapshot Eleven:

*Lawrence's Lawrence Welcomed as a "Hero" after Saving Gasim.

Appendix of Chapter Three



Snapshot Twelve:

*Lawrence Welcomed as a "Hero" after Saving Gasim.

Snapshot Thirteen:

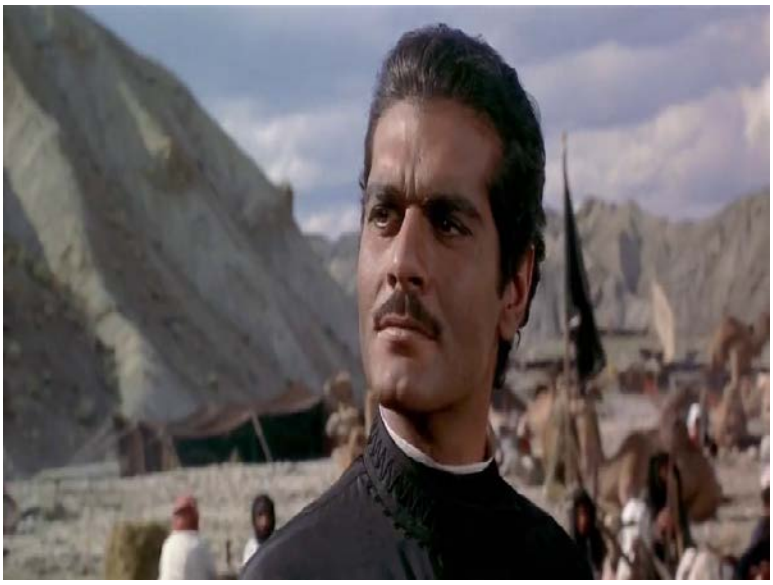
* Lawrence standing on top of the derailed Turkish Train

Snapshot fourteen:

*Lawrence posing as a "deity" on a wrecked Turkish train.

Snapshot Fifteen:

*Auda Abu Tayi Leader of the Howeitat Tribe played by Anthony Quinn.



Snapshot Sixteen:

*Sherif Ali Ibn EL Hussein of the Harith Tribe played by Omar Sharif.

Appendix of Chapter Four

Snapshot Seventeen:

* Sherif Ali Killing Lawrence's Guide Tafas.

Snapshot Eighteen:

*Sherif Ali and Auda Abu Tayi as they prepared to leave Damascus.

Snapshot nineteen:

*The Arabs quarreling inside the Arab National Council at Damascus.

Snapshot twenty:

*Prince Feisal explicitly expressing his aspiration of being a King