


Fall 10-12-2018

The Prehistory of the Hollywood Eastern genre

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Recommended Citation

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The Hollywood Eastern: The Historical Dimension

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If average educated Americans were asked to mention some historical events involving the Middle East, they might come up with some or all of the following: The Crusades (gallant Christian knights from Western Europe make several incursions of varying success into the Holy Land to reclaim the Holy Lands from the infidel Saracens, whoever they were); "... to the shores of Tripoli..." (In 1807 the USS Constitution swung into Tripoli harbor and blasted away, rescuing a hundred or more American held hostage for several years by the "Barbary pirates."); the French foreign legion (which had something to do with quelling the natives who adamantly refused to be civilized); Lawrence of Arabia (who went native and bravely led the ragtag Arab "insurgents" to victory against the terrible Turks during World War I); the Arab-Israeli conflict (which seems ageless and endless, and appears to be tied to religious conflict and ethnic temperaments and not to modern imperialist politics gone awry). Why would these events occur to some people off the top of their head, without reference to history books or net searches, and with this particular slant? Why do some events "count" more than others, get remembered more than others, become landmarks in a national or ethnic consciousness more so than others? One reason for this is due to the way that preceding events have shaped the prior consciousness of a people or ethnicity as expressed in the stories that people make up about themselves using these events. Past events involving the Middle East and Americans have left their historical imprint on the fictionalized narratives which underlie America's identity vis-à-vis the Middle East, and further collective experiences involving that area are viewed through the prism which those prior historical experiences, now heightened through a fictionalized prism, provide. Such fictions of reality may then provide frameworks or justifications for actions dealing with the peoples and countries of that area in the present and future.

The fictionalized narratives which have gone into the development of a film genre such as the Hollywood eastern are a product of the interaction between real, historical events in the Middle East involving Europeans and Americans, and the generic tradition of representation which has grown up around them. The study of this interaction is also in large part a study of the development of the cultural expectations or imaginary of the American people as related to the peoples of the Middle East, and it is there that one can find the reified expression of a part of the American (and Euro-American) unconsciousness which still resonates until the present day.

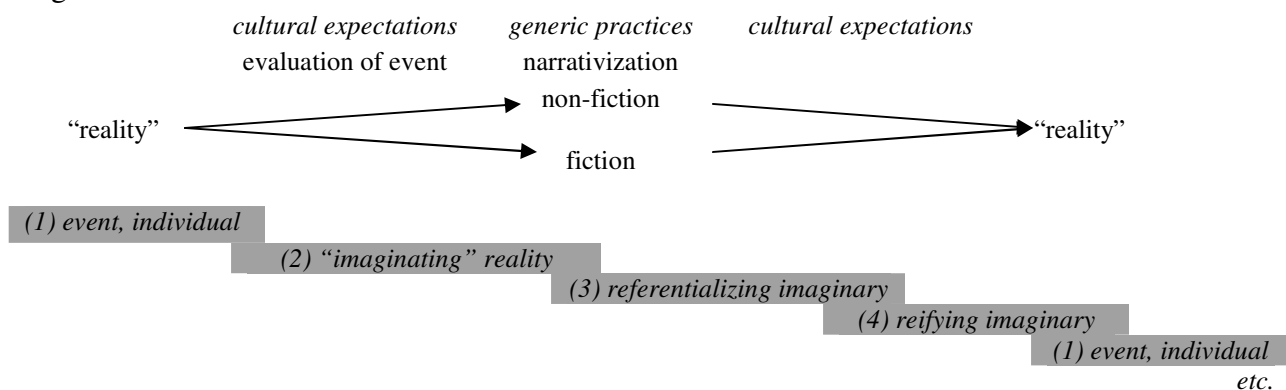
The events surrounding the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center provide a good example of the interaction of generic representations and actual events. The attacks themselves seemed to be a media production: they were produced, directed, given a capital investment, involved long-term training and rehearsals; they received the most widespread coverage of any news event in history, were carried live on many channels, were shown in repeated reruns, and were later available on DVD. They seemed to be the reification of an old Hollywood trope—"The Revenge of the Sheik"—as if a character came out of these fictions and said: "Here I am, I am real, I am your worst nightmare...", similar to the familiar formula from "horror" films, in which ordinary characters in an ordinary situation start out pooh-poohing some occult matter which then becomes "real" (at least on screen). The "producers" of

the attacks seemed to make use of tropes which were present in the fictional realm long before the attacks, fictional tropes which were themselves reactions to reports of real terrorist plans.

The immediate reactions to the attacks also involved recourse to generic fictions, the most obvious and weird one being the Pentagon consulting with Hollywood producers and directors regarding possible terrorist scenarios through the (Department of Defense funded) Institute of Creative Technologies at the University of Southern California. As noted on its website (<http://www.ict.usc.edu/>), the ICT develops simulation programs in part by “harnessing creative talent from the entertainment and game development industries” which seems reasonable enough, but in its apparent desperation to avert other attacks the Pentagon was relying on Hollywood directors of such realistic films as *Big Top Pee Wee*, *Blue Lagoon*, *Honey I Blew Up the Kids*, *Grease*, *Invasion USA*, *Star Trek*, etc. to provide the “realism” necessary for its anti-terrorist operations.

The circular relationship between historical events, cultural expectations and generic expectations outlined above involves many overlapping circles or loops (represented in Fig. 1) where one can never be sure of being at the “beginning” of any one of these elements. This chapter will examine the circular generic narrative traditions which contributed to the store of images and motifs about the “Orient” prior to the advent of cinema and which shaped its development in early films, and will leave for the future examining the same with regard to the development of the film genre in the 20th century. This inquiry is structured around a series of questions, as follows: 1) what were the landmark “real world” events in the relationship between the West and its “East” which have been selected to be represented and remembered in various cultural practices, including journalist reports, historical work and other non-fictional genres?; 2) how then were these events fictionalized or “imagined” (i.e., reimagined by their association with the imaginary) through pre-existing generic forms (chansons, plays, novels, and eventually films)?; 3) how were generic fictional forms in turn influenced in their developments by real events (how were they “referentialized” or associated with the “real”)?; and 4) how were they in turn used as models for actions or world views, or in other words, how did the imaginary become reified?

Figure 1:



1) The “Real”: The landmark historical events which have helped to shape the cultural and generic expectations of European and American audiences have taken place within a number

of longer historical periods of conflict between East and West which often overlap but can nevertheless be differentiated according to the type of conflict, the power differential between East and West, and other factors. The first of these periods is (a.) that of the Crusades (12th to 15th centuries), although it is the initial period only that is of the greatest importance for our purposes), followed by (b.) the period of the Ottoman threat to Europe on land and on the sea (Barbary pirates) (15th century to early 19th century); (c.) the period of European colonialism (especially French colonialism in North Africa, 19th century to early 20th century), (d.) the period of WWI, the Mandate, WWII, and independence (1914 – 1950's), and finally the period following the establishment of the state of Israel and the rise in militant resistance to it (“terrorism”) on the part of the Palestinians (1948 – present).

2) “Imaginating reality”: Events drawn from each of these periods were central to the evolution of the West’s representation of the East in both fictional and non-fictional narratives. Rather than an immediate transfer to the fictional or imaginary realm, most of these events went through several stages of narrativization, at each stage undergoing both abbreviative processes (distillation and telescoping) as well as augmentative processes (magnification and enhancement). The first stage of the narrativization process is typically a report of some sort—represented in terms of letters, medieval chronicles, memoirs, histories, etc.—which makes liberal use of the strategies of *distillation* (what gets taken out, or left in) and *magnification* (enlarging the role of an individual or event in the report) and less use of the strategies of *telescoping* (generalizing several events or characters into one) and *enhancement* (addition of characters or events not in the original reports). In the pre-modern histories such as the crusader chronicles, one finds more “enhancement” of the historical record than in later histories (mid-19th century on), but on the whole it is the fictionalizing stage (3. below) which makes the most liberal use of the enhancement and telescoping strategies, along with the further extension of the distillation and telescoping ones. The manner in which these various narrativizing strategies proceed is based to a large extent on the pre-existing structures of generic and cultural expectations which serve to frame, give coherence to, and make salient the historical events in question. In a sense, this stage in the narrativizing process is a way of associating real events with the abstract or imaginary constructions present in generic forms, a way of “imagining” them (for lack of a better word), to make them seem more salient, and oddly enough, more “real” to an audience which has those expectations.

3) “Referentializing the imaginary”: The events which are represented in and through these generic processes are transformed into “something else” (history, fiction (song, play, novel, etc.)) but the events may also in turn reshape the generic forms themselves. As “real” events are associated with the “imaginary” through generic narrativizing forms and are thus “imagined” and transformed into fiction, likewise the association of generic fictional forms with real events leads in turn to their being “referentialized” or associated with the real in some way, either by situating them in a known historical context, or by using real historical individuals as characters, or something similar. It is important to keep in mind that there is not a direct relation between generic fictional forms and real events or “reality,” however, but only an indirect connection through other “discourses on the real,” other cultural systems of representation which serve to delimit what is taken to be real (or “realistic,” part of “realism”). The referentialization of generic narrative forms leads to their evolution over time in response to these real events. This is

as important an element in this analysis as is the previous one, and will be exemplified in the following discussion through the evolution of the representation of the Crusades from epoch to epoch, the Orient in French theatre under the impact of expanded French colonialism, and the evolution of the eastern under the influence of increased American involvement in the Middle East region. An important aspect of this discussion will be the high value placed on “realism” in many of these genres, especially the modern ones (theatre and film), which extends, as we shall see, even to the subgenres which by their very nature involve the “fantastic”, e.g. the Arabian nights.

4) “Reification of the imaginary”: The last issue to be addressed here is much more speculative than the previous one, and has to do with how these imaginary (or “imagined”) representations of reality eventually come to have an effect on that reality—or, in other words, how the “imaginary is reified.” These fictional representations of reality are the products of a world view or ideology (cultural, political, economic, etc.), and by being transformed into narratives within that ideology, they may be put to use in its service and thus influence the course of actual events. For example, in the 19th century the French made use of their “imagined” view of the crusades (as a noble and victorious form of proto-colonialism) to help justify (and eventually reify) their latter-day imperialism, and in the 20th century they made further use of it to justify and carry out their claims in the Versailles Treaty for a mandate over Arab lands formerly under the control of the Ottoman empire (by referring to the medieval Frankish Kingdom of Jerusalem which existed in the Levant area for about one hundred years in the 12th to 13th centuries. Another important aspect of this issue to be addressed here is the rather common (but nevertheless odd) phenomenon of fictions preceding (or predicting, prefiguring) later “real” events, a situation which is, in a sense, the opposite of what is described in points 1, 2, 3 above.

In the following I will examine the development of Western narrative forms dealing with the “East” prior to the advent of cinema, as related to actual historical events (the Crusades, Ottoman invasions, Barbary pirates, and European (especially French) colonialism). These pre-existent forms, it will be shown, were carried over into film narratives, forming the basis of the early eastern film genre. Finally, later changes and developments in the Hollywood eastern will be charted as related to both actual contemporaneous events as well as to the pressures internal to the film industry.

Historical events & generic traditions: Pre-cinematic traditions of Orientalist inspired entertainments

1. The Crusades:

Crusades began in the 11th century as Christian holy wars to take back the Holy Land from its Muslim rulers. Stirred on by isolated acts of religious persecution during the previous 100 years, as well as by changing social and economic conditions in Europe, the knights of the first crusade, considered the only successful one, managed to conquer Jerusalem and some neighboring urban centers and set up a Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1099. The next crusade was a failed attempt to shore up this Latin kingdom against the increasingly successful Muslim counterattack, which culminated in the reconquest of Jerusalem in 1187 by the Ayyubid sultan of

Egypt, Salah al-Din or Saladin. This sparked the third crusade, which was not successful in recapturing Jerusalem but did buy an extra 100 years or so for the fragile Latin kingdom based now in Acre. Subsequent to this, the notion of crusade underwent quite an expansion, being applied (generally by the Pope) as often to supposedly pagan or heretical movements within Christendom as to external Muslim foes.

In considering how these real events were narrativized or “imagined” by their association with a partially imaginative narrative structure) it is important to note that the first and third crusades have supplied most of the chronicles, letters, and landmark figures which have dominated the western Christian image of the Crusades, especially since the 19th century. These chronicles and figures have found immortality in the popular tales and chansons which have extolled the exploits of the crusading knights. The initial stage of narrativization is found in the medieval crusader chronicles, where the original events have been *distilled* so that only the most negative and distressing are mentioned in order to justify the crusader mission. Thus the many western pilgrims who did make it to the Holy Land in the century preceding the crusades have been left out in order to highlight those few who were prevented or persecuted for trying to do so, while some events are *telescoped* in order to make it appear as if they had just happened (so al-Hakim’s destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in 1009 and his prevention of Christian pilgrimage until 1021 are presented as being part of the instigation of the crusade which took place almost a century later). Likewise, each chronicler engages in a *magnification* of the actions of the leader in whose company he rode (or, if not a crusader himself, from whose country he came). *Enhancements* of the facts in these original reports generally consisted in hearsay reports of supposed miracles or visions or superhuman heroics on the part of a western knight, which were sometimes discounted.

Later fictional versions of these tales, which used the crusader accounts as points of referentialization for their fictional narratives, further heightened each of these processes, most especially in their *enhancement* by even more fantastic feats and events, and the further *magnification* of real individuals into paragons of epic proportions. I will mention only one episode which reflects these processes, dealing with the Second Crusade. The Second Crusade in 1148 was led by the French King Louis VII in response to the fall in 1144 to Muslim armies of the Latin kingdom of Edessa, which had been the first of the Crusader states in the East. Louis VII ultimately failed in his attempt to capture Damascus and had to return defeated, but in the course of the crusade he had occasion to take along his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine (something which had not been done in the first crusade). Her close relationship with her uncle, Raymond of Antioch, the Frankish ruler of the kingdom of Antioch in the east, led to rumors and reports of her adultery with him. This report did not make it into the first official chronicle of the crusade, but was mentioned (and magnified) by later chroniclers as being the reason for the failure of the crusade. Later a 13th century minstrel took these magnified rumors and, telescoping temporal events and characters, and enhancing the rumor still further, had Eleanor engaged in an affair with Saladin, who was only 11 at the time of the second crusade. (Hallam 140). Aside from the way in which it exemplifies the various narrativizing strategies (fictionalizing and referentialization), this story is significant in that it helps to explain the figure of Berengaria in DeMille’s film *The Crusades* who is unmentioned in most histories and chronicles, but who does accompany Richard the Lionhearted and manages to get abducted and nearly seduced by Saladin.

Despite the way the crusader chronicles and chansons clearly exemplify the narrativizing processes (distillation, telescoping, magnification, enhancement), it is surprising to note that there is little in these original tales, whether the purportedly non-fictional or the clearly fictional, which was inherited by the Hollywood eastern. Crusader tales are primarily concerned with battles and the exploits of the major figures in these battles, the difficulties of transporting and feeding large armies, intrigues among the crusader leaders, with an occasional story of a miracle or purported miracle along the way. Muslim opponents are generally pictured in the worst of terms, as pagans, massacring Christians and carrying survivors off to eternal slavery. Despite this, some of the worst scenes of massacres are tied to the Christian warriors, including quite a few beheadings or maimings of captives. Beyond the very general narrative elements such as “going east” to make one’s career or to expiate one’s sins (similar to the narrative elements of “transgression” and “separation” in the eastern), the Muslim taking of Christian captives (“abduction” and “reduction” in the eastern), there is surprisingly very little direct influence of these earliest Crusader narratives on the Hollywood eastern. It is interesting to note in this regard the limited number of Hollywood films which actually have the Crusades as their subject matter. I can only identify three or four American films whose subject matter is clearly “crusader” in nature, with an additional three or four films which are either from Italy, or which deal with conflicts in Spain.

As Tyerman (1998) argues, however, the representation of the various and disparate movements that we call the “Crusades” is actually an amalgam of varying images of these events which have accumulated over time and which reflected the political and religious “interests of those who identified in these events actions that could serve their own purposes, political, pastoral, or polemic” (p. 100) throughout time. He notes further that since the sixteenth century, “each generation has fashioned its own crusades.” With this in mind, there are at least two periods in which the representation of the crusades in the popular imagination underwent a significant revision, affected by ongoing historical events, which led to changes in the generic representation of the crusades. The first was a response to the Ottoman threat in the 16th through 18th centuries, and the second was in the period of European colonial expansion, each of which I will examine in the following.

2. Ottoman invasions:

By 1571, the crusader movement was “dying on its feet” (Hallam: 14), due more to internal conflicts within Europe than with the lack of external enemies. By the late 1300’s, the Ottoman empire had begun to expand into Europe with a series of spectacular victories throughout the Balkans, and in 1453 it took Constantinople, the last remaining relic of the Byzantine Empire. Initially met with a series of ineffectual crusades on the part of the Europeans punctuated by the occasional victory, the Empire continued to expand into Central Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East through the end of the 1500’s. Although its expansion was eventually halted, the Ottoman Empire continued to constitute a threat to the Europeans until the early 19th century, especially in the Mediterranean area due to attacks by the Barbary corsairs on European shipping.

The effect of the Ottoman threat on the European imagination was profound, and the generic forms engendered in this period continue to exist to this day, albeit in modified form.

There exist numerous works of history, philosophy, ethics, poetry, plays, and narrative fiction in many European languages which deal in whole or in part with the specter of the Ottomans or the “Turks”, from the late Renaissance through the Enlightenment up to the early Romantic period, far too many to deal with here. It is sufficient for our purposes to note a few general features of the fictional literature of this period which are most relevant for understanding where the Hollywood eastern came from.

The most obvious difference between this period and the preceding period is that the Ottoman threat reversed the crusader motif—here were Muslim infidels turning the tables and invading and conquering Europe. This came at a time of disunity in European Christendom, the Reformation, which derived in part from the excess uses of crusading indulgences and the very idea of the Church condoning and even leading wars against its enemies. While Christian rulers elsewhere in Europe were successful in their military struggle against Muslim rulers (e.g. the Spanish successfully overcoming and driving out Muslims in Grenada in 1492), for the most part the Ottoman threat signaled the end of the crusader movement and the development of a variety of different responses to it. Most of these responses were initially negative, and were reflected in military campaigns against them, but eventually (even by the 1600’s) there was developing a growing body of literature (both travel literature and fictional literature) which saw some positive aspects in the Ottoman phenomenon, or at least aspects which were to be envied and admired.

Vitkus (2000) in his introduction to “Three Turk Plays” from the 16th and 17th century describes many of the aspects of the general cultural and generic expectations concerning the Turks in the 16th and 17th centuries, which derived from real events and real contact. Vitkus (6) sees as the origin of the demonizing stereotypes which framed the pictures of the Turks at this time as deriving from biblical and classical stereotypes describing invading hordes from the East, which were shaped and solidified by actual experiences of “holy war” with the rise of Islam, the Crusades, Spanish reconquista, and Ottoman imperialism, although no evidence is given for this. I believe that most of the images present in the works Vitkus describes and introduces derive from the immediate confrontation with the Ottomans in the 15th through 17th century, which correspond to motifs that are still present in the Hollywood eastern’s depiction of the area and its inhabitants. These elements have been outlined in Eisele 2000 as the narrative paradigm of the eastern, and they include such motifs as the induction (change in identity and or dress), abduction (or capture), reduction (enslavement, imprisonment), etc. Virtually all of these elements are to be found either in the works that Vitkus describes and presents in his volume, or in his description of the cultural and political milieu at the time the works were written.

The element of abduction, or the fear of captivity by the Muslim infidel, is one of the most persistent images, even in crusader literature prior to this period in which it was the “natural” result of a military conflict. It was lent even greater salience in Ottoman times due to the greater number of Europeans in Ottoman captivity (either from the land-based military campaigns or from the sea-based corsair raids on European ships) and especially due to the Ottoman practice of *devshirme*, or the levying of Christian children from the Balkans to serve in the Turkish army, which led to their separation from their families as well as their “induction” into a new, Islamic identity. Closely related to “abduction” are the elements of “reduction” and “induction.” The element of “reduction” (or enslavement, captivity) is reflected in the general

cultural expectations from this period which viewed Islamic culture as one with absolute, unlimited power embodied in an Islamic ruler (as master over slaves) (Vitkus 11), and in the generic fictional and non-fictional representations of Muslims as engaged in “white slavery”: “From the Saracens of medieval romance to Barbary pirates to Turkish pashas, Western tales depict Islamic predilection for taking, imprisoning, and enslaving of captives.” (Vitkus 12-13). Needless to say often (but not always) left out of these accounts was the European trade in Muslim, as well as African, slaves. Closely related to both abduction and reduction was the element of “induction” (taking on a new identity by choice, through coercion, or for disguise): at the level of general cultural expectations “the prospect of conversion to Islam by sword or otherwise was a sensational subject that inspired anxious fascination” (Vitkus: 9), which was reflected in generic expectations which structured fictional and non-fictional narratives including “narratives of renegades and pirates who had willingly joined the Moors and become part of the privateering communities in Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli, Sallee and other North African ports. These fascinating traitors and apostates were thought to have succumbed to the sensual temptations offered by life in Islamic society” (ibid. 13).

The “sensual temptations” which overcame these renegade privateers were part of the element of “seduction” which, especially in this period, developed into one of the most potent elements in the representation of the East. General cultural expectations viewed Turkish material accomplishments with admiration and envy (vast wealth, absolute hegemony, steadfast discipline) which were reflected in the “fanciful exaggerations” of “fictions (which were) based upon the lucrative adventures of real merchants” (ibid 12). On the sensual side, “the private life of wealthy Arabs, Moors and Turks was said to be one of hidden sin, and their houses and palaces were supposedly designed for the indulgence of sensual and sexual pleasure.” (ibid 13) These cultural expectations were reflected and reinforced in fictional narratives which often focused on the harem and the practice of concubinage, which were presented “as if they were universally practiced among the Muslims” (ibid 13) although the seraglio of the “Great Turk” did have special fascination for Europeans. As Vitkus notes, some of these European beliefs and expectations had a basis in Muslim beliefs and practices, but they were exaggerated out of all proportion to their reality, and put to a variety of purposes, including explaining renegade Christians converting to Islam.

Other familiar elements of the Hollywood eastern are also present in these Renaissance beliefs and texts, including “transgression” (the reason for the Turks successes was seen as a “divine chastisement to punish backsliding Christians.” (ibid 10)), “mutilation” (association of Islam with acts of violence, treachery, cruelty, & wrath, and representation of Muslims in literature as ranting, fanatical killers who practice treachery, oath breaking, double-dealing, slavery, piracy), and “redemption” (e.g. in *Renegado* the Ottoman princess Danusa, who had stated that “Islam allows all pleasures,” rejects noble Muslim suitors and falls in love with a Venetian, then pursues him aggressively, seduces him with power, beauty, wealth until he succumbs, but it is *she* who eventually converts to Christianity).

As Vitkus notes, even Shakespeare’s *Othello* contains elements familiar to the Hollywood eastern, including abductions (of sorts): Brabantio is “robbed” of his daughter by Othello the Moor, at the same time that the “Turk” intends to take Cyprus from them; “induction” is present in the internalization of the Turkish threat as the Christian soldiers and

Othello begin to “turn Turk” by taking on stereotypical Turkish features (aggression, lust, merciless violence, etc.). The story is further “enhanced” by having the Turks drown and not take Cyprus even though they had conquered and controlled Cyprus since 1571.¹

The presence of so many of these elements familiar to Hollywood easterns in these early, Renaissance era texts leads one to believe that Hollywood still seems to be fighting the Ottoman empire. The power of these images and expectations had its effect even on prior existing traditions, such as those deriving from the Crusades. Rather than the Crusades influencing the way the European’s represented the Turkish threat in the 16th century, it appears more likely that the reverse was true. This is exemplified in Tasso’s epic *Jerusalem Delivered* which has as its subject matter the First Crusade, and whose main story line follows the exploits of Godfrey of Bouillon as he goes about the capture of Jerusalem from the infidel, pagan Saracens. Originally published in Italian in 1581, it was translated into English in 1600 by Edward Fairfax, through which it had a significant impact on English literature as well. While the structure of the main narrative still follows that of previous Crusader chronicles and fictions, in the subsidiary tales and motifs it has a great many elements in common with the “Turk plays” described by Vitkus (and with the narrative motifs found in the Hollywood eastern). The addition of so many of these latter day motifs and images (relating to the Ottoman threat and not to earlier crusader motifs) may be seen as the result of Tasso’s “referentialization” of the crusader genre (i.e., associating generic fictional structures to a present “reality” or a current understanding of that reality). At the same time, however, the epic contains many fantastic elements (including Satan, magicians, enchanted chariots, Godfrey being transported to Heaven to interview dead knights, etc.), which clash with the purportedly “realistic” historical record but which are faithful to the generic requirements of the classical epic poem.

For example, Canto II contains an “abduction” of the icon of Virgin Mary at first by Muslims, and then its “redemption” by the Christians, followed by massacre of Christians by Muslim ruler (“mutilation”), while Canto IV has the seduction of the chiefs of the Christian warriors by Armida, enchantress daughter of the magician prince of Damascus. In Canto V Rinaldo kills another Christian knight, Gernando (a typical “transgression”) and flees the camp (“separation”) only to end up (in Canto XV) as a prisoner of love in Armida’s enchanted castle in the Atlantic (“seduction”, “reduction”). In Canto VII Tancred is imprisoned in Armida’s Dead Sea castle (“reduction”) with the help of a renegade Christian-turned-Muslim named Rambaldo (“induction”), while Canto VIII and other cantos contain descriptions of general slaughter

¹ There are many interesting aspects of Vitkus’ “Turk plays” than cannot be treated fully here. He notes, for example, the stages in the fictionalization of these stories, from one narrative genre (history) to another (theatre) since so many of these plays are based on published reports or memoirs of real individuals. Also the character of Bullithrubble in *Selimus* (1594)—an English Christian in the Islamic world, a clown, a homespun English fool—is very similar to the stock comic character in French oriental plays in the 1800’s, (e.g. Raymond in Pixérécourt’s *Les Ruins de Babylone ou le Massacre des Barmecides* (1810)) as well as to the “comic sidekick” which is so common in Hollywood easterns, especially Arabian nights films. Also note the directions of the “enhancements” of reality in these fictional treatments: both plays feature renegade pirates who regret their apostasy and turn against their Muslim sponsors, which is a “re-imagining of reality,” a way of making it “right.” Also note that in *A Christian Turned Turk* the fictional pirate commits suicide, similar to the fate of the anti-hero of *Pepe le Moko*, the original French version of the film *Algiers*. There are also similarities between these pirate stories and those of the French foreign legion, which might be seen as an extension or a remaking of the original pirate genre.

(“mutilation”). In Canto X knights “seduced” by Armida return and tell of their transformation into fishes (“induction”) and their liberation by Rinaldo (“redemption”) and in Canto XI Godfrey assumes the dress of a private foot soldier (“induction”). Canto XII contains the most significant element of similarity with the Turk plays and later eastern narratives, and is especially reminiscent of the Hollywood classic, *The Sheik* (1921): Clorinda, a female knight of the Muslims, is informed just before her battle with Tancred that she is actually the white daughter of the Christian king of Ethiopia (suckled by a lion, no less), and after she is fatally wounded by him, is baptized back into the faith (“induction”, “revelation”, “redemption”). Canto XV has Rinaldo being rescued from Armida’s love prison (“redemption”), but she who has “seduced” and “reduced” is herself seduced by her love for him, and flees to Egypt for revenge. In Canto XVII command of the Egyptian army is given to Emireno, a Christian renegade (“induction”), while in Canto XX Armida is saved from suicide by Rinaldo (“redemption”) who still loves her, and, with clear signs of an imminent conversion to Christianity (“induction”), she “gives herself up to his disposal.”

The effect of the Ottoman threat on the European imagination continued into the early 19th century, and can be seen in several of the works of Lord Byron, whose subject matter deals with this topic, including such works as the “Turkish tales” of *Bride of Abydos* (1813), *The Giour* (1813), and *The Corsair* (1814). Due to their great popularity, these works had a great influence on the development of the pre-cinematic eastern genres, but due to space limitations a discussion of them will have to wait a future time.

3. The Barbary Pirates and the United States:

The influence of the very real European confrontation with the Ottoman empire lasted until the early 19th century, although Europeans had begun to reverse Ottoman expansion, to penetrate their domains, and influence politics and economics in the region well before that. One area of this conflict in particular lasted long enough and was serious enough to engage the attention of the newly formed United States, namely the corsair activity based in the Barbary states. This conflict, termed the Tripolitan War in American history books, helped to solidify in the American consciousness, and to “Americanize”, many of the most salient representations of the “Turk” and Muslim and the Middle East in general which had been developed in Europe in the previous 200 years. Central to the American imagination of this area was the “Barbary captivity narrative” which was very popular in early 19th century America, and, as Baepler 1999 notes, influential in the anti-slavery discourse. It was already a recognizable genre in American letters as early as 1621, no doubt an extension of the genre from English sources (as described in Vitkus 2001). After the United States achieved independence from Britain, however, the fledgling United States government became embroiled in a conflict with the Barbary states which developed into its first foreign war and the source of much mythologizing in contemporary accounts and those which followed throughout the 19th century.

The events themselves are as follows (based on Baepler 1999 and Allison 1995): in 1785 Britain played a role in getting Algerian ships to prey on American ships since it notified the Algerians that American ships were no longer covered by Britain’s truce with the Algerians. This led to the Barbary states’ boarding and capturing a number of American ships and their crews,

some of whom were ransomed, and by 1793 the first popular narratives of their travails were published. In 1796 the US government sued for peace with the Barbary states by paying Algiers \$1,000,000, Tunis \$107,000, and Tripoli \$57,000. In 1801 Tripoli found out that it had received the lowest payment and demanded more, but the US refused and Tripoli resumed its piracy of American ships, capturing and holding for ransom a number of American crews. In 1803 Jefferson sent the USS Philadelphia to blockade Tripoli, but it got stuck on a reef, and 300 Americans were taken hostage. Tripoli demanded \$1.69 million but faced with an even greater military response from the US (including the famous “Decatur’s raid” which destroyed the captured American ship in the harbor of Tripoli, a bombardment of Tripoli, and an American led attempt to depose the pasha with an invading force of mercenaries), the pasha settled for “token” tribute of \$60,000, and the American hostages were freed (1805). Several of these hostages wrote narratives of their experiences (as described in Baepler 1999), which were quite successful and were adapted as plays, and the individual exploits of the Americans involved in the military response became part of American legend (as described in Allison 1995).

The “captivity” genre sparked by these events and experiences continued to be fed by narratives of others who found themselves captive in North Africa, either through shipwreck or raids on travelers’ caravans, and very early on came to include fictional as well as non-fictional accounts.² However, as Baepler notes (11-12), the distinction between fictional and non-fictional captivity narratives is blurred due to the dependence of even non-fictional narratives on generic episodes and scenes (e.g. of seeing wild animals no one had seen before or since, of witnessing wild melees among the captors that included mutilations that other captives denied happening.) More importantly, Baepler (24) details some of the reasons why such tales struck a chord with American audiences—or, in my terms, how they fulfilled certain cultural expectations regarding the newly emergent American identity or Self in confrontation with a inimical Other: there was an increased interest in Indian captivity tales during Revolution, as the colonists viewed themselves as being “captives” to a tyrannical king, which led Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams in 1776 to propose a “captivity motif” for the Great Seal of the United States based on the Puritan Captivity narrative. All of these facts may help to explain the popularity of this genre, since between 1798 and 1817 over 100 Barbary captivity narratives were published. Also part of the more general set of cultural expectations which prevailed in the United States at the time these works were composed were issues related to race and slavery,

² It is interesting to note in the context of the Hollywood eastern that Baepler includes as a captivity narrative that of Ion Perdicaris an aging American millionaire living in Tangiers who in 1904 was taken captive by a Berber chieftain named Raisuli in order to pressure the Moroccan sultan into accepting his demands, an “abduction” that Perdicaris may have helped to arrange. Teddy Roosevelt, at the time fighting for the Republican nomination, sent US warships to Morocco in response, but the Sultan quickly gave in to Raisuli’s demands. It turned out that Perdicaris was no longer even an American citizen, and that the US had no intention of invading Morocco. This did not stop director John Milius seventy years later from turning this story into the abduction of an American woman and her son, who are rescued by the landing of the American marines who, after a shoot out with the Germans no less, rescue the fair haired damsel from the clutches of the evil proto-Nazis and their native consorts (the Sultan and his men). Milius’ radically altered retelling of the story in *The Wind and the Lion* sets it apart from the typical Barbary captivity narrative, and brings it closer to a typical sheik story, with the political overtones reminiscent of the foreign intrigue eastern, reflecting the developments which had taken place in the eastern film genre in its first seventy years.

which these works appeared to reverse: "... the narrative of captivity in Africa translated local issues of race and slavery onto a removed setting that had been made exotic by European lore about the 'Dark Continent' ... While eventually presented as the ostensible memoir of an American in Africa, the narrative actually stages a larger drama about racial struggle." (Baepler 1999: 26). It is interesting to note that the way in which this genre of fiction reverses reality is similar in many ways to the way the Hollywood eastern reverses the reality of the power relationship between east and west: Hollywood films tend to portray Americans as captives to Arabs or Muslims, threatened with the expropriation of their freedom (advanced weaponry), when in actual fact it is the Americans (or Westerners in general) who have done most of the capturing and expropriation of the east.

Regarding the overall aspects of the genre or generic expectations, these works were a form of exploration and adventure literature, structured as a journey that through some ill-fortune—kidnapping, war, shipwreck—leads the narrator off her original course and into Africa and consequently into slavery. The narrator recounts her discoveries, once she had been captured, much as an explorer does, noting the lay of the land, the climate, the natural resources, and particularly the manner and appearance of her barbarous captors as well as the other Africans she encounters. (Baepler 1999: 26).

Although Baepler does not explicitly state it, it appears from the texts included in his anthology and from the lack of more detailed remarks on the common structure of these tales that the Barbary captivity genre is rather diverse and varied, and therefore is structurally less coherent as a genre. Supporting this view is Baepler's comment that the narratives are actually a combination of captivity narratives, survival narratives, adventure stories, travel narratives and ethnography, the latter element providing a "scientific" underpinning to the whole enterprise. A more detailed study of this genre might reveal more coherence to the genre, but it sufficient for our purposes to note the popularity of the genre throughout the 19th century and the areas in which it contributed to the development of the eastern film genre. Between 1798 and 1817 there were over one hundred Barbary captivity narratives, and as an example of the longevity and robustness of the genre Baepler notes that Riley's 1815 captivity narrative was adapted as an illustrated children's book in 1854, and that between 1875- 1900:

captivity narrative filled the juvenile pulp fiction market with titles like *The Algerine*, *The Corsair Prince*, *The Boy Bedouin*, *We Three (or The White Boy Slaves of the Soudan)*, *Seven Boy Slaves (or, Wrecked on the Desert of the Sahara)*." Many of these dime store novels saw "numerous incarnations as they were reissued under different imprints, and they remained popular well into the 20th century." (Baepler 1999: 49)

It may be assumed that the popularity of this genre in the late 19th century had a quite an influence on many of the early filmmakers who were growing up at this time in the United States, and Baepler notes at least eight films produced on Barbary pirates theme, up to and including *The Wind and the Lion* (1975). But this is actually quite a small number, given that most of them (five) were done in the "Technicolor costumer" period (1945-55), while only two were done in the silent period. Considering how important and widespread the Barbary captivity narrative was in the period just prior to the development of cinema and the eastern film genre, this is a surprisingly small number of films. The reasons why the narrative did not get adapted

more into films is at this point unknown, but may be due to the earlier connection in the mind of many American readers of these tales to the abolitionist movement, but this is purely speculative. More importantly, however, despite the fact that the overt narrative of Barbary captivity may not have made it into the film era as a separate subgenre, it did contribute significantly to the eastern genre as a whole, since many specific narrative elements present in it were carried over. It is as if the source has faded away, but has left a residue of narrative elements behind. Its influence may be seen in all of the early eastern subgenres, but most especially in the sheik genre.

Some of these elements are obvious from the very name of the genre: “captivity” is a form of “reduction” which includes imprisonment and/or slavery, a central component of all of these tales. Furthermore, in the 19th century a connection was made by some writers between women’s condition and that of slavery, one of the initial themes of Edith Hull's *The Sheik*, and the description in Bradley’s (fictional) narrative of her captivity in fact prefigures many aspects of *The Sheik* narrative which appeared nearly one hundred years later:

On several occasions her master physically defends her from attack, even taking a beating for her, and Bradley doesn’t represent these episodes merely as a man protecting his property... nor as a noble barbarian with romance in his heart, but as stories of a monster growing more humane. (Baepler: 23)

Elsewhere the captives are said to adopt the dress of their captors (a mild form of “induction”), while there are many references to those among them who went all the way and “took the turban” by converting to Islam (the more severe form of “induction”), while other elements such as “mutilation” and “redemption” also figure prominently.

One aspect of these narratives that is relevant to the present analysis is the way that they relate to the real events that they purport to recount. While there is some variety in the way the narratives are structured, most seem to incorporate the element of “ethnographic description.” It seems in fact to be almost a necessary condition at least for the earliest non-fiction examples of the genre (and is adopted by some of the earlier fictional narratives as well), and it seems to lend authenticity and authority to the account. In other words, ethnographic description referentializes the narrative, bringing it closer to a conventional concept of “realism” and thereby making it seem more “real” or truthful by objectifying the personal experience. These kinds of ethnographic elements continued to make their appearance even in eastern films, most memorably in the opening sequence to *Algiers* (1938) but also in the way the easterns tried to incorporate elements of the “real” (whether they be sandstorms or real events and people) into their fictions. Just as the ethnographic element is a legitimizing device for these memoirs and narratives, so cinematic “realism” in whatever form it takes is a way of giving fiction substance, giving it a “reality” that it cannot otherwise be said to possess.

There is a further step that such fictions may take toward “reality,” namely in what I term the “reification of the imaginary” (point 4 above), which may take different forms. An example of how the imaginary may be “reified” is the way in which a fiction seems to precede or prefigure a later real event, which is seen or understood as the manifestation of that earlier

fiction.³ It may seem an odd thing to happen, but instances of this appear quite frequently in the histories of the Tripolitan war found in Baepler 1999 and Allison 1995. For example, Baepler describes Royall Tyler's 1797 novel *Algerine Captive* as the best of the Barbary novels, in part because it most closely parallels the captivity genre since the main character receives special treatment from his captors because he was ship's doctor "like Cowdery"—yet Tyler's fictional account preceded Cowdery's release and his own narrative of it by several years. Allison 1995 (especially Chapter 8 "Remembering the Tripolitan War") gives many examples of the ways in which real events interacted with their representation in print, on stage, in song, and in paintings, exemplifying the "imaginating" of a reality (2), the "referentialization" of a generic narrative (3), and the reification of an imagined representation (4). He notes first of all that "Americans had hardly fought Tripoli before they turned the war into a moral fable." (Allison: 187) A real event, an 1801 American victory at sea over a Barbary corsair, was in 1802 "imagined" into a play, "The Tripolitan Prize," whose location was appropriately "enhanced" to the English channel (from the Mediterranean) so that an English crowd could shamefacedly view the American victory. This heavily fictionalized account provided the template in which Americans saw subsequent events in the conflict, since as Allison notes, "the play, though it did not survive, did in fact become the way Americans remembered the war against Tripoli" (Allison: 188). Later, in February 1804 Stephen Decatur carried out a raid on Tripoli which succeeded in burning the stranded U.S. frigate Philadelphia, which was seen as a great victory for the Americans, and as a reification of the fiction contained in the play *The Tripolitan Prize*: "Decatur had created for the American people a real-life version of the Tripolitan Prize" (Allison: 191). Decatur's raid in turn was "imagined" into pantomime and musical overture forms within weeks after news of it reached the U.S. In August 1804 Tripoli was bombarded and Decatur again was involved in what was seen as a heroic action: when he heard that his brother had been killed by a captured Tripolitan captain, he returned to the harbor, tracked down his brother's killer, and killed him in hand to hand combat. When this event was "imagined" in its retelling through song, play, and pantomime, the role of a common sailor was magnified and perhaps enhanced so that he became the hero of the piece, by taking a sword blow meant for Decatur, thus saving his life. The name of the sailor was first given as David Frazier, but was later changed to Reuben James, a fact which indicates that this particular fictionalization did not get adequately "telescoped." Both of these sailors were real individuals, and both are given credit for this act, although Reuben James is by far the more famous of the two. Again, as Allison notes, "his exploit did not bring an end to the war, but changed the way Americans perceived the war (Allison: 193).

A final example from Allison of the relation between the reality of this conflict and its reimagining in stories, songs, and plays is provided by Francis Scott Key and the development of the Star Spangled Banner. Francis Scott Key's 1805 poem was originally an ode to Decatur and other Tripolitan heroes, based on a real event, viz. Decatur's raid into Tripoli harbor, which he imaginatively represented since he was not a witness to it. He later reworked the original song into the "Star Spangled Banner" following the British bombardment of Ft. McHenry nearly ten

³ Another way for the imaginary to be "reified" is when individuals or groups adopt the narrative (fictional or non-fictional) as a way of structuring action or practice, and they make the narrative "real" by carrying it out in some way in action or practice. I will examine this manner of reification in a following section.

years later which he witnessed. That is, his “imagined” representation of a battle came first, before he witnessed the “real” bombardment of Ft. McHenry. As Allison notes, apparently without irony: “Key so vividly imagined the horrors of a naval battle that when he actually saw one nine years later he already knew what to look for.” (Allison: 206). That is one way of putting it, but it is also possible that he saw only what he was expecting to see, based upon his earlier imagining of battle, and this is one effect of generic forms of representation on viewing and understanding reality: they provide pre-packaged templates of cause and effect, distilling and telescoping unique, real events into more understandable stock events, until we begin to see things as we expect them to happen and not as they actually happened, and to see things that were not there to begin with, or events that did not happen quite the way they seemed to at first.

4) French colonialism and its melodramas:

The influence of real events on the development of a fictional genre of representation which is encapsulated in the term referentialization is also evident in the way that French plays based on Oriental themes developed from the 18th century into the 19th century under the influence of increased French imperial and colonial involvement in the Near East and North Africa, as described in Pao 1998. Pao’s thesis is that “the fifty years separating the writing and staging of *Ruins de Babylone* in 1810 and *Les Massacres de Syrie* in 1860 mark the time span during which there matured an Orient whose appeal to theater audiences no longer relied on imaginary realm but on its qualities as a representation of actuality” due to the fact that “serious dramatic genres shared a common trajectory toward greater realism in production and greater expressivity in performance” (Pao 30). The trend toward greater “realism” in the generic practices of French theatre is due in large part to the fact that it occurred in the context of several landmark historical events, including French interventions and campaigns in North Africa and the Middle East which had tremendous effect on the political, social, and economic life of France as well as on historical developments in the Arab world.⁴ The narratives of these French plays share many similarities with the narratives of the Hollywood eastern film tradition, but more importantly by the manner in which increased French involvement in the Arab world in the 19th century had an effect on the turn to “realism” in the development of the French oriental drama which has a striking parallel in the way that the Hollywood eastern genre developed in the context of increased American involvement in the Middle East in the 20th century.

Many of the narrative elements central to the Hollywood eastern are central to the narrative of two of Voltaire’s tragedies, *Zaïre* (1732) and *Mahomet* (1742). In the latter we find such elements as the abduction, induction (i.e., conversion to Islam), redemption, revelation (recognition). There is a further similarity to the cinematic sheik formula when Orosmane’s “liberality” is attributed to the fact that he was born in part of Ottoman Empire that extended into Europe—i.e., that he was somehow a “European” in Turk clothes. But it is interesting to note

⁴ These include the French invasion, occupation, and colonization of large sectors of North Africa and the Near East in the 19th century, including the following landmark events: Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798, the French conquest of Algiers in 1831, and subsequent campaigns to conquer the whole of Algeria and colonize it, including the campaign to crush the Algerian resistance led by the Emir Abdel-Kader from 1832 to 1847, and finally the French intervention in Syria following the massacres of Christians there in 1860.

that in this early tragedy the “European / Turk” character’s trajectory is the opposite of that of the “European / Arab” character in *The Sheik*: the latter starts out as “oriental” (with all of the negative features that implies) then slowly begins to show his western, civilized self, which is the opposite of Orosmane’s development. In *Mahomet* Voltaire relies on a centuries-old image of Muhammad in anti-Islamic Christian polemics as a worldly imposter, and adds to it the familiar “Turk play” plot, which is quite clear in this play as it was in *Zaire*: abduction, induction (i.e., conversion to Islam), redemption (release from prison), and revelation. In general these plays combined generic elements of classical French tragedy with a centuries-old anti-Islamic polemic (given new uses in a critique directed at Western institutions), as well as evolving French cultural expectations regarding the Orient, which included many of the same “Turk play” elements found in 16th and 17th century English plays, the source of many of the generic elements found in the Hollywood eastern.

The later, 19th century plays that Pao reviews have fewer and fewer elements in common with the later eastern film genre. For example, Pixierécourt’s *Les Ruins de Babylone ou le Massacre des Barmecides* (1810), despite the presence of some “eastern” elements (the threats of death and dismemberment (“mutilation”), the “revelation” of identities, and the saving of one or another character’s lives (“redemption”)), actually shares few other elements with the narrative of typical Hollywood easterns. Such elements as the abduction, reduction, or induction which are so central to the typical eastern narrative of Hollywood are not found here. One point of similarity to later Hollywood easterns is the presence of the character Raymond, a Frenchman set incongruously amid all these Orientals. According to Pao (89), he is an identifiable stock character of the melodrama, the comic figure, drawn from the original models in comedy and féeries (or meloféeries). He is quite similar to the character Bullithrubble in *Selimus* (1594), an English Christian in the Islamic world, also a clown, a homespun English fool. Both of these characters are exemplars of the same template which is used for the “comic sidekick” character in many Hollywood easterns, especially those of the Arabian Nights variety, which includes the Phil Silvers character in *A Thousand and One Nights* (1944) and the Robin Williams’ comic genie in Disney’s *Aladdin* (1992). They function, like Raymond, to transgress the “bounds of generic convention” (Pao 90), to poke fun at the authority of the film or play, its diegetic universe, and its generic expectations, providing a providing an alternative axis of identification to those of the hero and antagonist.

Although in almost all of these plays one can find some elements of the oriental tradition which found its way into the Hollywood eastern genre, it appears that some of the earlier French oriental plays (tragedies and melodramas) had more in common with the later eastern film tradition in Hollywood than did the later melodramas. More interesting to note here, though, is Pao’s claim that the identification potential of Arab and Muslim characters in French Oriental drama decreased over the course of the 19th century, under the influence of increasing French involvement in the Middle East and North Africa, a development which is paralleled by similar developments in Hollywood film easterns in the 20th century. Initially (in the 18th century), the “identification potential” for Oriental characters was quite high as evidenced by the fact that all of the characters in Voltaire’s tragedies were Oriental and that Voltaire “counted on the possibility that French audiences could “sympathetically identify” with a cast of Oriental character in order to make *Mahomet* a success” (Pao 59). As the 19th century proceeds, however,

a shift occurs in the identification potential of Oriental characters in French dramas which Pao claims is the result of greater and greater French political and military involvement in the “Orient” itself. She notes that in the 1810 oriental melodrama *Les Ruins de Babylone ou le Massacre des Barmecides* by Pixerécourt there is still a high potential for the sympathetic portrayal of oriental characters since almost all of the characters are Muslim. In the 1837 drama *Zara ou la Soeur de l’Arabe* 1837 by Valery and Montigny, however, there is a noticeable shift away from sympathetic Muslim characters: although the female love interest is still Arab, the hero is French, and while the French hero gets the support of some Arab tribes in his struggle, it is in the name of furthering French colonial interests in Algeria. The final melodrama examined is Victor Séjour’s *Les Massacres de Syrie* 1860, in which the shift away from sympathetic Muslim characters is almost complete, and is reflected not just in characterizations but in locale and stage design as well. In between these melodramas Pao describes other kinds of dramas—national dramas and military epics—which were clear and direct expressions of political and military events which were shaping the French national consciousness in these years, and which helped to influence the changes in the generic expectations of French audiences regarding the Orient which were evident in the melodramas.

Much of Pao’s discussion on this point is concerned with issues related to what I have termed here “imaginating reality” (representing real events through generic narrative forms, derived from fictional forms but applied to any kind of generic narrative), and “referentializing the imaginary” (the concomitant influence of real events on generic narrative forms). She notes for example that in the earlier dramas (*Zaire, Les Ruins de Babylon*) the Orient could be used as metaphors for France or Europe. In these cases, the “imaginating” of real events and locales the generic forms took precedence over representational accuracy or faithfulness. As time went on, however, dramas involving oriental subjects and locales increasingly referentialized the imaginary forms of narrative by representing real events (political, military, etc.) in order to increase audience interest and identification by having them “draw correspondences not only with their own experiences but also with information that had been published or circulated as common knowledge... [thereby] establishing an “indexical bond to the historical world” (118).⁵ This increased referentialization of generic forms in turn influenced the development of the generic forms themselves which “incorporated the very structures of political, intellectual, scientific and military discourses.” (106) The increased referentialization did not lead to more accurate representations, however, but simply crowded out previous traditions of how to represent the Orient, which continued to thrive in other genres, but much less so in melodrama.

Pao makes clear that the narrativizing (or imagining) processes and the referentialization processes continued in tandem to influence the representational strategies of genres associated with one or the other tendency (fiction (plays, novels) vs. non-fiction (journalism, travel)). Thus contemporary figures and recent events reported on in newspapers and journals could be embellished by being given “un aspect plus dramatique [following generic

⁵ One method of accomplishing this in military dramas was by the “visual citation” of well-known paintings of events.—but this is an example of how “referentialization” should not imply a direct relationship to a real event but rather to forms of representation which are understood by the audience as being “realistic.” An example of this in recent films is the use of quasi-documentary headings such as typing out the place names, dates, or times of day which gives the narrative an aura of precision and accuracy.

narrative conventions] but only to the extent that this embellishment did not contradict commonly accepted or known facts [following conventions of referentialization]" (134), while journalistic reports employed (and still do) generic narrative techniques, including reference to events as a "drama" with "acts" (and sometimes even titles), to locales as "theatres of events," and to individuals as "actors" in the drama, all in order to heighten and dramaticize (or sensationalize) real events and to increase the engagement of readers or viewer with the events in question:

If dramatic authors did indeed rely heavily, even exclusively, on dispatches and commentaries published in the daily papers for their plot outlines and composition of scenes [i.e., referentialization of imaginary], journalists just as consistently organized their reportage in terms of dramatic scenarios [i.e., imagining of reality]. Both mediums, in fact, achieved their greatest effectiveness as forms of communication by inviting the emotional engagement of readers through personalized perspective and sensational presentation. (Pao 123)

As a result of the "referentialization" effect of generic narrative forms, the identification potential of the Oriental Other in French melodramas produced in boulevard theatre decreased, following a trajectory similar in many ways to the Oriental/Arab/Muslim Other in the Hollywood eastern film a century later. The Orient as an "imaginary realm disconnected from actuality" may have continued to function in other genres in 19th century French theatre not treated by Pao, but melodrama, because of a developing necessity for a connection of "reality" of some sort, used the fantastic Orient less and less, and relied on a representation of the East that reflected actual events (of penetration, conquest, and colonization).

Another example of the referentialization of a generic tradition of representation is the 19th century reinterpretation of the crusades, in response to European colonial expansion and imperialism. It was in the nineteenth century that the present view of the Crusades (and one most immediate to the development of the eastern film tradition) occurred. During this period the crusades came to be seen in a more positive light, as noble (and even in a delusional way, victorious) efforts, in contrast to the previous Enlightenment view, which was much more negative. As Tyerman notes: "in the 19th century many European nations were establishing or re-establishing a sense of identity and pride in a corporate past as a guarantee for a common future. The crusades provided one of the mines from which such national myths could be quarried." (Tyerman 121). Crusader narratives were referentialized with respect to what was taken to be the reality of the time—European superiority.

Colonialism was a symptom of European economic and political hegemony, but was praised by its apologists in terms of cultural ascendancy. It became axiomatic that the Crusades had played some part in this triumph of western progress. Thus to romantic nostalgia was added supremacist ideology, a double dose of fantasy... Crusading became popularly admired, even if the excesses of violence aroused flickers of disapproval. Crusading became synonymous with fighting good causes, primarily religious or moral... The historical crusades were fashionable across Europe as subjects or settings for novels, poetry, painting, sculpture, plays, and operas... often compensated for historical inaccuracy with lavish bad taste" (Tyerman 117).

Note that referentialization does not result in making generic forms more faithful to reality or more accurate; rather, it associates them with other systems of generic or cultural expectations regarding what is real, accurate, or true, resulting in a blending of generic forms and expectations from one generation to the next. In the popular tradition of representing the crusades the end result is the accumulation of different phases of referentialization, including the “Turk play” elements acquired during the era of Ottoman incursions, on top of which was placed the image of the invincible, virtuous, and always victorious crusader knight of such popular novels as *Fighting the Saracens* (1892) (reprinted as *Knights of White Cross* (1902) and *Winning His Spurs* (1942)) and *A Stainless Sword* (1919). The relevance of such fictions to the early eastern film genre lies not in the overt subject of the novels, viz. the crusades (which were never very well represented among eastern screen narratives) but rather in the elements which make up the details of the narrative, including almost all of the central and most typical ones (abduction, induction, reduction, redemption, mutilation, etc.)

5. Arabian Nights:

Unlike the other subgenres of the eastern, the Arabian Nights genre cannot be related to specific historical events of a political or historical nature. Rather they appear to derive in large part from the European receptivity to and cultural adoption of the popular folk and literary tales which make up the *Thousand and One Nights* tradition in Arabic. In the Arab cultural tradition these were popular tales which were recited in a somewhat colloquialized form of the literary language by storytellers who learned them either orally or from written manuscripts. This oral tradition is thought to date from the 9th century, when many of the tales were passed into the Arab-Islamic tradition from the Perso-Indian tradition. By the 13th century there existed a written manuscript form of these tales, to which many new stories were added. These tales were popular among all sections of the society, both literate and non-literate, but they were not considered among the works of the high cultural literature which were worthy of study and faithful transmission. Europe discovered these tales through their French translation by Antoine Galland in 1704, a compilation which supplemented the tales found in Arabic manuscripts with the purely oral tales from a Lebanese Christian (Maronite) informant. Thus to the written tales were added the oral tales such as “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves” and “Aladdin and the Magic Lamp,” and the independent cycle of Sindbad tales. The tales were an immediate sensation, and were translated into many other European languages, as were the subsequent translations, eventually (by the 19th century) even finding their way back into Arabic through a translation of the French transcription of the tales (including tales not previously found in written form in Arabic).

While Europeans embraced and adopted these tales as their own, they were always seen in some way as a representation of their nearest cultural Others (Muslims, Turks, Arabs, Persians, etc.) At times they were playful and irenic, but at other times they could be a source of negative and foreboding imagery, interacting with other regimes of representing the East in the West, as well as with ongoing historical events and conflicts between European countries and the Ottoman Empire. Due to the depth and pervasiveness of the influence of the Arabian nights tales on Western (European and American) audiences and tastes in the 19th century, it is impossible to due justice to this topic in the short space allotted here. I will simply point to three areas in this

very broad topic which are relevant to the development of the Hollywood eastern and which should be studied in more detail in the future.

The first of these is the frisson between reality and fantasy which these tales seem to engender in their admirers, detractors, and literary critics. Since the tales do not make reference to real historical events, they seem to be cut off from reality, pure fantasy, even when they do not make recourse to fantastical devices such as magic lamps and flying carpets. It is as if the West borrowed part of the Arab-Islamic imaginary and made it part of its own imaginary, without the intervening step of having it associated with a real event. Despite this, when real events involving the Middle East have been evaluated (i.e., narrativized) in the past, they have often been associated with elements derived from the tales, whether consciously or not: once the fantastical forms have been assimilated into the West's narrative of the Eastern imaginary, it is sometimes difficult to keep them from taking over at times. As I have noted previously, this step of narrativizing reality (or "imaginating" it, associating it with the imaginary) has a flip side, which is the referentialization of the narrative forms themselves. While many consumers of these tales saw them as pure fantasy, associated with their childhood memories, others saw them as a source of anthropological and ethnographic details which could be useful in evaluating the real life situation in the Middle East. The former is exemplified in such travelers as A. W. Kinglake and Charles M. Doughty. As noted in Moussa-Mahmoud (1988: 103-4), Kinglake was a devoted fan of the Nights, but while he carried a copy of it with him on his travels and classed it with the Iliad as great literature, he nevertheless could not find it reified on the streets of Cairo, which was therefore rather a disappointment for him. Following his travels through Arabia in 1876-78, Doughty penned one of the great travel books of the nineteenth century, but did not make references to the romanticized fantasies of the Nights, for good or ill, as other writers were doing at the time. While Kinglake sought to referentialize the Oriental imaginary and found it wanting, Doughty did not even try.

In contrast to these approaches, other travelers and researchers, such as Edward Lane, Richard Burton and others, saw the texts of the Arabian nights as an inventory of anthropological and ethnographic detail without peer. Both Lane and Burton sought to immerse themselves in Arab culture, by assiduous study of the language, by adopting Arab dress, and by living among the Arabs and not in European quarters. Both also indulged in the "imaginating" narrativization of their experiences by relating them to aspects of the Arabian nights, and concomitantly the referentialization of these imaginary tales by relating them to their real life experiences. As Moussa-Mahmoud notes, "he [Lane] could always bring in an incident from the *Nights* to illustrate a custom or an opinion held by the people he so closely observed" (101), including the intrigues of eastern women, wine drinking, superstition, and story-telling itself. Moussa-Mahmoud notes further that he goes so far as to accept the suggestion that real individuals in Egypt at the time imitated the characters in the Nights—they were, in a sense, taking Lane a step further and actually "reifying" the imaginary. In a similar fashion, Burton constantly makes references to the imaginary characters of the Nights in describing the real individuals he met on his travels (Moussa-Mahmoud 105). In the copious notes to his own very idiosyncratic translation of the Nights he responds to his critics by claiming that the "previous translations [of the Nights] had degraded a chef d'oeuvre of the highest anthropological and ethnographical interest and importance to a mere fairy-book, a nice present for little boys." (108).

The relevance of this to understanding the origins of the Hollywood eastern is that the tension between reality and fantasy inherent in the contrast between referentialized vs. non-referentialized readings of the Arabian nights is reflected in the contrast between what I term “fantastic” and “non-fantastic” types of Arabian nights films. The first type involves the use of such fantastic devices as magic lamps and flying carpets and fantastic individuals such as ghouls and jinn, as is found in the exemplar of the film genre, *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924). The second type, on the other hand, eschews these fantastical devices but makes use of most of the other elements of the Arabian nights (or rather: what is left of the *Nights* by the time Hollywood gets a hold of it) and is exemplified in one of the most remade films in Hollywood, *Kismet*. The non-fantastic type seems to harken back to the many stories in the Nights which do not involve magic or supernatural devices, but rather make use of riddles and tricks, tricksters and other stereotypical character types, mistaken identities, playing with fate, etc. It is among these tales that Burton and Lane probably found most of their relevant “ethnographic” details which they referentialized in their experiences. For most readers and lovers of the *Nights*, the tales which are most memorable are those that involve the fantastic and supernatural, which are those that appeal most to children—hence the almost universal view that the Nights are primarily children’s entertainment which adults may consume if they like.

The contrast between realism and fantasy also plays a role in the development of another genre of American fiction which may be a little-known source of some of the motifs of the Hollywood eastern, namely the “oriental fantasy” religious tales, as described in Reynolds 1981. This genre flourished between 1785 and 1820 and was written by religious outsiders often critical of the views of the established churches. While it was eventually absorbed into the more realistic genres of religious fiction by the 1830’s (Reynolds 9), one can see traces of it in the prominence given to the moral of the story in the early Arabian nights eastern films, including both *Kismet* as well as *Thief of Bagdad*. One can also see traces of it (in eastern and non-eastern films as well) in such motifs as the “visionary mode” (“an angel gives moral or religious advice... a genius appears in a dream, displays the rewards of virtue and the wages of sin either through visions of heaven and hell or through allegorical landscapes... an angel flies with the hero to other parts of the universe to visit not only model societies but heaven itself” (Reynolds 10). The final point that I will mention is the similarity between early Arabian nights easterns like *Kismet* and *Thief of Bagdad* with the kind of Oriental tales that “dramatize the contest between two religious value systems—tyranny, predestination, enigma, and emotion versus democracy, self-determination, clarity, and reason... These stories usually depict an indigent protagonist desiring material or intellectual advancement, being given them by a genius, becoming disillusioned with them, and returning to his former life having learned that virtue is its own reward.” (Reynolds 32). Despite these similarities, this genre of stories is significantly different from what appears in later eastern films due mainly to the use of Islam and Muslims to criticize and critique American religious practices. As Reynolds notes, “Islam was to Christianity as liberalism was to New England orthodoxy.” (Reynolds 15). While one can glimpse this in the early Arabian nights films, it quickly disappears in later films which are either child-oriented fantasies or young adult oriented action-adventure films, in which the moral (if there is one) is lost in invention and special effects, and Islam is present only as part of the scenery.

A third source of some of the generic motifs found in the Arabian nights easterns may be found in the generic conventions of the English pantomime and the French *féerie*. As I have noted previously, the form that the narrative of Arabian nights films take is different from the one found in the majority of actual tales in the original collection. Much of this change is due to the influence on the Arabian nights genre of the evolving “oriental” narrative, as exemplified in the “Turk plays” of the 16th and 17th centuries, and other genres as well. However, there were other sources for some of the most familiar elements of Hollywood’s Arabian nights films, and the pantomime and *féerie* were two of them. The elements that appear to derive from these popular entertainment genres are: the chase (including astounding acrobatics and surprising special effects), identity changes (reversal of gender identities in role playing, hidden identities which are revealed, transformation of identities, etc), the role of animals, and the illusion of decapitation or dismemberment.

It is difficult to find information on the French genre “*féerie*” and its relation to 1001 Arabian Nights stories. While it seems to be similar in some ways to the English pantomime tradition, it seems to utilize more varied story lines, less buffoonery (much less compared with the later versions of pantomime), with a greater emphasis, especially in its later forms, on special effects.⁶ Its influence on Arabian nights films may be seen most clearly in the early George Melies’ films which have as their subject matter Arabian nights tales, which involve spectacular sets, surprising special effects, and other fantastic elements.⁷

The pantomime is the English version of the *féerie*, although it seems to have evolved in a different fashion.⁸ As Cookman describes it:

Pantomime, traditionally, is a Christmas entertainment intended particularly for children...it is derived in part from the Italian *commedia del'arte*, from which several of the stock characters of pantomime have evolved. Harlequinades, as these performances were known in England, were played as after pieces to a long evening's entertainment of farces and tragedies ... The first recognizable pantomime was probably *Robinson Crusoe* at Drury Lane, which contained a transformation scene and introduced the infant Joseph Grimaldi. *Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp* followed at Covent Garden, with *Babes in the Wood* performed as an opera at the Haymarket. By 1800, pantomime was emerging as a distinct form in its own right, with the harlequinade now forming the greater part of the evening's entertainment, the Dame performed by a man and the whole presented most frequently at Christmas and Easter... In 1861, H.J. Byron's *Aladdin* introduced for the first time the famous Widow Twankey at the Strand Theatre. This production confirmed the casting of the male pantomime dame and the female principal boy which remains in common usage today ... (Cookman (12/01/01))

The “madcap harlequinade” was the second part of the pantomime until about the 1850’s, but it continued to develop on its own and became the precursor to the stunt-filled clown shows at

⁶ For more information on the *féerie*, see <http://www.histoires-litteraires.org/les%20articles/artbesnier7.htm>

⁷ This is noted in Kovacs 1976.

⁸ The information on the English pantomime is taken from several different websites including: <http://www.author.co.uk/lesleycookman/history.html> (Cookman (12/01/01))
http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/brian_turner/panthis.htm (Turner (12/01/01))
<http://members.aol.com/johntowsen/mybook.html> (Towson (12/01/01))

circuses, and included a chase scene which was an extended sequence of practical jokes and acrobatics, animal disguises, and daring leaps. (Towson (12/01/01))

The chase scene that is a staple element of Arabian nights films shows remarkable affinity with the harlequinade. It made its first appearance in Douglas Fairbanks' *Thief of Bagdad* when the poor thief, having stolen a bit to eat, is chased through the market and alleyways of the oriental city, performing acrobatic stunts (including the "jump through the jars" reprised in so many later films), always eluding his pursuers. Unlike the harlequinade, however, it appears at the beginning of the film, and not at the end, and rather than being left behind in the development of the eastern genre, it makes its appearance in other eastern subgenres as well. One part of the harlequinade involves animal impersonation, whereby an actor would impersonate an animal by physical contortion, and too this element has its echoes in many Arabian nights films: the thief in *Thief of Bagdad* 1924 is sentenced to be "thrown to the apes" (which also guard the palace gates), the thief in *Thief of Bagdad* 1940 (Sabu) is changed into a dog by the evil sorcerer-vizier Jafar, while in Disney's *Aladdin* 1992 one of the hero's (many) sidekicks is a monkey (named Abu), while the evil sorcerer-vizier Jafar has his own sidekick, a parrot, and the princess a pet tiger.

The harlequinade also involved creating the illusion of violence, through special effects, including the "decapitation effect" and other effects of dismemberment, inherited by the Arabian nights films and other easterns (in the element of "mutilation"), bolstered perhaps by the image of the scimitar-wielding Turk from the Turk plays, as well as by the knowledge of the Islamic prescription for stealing, given that the chief character of the Harlequinade, the Clown, was often depicted as a thief. The first part of the pantomime, and the part that has continued to be performed and developed, involves a good deal of identity switches, reminiscent of the element of "induction" in the eastern: "The plot is very simple: The girl dressed as a boy who is the son of a man dressed as a woman, will win the other girl (surprisingly dressed as a girl), with the assistance of a person(s) dressed in an animal skin. (Turner (12/01/01)). It also includes a "transformation" scene, which is "designed to depict a change in mood when the hero is going through a period of doubt or unhappiness which the transformation should dispel." (Turner (12/01/01)), reminiscent of the "revelation" element in the eastern film genre. Other elements include setting the Arabian nights' stories in China, not the Middle East, and the Chinese nemesis in the first film version of *Thief of Bagdad* probably harks back to this element in the pantomime.

Some of the earliest film adaptations of Arabian nights or oriental plays described them as "pantomimes," the most famous of these being *Chu Chin Chow*, staged in London in 1916 and continued on what was the longest run of any play until the 1940's. Filmed once in 1923, and again in 1934, it is an adaptation of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. The title character is not Chinese but actually a thief named Abu Hasan, come to steal from his host, Kasim Baba, in whose house his slave Zahrat is spying. (Again, the Chinese servant in *Thief of Bagdad* (1924) comes to mind here). Kasim's wife loves Kasim's brother, Ali Baba, whose son is loved by the slave maid Marjanah, who recognizes Abu Hasan's identity. The treasure cave is discovered, lovers are taken hostage and rescued, Kasim is stabbed to death, as is Abu Hasan, and all of the lovers unite in the end. Another well-known film adapted from a pantomime is Ernest Lubitsch's German film *One Arabian Night*, adapted from the play *Sumurun*, which is termed a

“pantomime” even though it does not contain any of the elements found in the British popular pantomime but does involve star-crossed lovers and exotic Arabian nights’ locale and costumes.

In sum, a good many of the narrative features of Arabian nights films have their origins in the popular pantomime theatre of Britain and France in the 19th century, with some elements deriving from the “oriental religious tales” of the early 19th century, while the film subgenre as a whole evinces a split between “fantastic” vs. “non-fantastic” types reflecting a non-referentialized vs. a referentialized understanding of the original tales. Above all of these features, however, the typical Arabian nights narrative has come to be influenced by the same narrative that influenced crusader stories, namely that of the “Turk play.” While the Arabian Nights tales do lend their fantasy and charm to other oriental narratives, they have come to be more influenced than influencing. The typical story of an Arabian nights’ film has more in common with a Turk play than almost any story to be found in the original collection of *A Thousand and One Nights*, a development which probably predates its appearance in film.

6. Summary: Pre-cinematic eastern narrative formulas

Well before the birth of cinema at the beginning of the twentieth century, there already existed a narrative tradition for representing the East to the West. What I have described so far is but a small part of the very wide ranging Western discourse on its East which has been termed Orientalism. This term has many different connotations and refers to different kinds of practices in different fields of endeavor: in the fine arts it refers to a particular school of European painting, with specific styles and motifs popular in the 19th century, while in academic study this term refers to the vast field of “Oriental languages and philology” which had its start in the work of William Jones at the end of the 18th century which led to breakthrough developments in the field of comparative linguistics but also resulted in a skewed and restrictive philologically based interpretation of history and culture. The subareas of Orientalism that I have described above (and only in a superficial fashion) include narrative literary works (history, plays, stories, memoirs) which span the gamut from the culturally very highly valued (such as Voltaire and Byron) to the popular (including European stage entertainments such as the pantomime and the féerie, American vaudeville shows, and popular songs and stories). While the bulk of the themes and stories found in the early Hollywood easterns derived most immediately from the latter type of entertainment, the former is no less important in shaping the wider cultural expectations of the audiences for these early films. In these diverse entertainments and art forms, I have identified three sources or strands of influence which fed into the popular Oriental narrative which underlie the various regimes of representation which fed into the eastern film tradition, viz. the “Turk play” tradition, the tradition derived from Arabian nights tales, and colonialist spectacles.

Perhaps the most influential of these traditions is that of the “Turk play/story/poem” which derived from the European confrontation with the Ottoman empire from the 15th century into the 18th century. This tradition may be seen as the result of an earlier process of referentialization which became standardized as the generic basis of narratives about the “East” and “Easterners.” In this period Europe often found itself on the weaker end of the power differential, which also may explain some of the more fearful and long-lived aspects of this tradition in which a European found himself or herself captive at the mercy of the terrible Turk, at times succumbing to the temptation to “take the turban” and join the captor’s side. Next in

importance is the Arabian nights tradition, which derived from an Arab-Islamic source in 18th century Europe but was adopted and modified as time went on into a very European vision of a fantastic East, especially in popular genres. These stories and vision were often of a fantastic nature, although some Europeans took them to be accurate sources of information about Arab-Islamic culture. At the other end of the spectrum came the third type, the more “realistic” colonialist tradition, which began to develop in the 19th century following European penetration of Ottoman controlled territories in North Africa and the Middle East, following the reversal of the power differential of previous centuries. Despite this difference in relative power, however, many of the traditions developed in the “Turk play” tradition were still employed to good effect, including threats of abduction, seduction, and induction.

In these diverse entertainments there were aspects in the representation of the “Orient” which had “positive” connotations (more often in the Arabian nights tradition), and aspects which had negative ones (especially in the colonialist tradition). In all of these fields, however, the Orient was used as an “essentialized” Other by Western artists, writers and entertainers, in order to set off the West’s conception of itself. This was accomplished in different ways using contradicting images of the Orient: it was (negatively speaking) a land of danger and death, but (on the positive side) a land of adventure and opportunity (“the East is a career”); it was a land of mystery and ignorance, but also a land of ancient knowledge and science; it was represented figuratively as being both “female” (economically ‘attractive’ and penetrable) but also as being “male” (militarily and physically threatening), representing the worst aspects of “maleness” (sexual perfidy, rape, etc.).⁹

These contradictory images are perhaps best summarized in the comments of Sir Richard Burton as quoted in Hajji 1994 (p. 200), which seem almost like a parody on the “medieval Arab” as pictured in the Arabian Nights: the Arab is both “high-spirited and energetic,” as well as being “mentally torpid and physically indolent”; he is “ready to die for his Sultan and faith,” but is also “childish and astute, simple but cunning;” he is “courteous and affable, temperament in mind and self respect, self esteem,” but is also a “mere barbarian who has not forgotten the savage,” etc. Burton’s contradictory characterization of the “Arab” shows most clearly therefore the presence of at least two opposing trends in Orientalist discourse, one confrontational and inimical, and the other romantically sympathetic and amicable. While both used the idea of the “Orient” to further the ends of how to define Western subjectivity, they did so in different ways, and may simply be seen as the opposing ends of a continuum of cultural deixis. The first type, the “positive” or “irenic” view, uses an identification with the Other as a way of critiquing aspects of the dominant ideology of the Self, not to do away with it, but to maintain it and strengthen it. The second type is based in an “anti-identification” with the characters representing the Other, to intensify the ideology of the self and identification with its various forms, and thus more obviously and directly supporting and maintaining the prevailing ideology. Which of these

⁹ There are a number of works which deal with the issue of Orientalism, whether literary, artistic, or academic. The most famous of these is certainly Said 1978, which deals primarily with the political ramifications and dimensions of ostensibly non-political work in literary and academic Orientalism. For an examination of British literary Orientalism, see Sharafuddin 1994, while Grosrichard 1998 deals primarily with French Orientalism’s view of Islam and the harem. For a treatment of the Orientalist school of painting, see ---- and the ACR series on Orientalist painting.

approaches are used in Orientalist discourse has depended upon the author's own purposes and viewpoint, the social and political context of the work, and the expectations of the intended audience. Each of these factors may in turn lie within the realm of either culture-wide expectations or genre-specific expectations. With regard to the latter, they may also involve a rather large set of expectations and tropes whose distribution varied from one medium to the other and from one period to the other. For example, the number and kinds of tropes that were exploited by artists of the Orientalist school in 19th painting were much more limited than those available to the Orientalist authors of narrative works, whether non-fiction (primarily travel literature) or fiction, which exhibited the most variety. Theatrical works in an Orientalist vein in turn generally relied on fewer and less varied tropes than those in literary narratives, which were streamlined even further when they were transferred to the screen, a topic which I will pursue in future work.

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