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### T. E. Lawrence's Misrepresentation of the Arabs in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*

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#### Abstract

Adopting postcolonial theory, this article investigates T. E. Lawrence's depiction of the Arabs in his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926). I argue that Lawrence displays a Western colonial discourse in which he represents the Arabs as the silent uncivilized "Other." Part of this colonial discourse is Lawrence's presentation of himself as superior, prophet, leader and inspirer of the Arab Revolt. Arab leaders and tribes are depicted, in Lawrence's discourse, as an inferior "Other" who need the English to help them achieve their independence. In addition, I argue that Lawrence's negative representation of the Arabs is an ideology that justifies Western domination over the East. Lawrence's misrepresentation addresses Arab feuds, nature and atmosphere, Arabic language, Arab costume, and religion.

**Keywords:** Arab Revolt, Colonial Discourse, Other, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, T.E. Lawrence

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#### 1. Introduction and Review of Related Literature

T. E. Lawrence has assumed a significant place in the literary circle in relation to the discussion of the Arabs' image in English literature, especially in the last few decades. Lawrence is one of the most controversial Orientalists in the last century and his fame was totally connected to his experience in Arabia. His representation of the Arabs and Islam in his writings has been considerably discussed and disputably argued, especially in his renowned book, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926) and in his letters in a critical period of modern Arab history, especially with regard to the Arab Revolt and World War I.

Lawrence's writings always demonstrate an essential discourse of a Western English leader exemplified by Lawrence himself. Apparently, Lawrence reveals his identity as prophet and as

leader of the Arab Revolt, who helps the Arabs obtain their freedom. In his book, *Orientalism*, Said has asserted that the Arabs are always "identified with displaced and marginalized, exploited, and oppressed "Otherness," employed in a discourse to signify the glorified Western supremacy" (1978, p. 296).

T. E. Lawrence is a debatable figure in modern English and Arab history. His character has been much fictionalized not only in his own writings, but also in the writings of many English and European writers like Lowell Thomas, Liddell Hart, and Anthony Nutting. Inspired by Lawrence's writing, in which he fictionalized himself, these writers wrote about Lawrence and created stories about him from their imagination.

A brief biographical note about Lawrence is worthy in this context. Thomas Edward Lawrence, alias Lawrence of Arabia, was born in August 15<sup>th</sup> 1888, as the second illegitimate son of the Anglo-Irish squire Thomas Chapman. He was born after his father left his wife and his four daughters in England and moved to Ireland. His father never married his mother because his wife did not give him divorce. Lawrence knew all this after he was 10 years old (Mack, 1990, p. 5).

Lawrence was interested in history and archaeology. He received his study at Jesus College at Oxford and studied archaeology. As an additional part of his examination for his degree, he submitted a thesis on the influence of Crusades on European military architecture at the end of the twelfth century. So, he had to travel to Arabia to study these castles (Mack, 1990, pp. 52-53). This formed the real beginning of Lawrence's relationship with the Arabs and the Middle East. This experience gave him the chance to study the Arab and Islamic culture, traditions, and language. During this period, he started wearing the Arab dress (Mousa, 1966, p. 6). After that, he returned to England and got his degree in history. Then, he tried to secure a military employment. In September 1914, he was offered a job in geographical section in the War Office (Mousa, 1966, p. 8).

## 2. Discussion

In *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Lawrence represents himself as the leader of the Arab Revolt and presents Arab people and leaders fighting under his control. He gives the reader a picture of binary opposition of "Self / Other," "West / East," and "Superior / Inferior." Lawrence's speech always connotes this colonial discourse of power, especially his own discourse in this Revolt. This is clear in chapter one of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, as he comments:

All men dream: but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dream with open eyes, make it possible. This I did. I meant to make a new nation, to restore a lost influence, to give twenty millions of the Semites the foundation on which to build an inspired dream-palace of their national thoughts. So high an aim called out the inherent nobility of their minds, and made them play a generous part of the events: but when we won, it was charged against me that the British petrol royalties in Mesopotamia were become dubious, and French colonial policy ruined in the Levant.

I am afraid that I hope so. We pay for these things too much in honour and innocent lives. I went up the Tigris with one hundred Devon Territorials, young, clean, delightful fellows, full of the power of happiness and of making women and children glad. . . . The only need was to defeat our enemies (Turkey among them), and this was at last done in the wisdom of

Allenby with less than four hundred killed, by turning to our uses the hand of the oppressed Turkey. I am proudest of my thirty fights that I did not have any of our own blood shed. All our subjects provinces to me were not worth one dead Englishman. (1977, p. 23)

In other words, Lawrence employed his knowledge of a colonial discourse in his writing about the Arabs as the source of power. According to Michel Foucault, "discourse is not simply that which translates struggle or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized" (1989, p. 221). In *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, the Arabs are subjected to this colonial discourse. Lawrence's position in the English army, his place in the Arab Bureau, and his relationship with the Arabs enabled him to acquire knowledge (power) which he employed as his power in this colonial discourse. T. E. Lawrence proved this discourse by his language as the owner of knowledge about people in the Arab World. To signify this colonial discourse, Lawrence presented himself as the civilized, educated "Self," contrasted with the Arabs in this colonial discourse, who are presented as subjected, submissive, and silent "Other." The Arabs are described as "limited narrow-minded people whose inert intellects lay follow in incurious resignation" (Lawrence, 1977, p. 36). Lawrence exhibits the superiority of the West over the Arabs, using language as a source of power.

*Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is set in the Middle East and Arabian Peninsula at the beginning of twentieth century, i.e. the Arab Revolt and World War I. The book depicts mainly the role of T. E. Lawrence in the area during the Arab Revolt and World War I. It gives a preview of Lawrence's life among the Arabs. It also shows how he acquires his knowledge about the Arab culture and how he adopts it. This knowledge functions as the source for his book, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, and his letters in which he depicts the Arabs negatively.

The book starts with an introductory chapter in which he introduces his experience in the region and his main objectives in writing this book. He also describes the cultural, social and political situation in Arabia during this period. As Conrad describes the natives in Africa, Asia, or America "incapable of independence" (Said, 1993, p. 28), Lawrence describes how this situation leads the Arabs to look for the help and support of England to achieve their independence. From an imperial eye, this is the only alternative the Arabs have. Lawrence starts recounting the events of the book as he moves from the Arab Bureau in Cairo to the Arab Peninsula to meet Arab leaders, i.e. Sheriff Hussein and his four sons: Abdullah, Feisal, Zeid, and Ali. As a result of these meetings, he tells his superiors that Feisal is going to be the leader of the Arab Revolt. They ask him to go back to meet Feisal to set the agreement with the Arabs to start the Arab Revolt under the support of England and the leadership of T. E. Lawrence.

The Arab Revolt starts off in the Arabia Peninsula and moves forward to the north to secure Wejh, followed directly by the occupation of Akaba. Lawrence claims that he plans and leads the occupation of Akaba and guides Feisal and Auda abu Tayi in the process of this occupation. This occupation forms one of the most important stages in the process of the Arab Revolt which enables England, while fighting Germany and her allies, to achieve great advances in the war and the Arab Revolt and works "as an unassailable base, from which to hinder the Hijaz Railway" (Lawrence, 1977, p. 321). The forces of the Arab Revolt move to the northern areas of the Middle East and secure all important places in the area like Jerusalem, Jericho, Ma'an the Dead Sea, Der'a, Damascus and all the Arab territories under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Lawrence claims that

the success of all these occupations has been achieved by his effort and his bravery, ignoring the role the Arab leaders, like Feisal and Auda abu Tayi, play in the process of this occupation.

Lawrence incorporates his oriental encounters with the Arab and Islamic culture. In these encounters, Lawrence depicts the Arabs in a negative stereotypical way. This book serves as a subjective and ambiguous preview of his personal story in the Revolt as he states in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, "In these pages the history is not of the Arab movement, but of me in it" (Lawrence, 1977, p. 22).

During his sojourn in the region, Lawrence wrote letters to his superiors, colleagues, and to his family. These letters complete Lawrence's depiction and representation of the Arabs in his writing about his story in the East. Some of these letters are incorporated in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. Many of his biographers and friends like David Garnett were interested in collecting these letters. There are several collections of these letters like *The Letters of T. E. Lawrence* by David Garnett, *The Letters of T. E. Lawrence* edited by Malcolm Brown, *The home letters of T. E. Lawrence and his brothers* edited by Lawrence William George, and other collections.

Critics have argued that *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is full of details, stories, and information most of which Lawrence draws out of his own imagination. These details are:

absurd and trivial but happen to be among those where Lawrence can be shown definitely to be romancing. It is necessary to establish his records in this respect because in other and more important cases there cannot be or is not at represent such definite proof that he was romancing or inventing. (Aldington, 1955, p. 112)

He brings these details to support his representation and depiction of the image of the Arabs as a degenerated inferior "Other" in order to justify Western domination over them. This detailed picture of the Arab culture contributes to building an understanding of the Arab image that serves Lawrence's imperial and colonial ends.

## 2.1 Feuds

In his book and letters, Lawrence portrays the region at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries as an area of sectarian and tribal feuds and civil wars, as he describe it "between town and town, village and village, family and family, creed and creed, existed intimate jealousies sedulously fostered by the Turks" (1977, p. 344). He represents this turbulent situation as a result of the aggressive authority of the Ottoman Turks. Lawrence's negative representation of these sects and tribes as enemies can be explained as a justification of his project, as he claims, to unify the Arabs under his leadership to achieve the Arab independence from the Ottoman Turks.

Lawrence enlarges his criticism of this feud among the Arab religions, sects, and tribes to the feud in the one religion, one sect, and in the one tribe. For example, he discusses the enmity between Sunni and Shia, depicting both religious sects negatively. He says:

On the higher slopes of the hill clustered settlement of Metawala, Shia Mohammedans from Persia generation ago. They were dirty, ignorant, surly and fanatical, refusing to eat and drink with infidels, holding the Suni as bad as Christian; following only their own priests and notables. (1977, p. 339)

Then, he describes Prince Feisal as a "Sunni prince" (1977, p. 345). This means that Lawrence expands the gap among the Arabs themselves instead of reconciling and uniting them. This contradicts his main claim of unifying of Arab people. In this representation, Lawrence focuses on the idea of the outer help of England. The same applies to Lawrence's depiction of the Arab Christian sects like the Maronites, Ansaryia, and many other Christian sects that Lawrence discusses in his book. According to Lawrence, these Christian sects live also in wars and enmity.

The feud among the Arab tribes in the area is not exceptional in this case. Lawrence presents the Arab tribes living in the area in feud and enmity. Discussing the tribal system in the area, Lawrence focuses on the enmity in the one tribe, between the Sheiks and their people. Nuri Al Shalan, the Sheik of Ruwalla tribe; for example, killed two of his brothers to gain the leadership (1977, p. 179). This also appears in a letter to Colonel Pierce Joyce. In this letter, Lawrence describes the enmity between Auda as the Sheik of Abu Tayi and his people. He says that Abu Tayi's people want to revolt against their Sheik Auda (Lawrence, 1991, p. 128). This proves Lawrence's ambiguous representation of the Arabs as people living in an endless war.

Another aspect of Lawrence's criticism of tribal system is that he represents the Sheiks of Arab tribes as unqualified leaders of their people. This proves the purpose Lawrence claims that he comes to the East in search for the leadership of the Revolt. Lawrence suggests that the Sheiks of tribes in Arabia are unqualified for three main reasons: they are not precedent among their people in birth, nor are they loved, or great men of battle (Lawrence, 1977, p. 179). Lawrence wants to say that this tribal system is an anti-democratic system of dictatorship. Auda abu Tayi is one of the distinctive leaders of the Arab Revolt. He played an outstanding role in the advances of the Revolt. He was Lawrence's companion for a long time during Lawrence's sojourn in Arabia. Lawrence's contradictions and ambiguity become evident in his representation of Auda as an Arab leader and as a Sheik of his clan. While Lawrence praises Auda on several occasions as a good, courageous and hospitable man, he criticizes him in more than one place in the same book. For instance, Lawrence describes him as lusty because he "married twenty-eight times" and as a barbarous Sheik as "he himself slain *seventy-five* men, Arabs, with his own hand in a battle" (1977, p. 230). In other places, he describes him as ignorant as "Auda had not before known dynamite, and with a child's first pleasure was moved to a rush of hasty poetry on its powerful glory" (1977, p. 251). All this supports Lawrence's depiction of the lack of the Arab leadership of the Arab Revolt.

## 2.2 Nature and Atmosphere

According to Lawrence, this feud among the Arabs comes as a result of the bad geography and atmosphere in the region. He presents nature and atmosphere as "oppressive, deadly. There seemed no life in it." (1977, p. 73). He presents nature in the area as a hard place to live in. This implicates the strength and fortitude of his Western character as contrasted with the character of the Arabs as nomadic people. According to Lawrence, Arab people cannot stay in one place because they are unable to bear all these difficulties and hardships. Therefore, they live in this war and enmity for water and food. Said has observed that "the authority of the observer, and of European geographical centrality, is buttressed by cultural discourse relegating and confining the non-European to a secondary racial, cultural, ontological status" (Said, 1993, p. 70). That is to say, Lawrence contrasted the Western geography with the "oppressive, deadly" geography of Arabia. He also wants to prove himself to be the prophet of Arabia.

Lawrence tries to justify this enmity in the area as a result of the harshness of the natural environment of the Arab area. He claims, "Nature had so divided the country into zones. Men, elaborating nature, had given to her compartment an additional complexity. Each of these main north-and-south strip divisions was crossed and walled off artificially into communities at odds" (Lawrence, 1977, p. 337). Lawrence wants to say that even nature is very harsh in the area and it is very hard to live in. In writings about the nature and geography in the area, Lawrence overestimates his adventures, the bad circumstances he suffered from during his sojourn in the area, and most importantly his Western character in which he appears with great fortitude and ability to face all these difficulties.

### 2.3 Arabic Language

Arabic language takes an important part in Lawrence's representation of the Arabs. Lawrence pretends to love Arabic language. He "says that he knew some 12,000 words which sounds impressive but was not enough for a genuine command of the language" (Tabichnich, 2004, p.11). Lawrence describes Arabic language as the only bond that unifies Arabs, ignoring all other aspects of Arab culture. He says:

The master key of opinion lay in common language where also, lay the key of imagination. Moslems whose mother tongue was Arabic looked upon themselves for that reason as a chosen people. Their heritage of Koran and classical literature in Arab speaking people together, patriotism, ordinary of soil and race, was wrapped to a language. (1977, p. 344)

Lawrence consciously and intentionally limits the unity of Arab people to language ignoring their history, religion, culture and traditions as significant connections among all Arabs. He reduces the importance and value of Arabic language as the only bond that unites the Arabs and the Arab World as a whole. That is to say, Lawrence separates it from its origins in the Arab culture. His representation of Arabic language in his book and letters contradicts Lawrence's pretense of love of the Arabs and their language. His pretense to love Arabic language enables to him achieve his hidden agenda.

### 2.4 Islam

The representation of Islam is greatly related to the view of the Arabs in Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and his letters. According to Said,

The European encounters with the Orient, and especially with Islam, strengthen this system of representing the Orient, as has been suggested by Henri Pirenne, turned Islam into the very epitome of an outsider against which the whole European civilization from the Middle Ages on was found. (1978, p. 70)

The Arabs and Islam are the two major constituents of the Orient. So, it is hard to disconnect the Arabs from their cultural Islamic origins. Lawrence's book and letters demonstrate imperial discourse of hegemony toward Islam. Lawrence represents Islam as a fanatic, decaying creed contrasted with the true Western Christianity. This can be seen in a letter to R. O'Conner as Lawrence states:

Their present passion for nationality has driven out their former fanatical creed –and I do not believe that anything will make political faith which has become, like our Christianity; a purely ethical concern. ... Islam is no longer a fighting creed. (1938, p. 400)

Lawrence's depiction of Islam is similar to his portrayal of Arabic language as loose bonds among the Arabs. Lawrence "surveys the Orient from above, with the aim of getting the whole sprawling panorama before him-culture, religion, society" (Said, 1993, p. 194). He discusses them separately and views them according to his own understanding in a way that serves his aims. In other words, the Arab image becomes like play dough which Lawrence shapes the way he wants the West to understand it. This way of presenting the Arabs enables Lawrence to imply how they always live in feuds and endless wars.

## 2.5 Arab Costumes

An important aspect of Lawrence's Eastern life is his Arab dress. Arab dress is an accessory used by Lawrence in his play in Arabia. "It is like the cross that Everyman will carry" (Said, 1978, p. 71). Said asserts that Lawrence, wearing Arab dress, is "playing the Great Game [which] depends on the rock like foundation of European power" (1993, p. 194). It is important to know that this dress is suitable for life in Arabia. However, Lawrence used it to fulfill his personal ambitions of showing off and attracting the attention of the Arabs and the English. This dress enabled him to eliminate all the barriers and challenges that might face him during his sojourn in the area. Arab dress enables him to go wherever he wants easily. Sometimes, it saved him from many problems. For example, in one of his letters he says, "Fortunately I was in Arab togs" (1938, p. 162). In this letter, Lawrence admitted that this Arab dress saved him from being killed in Balkan War in 1913. Arab dress enabled him to earn the trust of Arabs. This trust enables him to gather the knowledge he needed to employ in his colonial discourse to achieve his enterprise by presenting the Arabs negatively and justifying Western intervention in the region.

His wearing Arab dress does not only attract the attention of Arabs, but also his English superiors and colleagues, achieving his political and personal objectives as well. However, Lawrence did not like Arab dress. In a letter to James Harley, Lawrence admitted that:

Politically the thing was so dirty that I grew to hate all before it came out more-or-less honestly in the end. So when I see pictures in Arab kit I get a little important-silly of me, for it was long ago, and did really happen. (Lawrence, 1938, p. 729)

This proves Lawrence's false love of the Arabs and his hypocrisy and manipulation of Arab dress to deceive the Arabs and achieve what he wanted. Lawrence admitted clearly that he is taking part in a play he is its director. He sent a letter to Vyvian Richards in which he says,

So it is a kind of foreign stage, on which one plays day and night, in a fancy dress in a strange language ... . You want apparently some vivid colouring costume, or of a flying Turk, and we have it all, for that is part of the *mise en scene* of the successful raider, and hitherto I am that. (1991, pp. 149-151)

This proves Lawrence's two-fold mission of deceiving the Arabs for the sake of English interests in the war "trying to hold on to Britain's Brown Dominion" (Said, 1993, p. 133).

## 2.6 Fabrications and Encounters

One disputable event of the Arab Revolt is the occupation of Akaba. This occupation is one of the most important events in Lawrence's recount of the Arab Revolt, in which his lies and fabrications are evident. The discussion of the occupation of Akaba serves as a sample that applies to the structure of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* as a whole. That is to say, by discussing the occupation of Akaba or any other major event of the Arab Revolt and World War I as recounted by Lawrence in his book, the researcher will come up almost with the same results as will be seen in the discussion of this occupation. That is, Lawrence tells his story in the Arab Revolt as a series of adventures. In each of these adventures, he always follows the same techniques and ideas towards him and the Arabs. Lawrence summarizes this event in his book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* saying,

THE port of Akaba was naturally so strong that it could be taken only by surprise from inland: but the opportune adherence to Feisal and Auda abu Tayi made us hope to enroll enough tribesmen in the Eastern desert for such a descent upon the coast.

Nasir, Auda, and I set off together on the long ride. Hitherto Feisal had been the public leader: but his remaining at Wejh threw the ungrateful load of this northern expedition upon myself. I accepted it and its dishonest implication as our only means of victory. We tricked the Turks and entered Akaba with good fortune. (1977, p. 234)

This brief summary of the occupation of Akaba is dominated by Western imperial discourse of power. Lawrence focuses on himself as a symbol of this imperial power, representing himself as the inspirer and leader of this occupation. He represents the Arab tribes as uncivilized uneducated "Other" who are under his control, underestimating their role in leading the process of this occupation. This is clear as will be seen in the discussion of his encounters with Bedouins throughout his recount of the events of Akaba occupation.

During the process of this occupation, Lawrence describes many of his Oriental encounters in the area with the Arabs. In these encounters, he displays a Western imperial discourse of power in a way that signifies the supremacy of the West by representing the Arabs as marginalized, exploited, inferior "Other." In these encounters, he extends his criticism of the Arabs to criticize some of their leaders like Auda abu Tayi. Lawrence describes Auda as uneducated, ignorant as Auda sees the dynamite for the first time. Lawrence describes this scene ironically saying, "Auda had not before known dynamite, and with a child's first pleasure was moved to a rush of hasty poetry on its powerful glory" (1977, p. 251). This representation of Auda emphasizes Lawrence's depiction of Arabs' ignorance in a way that signifies Western supremacy and civility. This justifies Lawrence's mission as a prophet of Arabia in search for the Arab leadership. According to Lawrence, the Arabs lack leadership, which means that he came to help them reach their dream of independence.

The first encounter in the Akaba incident is Lawrence's meeting of an old man and his wife. Lawrence depicts them as ignorant people who are scornful of politics and war. Lawrence explains how the English come to the Arabs to educate and to liberate them. Lawrence says, "We gently teased him with the notions of liberty; freedom of the Arab countries for the Arabs" (1977, p. 238). Lawrence tries to justify Western intervention and domination of the Arab countries. He continues proving the incivility of the Arabs saying, "However, he would not understand" (1977, p. 238).



Here, Lawrence represents himself as the educated "Self" who comes to save the Arabs and depicts them as the inferior "Other."

Lawrence affirms his intention of legitimizing the Western domination over the East:

Such people demanded a war-cry banner from outside to combine them, and a stranger to lead them, one whose supremacy should be based on an idea: illogical, undeniable, discriminate: which instinct might accept and reason find no rational basis to reject or prove. (1977, p. 241)

What Lawrence means here is that the Arabs need an outside help as he claimed that he "hated to see this gentle and beautiful land and its kindly people living under the heels of Turkish tyranny" (Nutting, 1961, p. 12). This could be only achieved through help "from outside" which accordingly means from England, and from a "stranger" like Lawrence himself. This is the only alternative Lawrence, as an imperialist, offered to reach their national aspiration of independence. Here, he very clearly represents his imperial intentions of expressing Western "supremacy" in contrast with the "inferiority" and incivility of the Arabs. In one of Lawrence's letters to Major R. H. Scott in 1918, he emphasized:

I have only one thing in Akaba which I value—my engraved British rifle. Please see that it reaches Cairo safely. My regards to the staff—and my very best thanks to you and them. We were an old little set, and we have, I expect, change in history in the near East. I wonder how the Powers will let the Arabs get on. (Lawrence, 1938, p. 258)

In this letter, Lawrence affirms his notion that the Arabs need help from outside to "stimulate the Orient (lifeless, timeless, and forceless) into movement" (Said, 1978, p. 241).

Another important encounter in which Lawrence expresses the inferiority of the Arabs is that an Arab kisses his hand. He says, "Daud leaped at the chance, kissed my hand" (1977, p. 244). This is totally inaccurate. If Lawrence had known the Arabs and Bedouin life very well, as he claims, and known their codes and traditions, he would not have produced such a lie. A Bedouin does not accept to kiss the hand of anyone whoever he is and whatever the reason is (Al-Umary, 1991, pp. 116-7). He brings this scene to describe the Arabs as simpleton people who are easily deceived by strangers like Lawrence in this case. He also depicts the Arabs as greedy and foolish when he describes a scene where Howeitat—an Arab tribe in Tran Jordan—go after some Oryx. He describes them as beasts running after a prey (Lawrence, 1977, p. 259).

In all these encounters, Lawrence represents and depicts the Arabs in negative stereotypical images. In his representations of all these encounters, there are "deliberate distortion of history, sometimes for political motives, sometimes in order to dramatize a real event for the sake of literature, and sometimes for reasons connected with his personal traumas" (Yardley, 1985, p. 87). This supports Lawrence's intentions of proving Western supremacy and justifying its domination and manipulation of the East. Both Aldington and Mousa studied the occupation of Akaba and examined Lawrence's role in planning and leading it. They found that Lawrence is a hypocrite and that he tells his readers mere claims and lies. They proved that most of what he states could not have happened at all. They agreed that Lawrence exaggerated and over-fictionalized things, which appears in his recounts of most of the events of the World War I and the Arab Revolt.

Desmond Stewart, in his book *T. E. Lawrence* (1979), has clearly stated that "the authorship of the plan to take Akaba solely from inland was later disputed between Lawrence, Feisal, and Auda Abu Tayi, the desert Ajax, whom Lawrence first met in April at Feisal's headquarter at Wejh" (pp. 165-166). Of course, this contradicts his claims that "Akaba had been taken on my plan by my effort. The cost of it had fallen on my brains and nerves" (Lawrence, 1977, p. 331). It also contradicts Lowell Thomas's claims that Lawrence's "strategy and personal bravery had played an all-important part in the success of" the Akaba occupation (1965, p. 95). Lawrence undermines and underestimates the role of Feisal and Auda abu Tayi in planning and achieving this occupation. Mousa drew the conclusion that "the whole expedition was thus planned with no reference to Lawrence" (1966, p. 67), the same conclusion Aldington's.

Lawrence's representation and depiction of the Arabs has been criticized from different perspectives. Many critics like Aldington and Edward Said attack him for his subjective, romanticized representation of the Arabs. He overestimates his effort in the Revolt and subverts the Arabs' effort in leading it and achieving victory. Said and other oriental critics suggest that Lawrence employs his knowledge and writings about the Arab in a way that contributes to English domination and producing "the Orient politically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively" (Said, 1978, p. 3). In other words, Lawrence manipulates his knowledge about the Orient to achieve his English bureaucratic imperial ends.

One of the most important and controversial questions in the discussion of Lawrence's depiction of the Arabs is the motives that stand behind his sojourn in Arabia. Mousa argues that "Lawrence was fond of adventures, of exploring unknown paths, and of attempting things his colleagues did not think of doing" (1966, p. 64). This means that Lawrence wants to appear more distinctive. He wants to satisfy two of his psychological complexes. The first was the lack of legitimacy since he was an illegitimate son of Sir Thomas Chapman. His motives are clearly personal as he says, "In these pages the history is not of the Arab movement, but of me in it" (Lawrence, 1977, p. 22). This becomes more evident as "*Seven Pillars of Wisdom* was a mere continuation of the tangled campaign he had chosen to wage, an additional weapon in his private war" (Kedourie, 1987, pp. 100-101).

Lawrence also had colonial motives serving England and its interests in the war. This means that "The Arab Revolt acquires the meaning only as Lawrence designs meaning for it" (Said, 1978, p. 242). This meaning is the benefit of England in this war. Lawrence tried to achieve these colonial motives through two means. Firstly, he depicts the Arabs negatively in a discourse that signifies Western supremacy. The other way is deceiving the Arabs through his pretense of his love for the Arabs and his false adoption of their cause, the knowledge he had about the Arabs and his Arab dress. However, Lawrence "had been so unskillful and so contradictory in the defense of the Arab case" (Kedourie, 1987, p. 105).

From the Arab point of view, this is the reality of T. E. Lawrence. A scrutiny of his book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and his letters offers a clear picture of his contradictions, ambiguities and lies. As he was glorified in the West, he is not welcomed among Arab writers and critics. He was condemned as a spy and as a liar who deceived the Arabs and put all his efforts to serve the English Crown by undermining the Arabs contribution in the Arab Revolt and in achieving English victory in the war.

The Arabs read Lawrence's Oriental studies and responded to it variably. This variation is due to the different representations of the Arabs' image in the writings of both writers. Ladikoff demonstrates that "Lawrence's well written and romanticized *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* could not be much appreciated by those who lived and suffered that tragic part of the Arab history, namely the Arab Revolt" (2008, p. 1). Al-Umari and Mousa agree that King Abdullah I criticized him for working against the Hashemite Family and described him as haughty and arrogant (Al-Umari, 1991, p. 86; Mousa, 1966, p. 256). Similar responses come from Subhi Al-Umary himself, a Jordanian officer in Jordan Arab Army who knew Lawrence personally. Al-Umary read *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and described it as "a story about Lawrence himself and not a story about the Arab Revolt" (67). Naseeb Al-Bakri criticizes Lawrence sharply, observing that:

As for Lawrence's claims that he went in disguise to Damascus, Ba'alabek, and Tudmor, it strikes me as very strange indeed because it is far from the truth. I am certain that Lawrence did not leave us for a single day, and we were not separated until after he left for Aqaba, with Auda and Nassir, while I left Jebel Druze (as cited in Mousa, 1966, p. 75).

These and other similar responses are the result of Lawrence's negative depiction of the Arabs in his writings.

In the same way, many Western critics attacked Lawrence like Aldington, Knightly, and Simpson. Tabichnich argues, "Lawrence has been attacked by Knightly and Simpson and Edward Said for ardent imperialism and by Aldington for being too pro-Arab. The Arabs themselves, saw him as a military hero during the Arab Revolt, but attacked him for imperialism" (2004, p. 86). In his book *Lawrence of Arabia: A Biographical Enquiry* (1955), Richard Aldington has accused Lawrence of being a hypocrite and liar. He has also tried to undermine Lawrence's legend denying that Lawrence is a man of any peculiar abilities. He focuses on Lawrence's recount of main events in the Revolt like the capture of Akaba, proving Lawrence's falsehood and hypocrisy.

### 3. Conclusion

Many writers who wrote about Lawrence and his motives "have ignored the fact that he was, before anything else, a British citizen with great regard to his own country's interest" (Mousa, 1966, p. 265). In other words, the writers who wrote about Lawrence have not focused on his political position in the English army and his imperial ends during the period of the war supporting England in World War I. Lawrence himself admitted this in his books and in letters which means that he pretended to be pro-Arab. It proves the idea that Lawrence came to the area as a spy looking for whatever helped England reach its victory. He manipulated the turbulent crises the Arabs faced under the rule of the Ottoman Turks to strengthen English position by securing the Arabs on England's side in World War I.

Lawrence reads the Arabs as an imperialist. He presents himself as does Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, where Conrad presents an imperialist world view of the non-European people. Lawrence represents the Arabs negatively as the minor inferior "Other" contrasted with the Western educated civilized "Self," putting himself in the focus as God-like position. "Lawrence builds his strategy on the exhaustive manipulation of knowledge and language in a colonial discourse that confines the Orient to a secondary racial, cultural and ontological status" (Said, 1993, p. 70). Lawrence's texts always display an imperial discourse in which he presents the Arabs' culture, language, history, mind, and religion in much unauthentic, ambiguous, distorted way. These texts are read in a

colonial discourse of hegemony toward the Arab and Islamic culture. Lawrence exploited all means he got like Arab costume, Arabic language, religion, and culture to deceive the Arabs reaching his hidden personal and English political enterprise.

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