

Abstract of M.A Thesis
Fiction and Reality in T.E. Lawrence's Portrayal of the
Arabs in Seven Pillars of Wisdom
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Completed 2003

The present thesis focuses on T.E. Lawrence's (1888-1935) Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph (1935). The main hypothesis is that the book displays some inconsistencies regarding the representation of the Arabian image. The purpose has not been the creation of an Arabian model mirage against which Lawrence's portrait could be evaluated. Rather, it explores the peculiarities attending the formation of the image discussed through analyzing firstly, Lawrence's much disputed motives for writing about the Arabs and secondly, the aspects of the Arabian community he has chosen to highlight.

As an outcome, the study, on one hand, stresses the insufficiency of the motives, which Lawrence himself has supplied, and, on the other, the knowledge of the Arabs present in SPW. Furthermore, the study shows that terms like "ambiguous", "inconsistent" and "contestable" could be used to describe Lawrence's Arabian image. Lawrence's portraits of the Arabian leader, warrior, and community in general, are drawn in a manner familiar to those who read earlier Western travel accounts of Arabia. Moreover, Lawrence's reconstructed reality is never at any one time immune against falling apart as the author introduces or destroys patterns with which he charts the foreign world. These patterns, in fact, never succeed in retaining the spirit of the world inspected. Instead, they emphasize the traveler's reflective and critical appreciation of his 'Self' drawing mystifyingly on the Other's mythical or stereotypical status.

An analysis of plot, structure and style yields, as far as the image of the Arabs is concerned, similar results. On plot level, the public plot is subordinated to the personal, thus downplaying the presence of the 'Other' in the narrative. Structurally, the picaresque ramblings of the hero are given more prominence than the heroic adventures of the Arabs and that, of course, diminishes the reader's interest in the 'Other'. With reference to narration, the unreliability of the first person narrator, either as a reporter or evaluator of the native's reality, destroys the reader's appreciation of the Arabian image. First person narration becomes eventually a method of domination that highlights the inferiority of the 'Other'. Lawrence's style, moreover, is a combination of variously adapted Arabic and English literary and non-literary styles. This style, besides being, multi-layered, allusive and figurative, is predominately suggestive of the Other's inadequacy and ambiguity.

Considering the generic status of Lawrence's Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph, one can safely point the historical aspects that link this account to nineteenth-century historical novels. SPW narrates a public history, which, in spite of being considerably detailed, is eventually deconstructed since the author is more interested in constructing an image of his 'Self' than in being faithful in rendering the Other's image.

