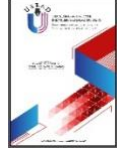




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LAWRENCE OF ARABIA: A ROMANTIC CAVALIER IN MODERN TIMES

ARABİSTANLI LAWRENCE: MODERN ZAMANLARIN ROMANTİK ŞÖVALYESİ

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Abstract: Thomas Edward Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia, was one of the most controversial figures in the field of Oriental studies. While some acclaim him as an epic hero who provoked the Arab revolt against the Turks, others criticize him for being an egocentric and embellisher who played a sideshow role during the War. Either as a popular hero characterized by speculative representations or a historical figure well documented by his biographers, Lawrence has an outstanding reputation in the area. Therefore, there are many academic studies based on his heroic fame and detailed war narratives. This study aims to illustrate how this epic heroism is represented by T. E. Lawrence in his book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1921-2). Through a detailed literary analysis of the book, it also hopes to reveal how Lawrence represents himself as a romantic cavalier. In this context, the study will first examine Lawrence's aristocratic background and deep interest in mediaeval studies. His identity clashes stemming from his contact with the Arabs will also be investigated to show his quest for a new heroic identity. Then, Lawrence's reliability as a narrator will be questioned. Some fictional incidences included in his book will be analysed to explore how these false accounts help Lawrence's aim of representing himself as a mystic and romantic hero. Overall, the study hopes to contribute to the existent scholarship by examining a controversial political figure through the lenses of chivalry, heroism and Medieval studies.

Key Words: Lawrence of Arabia, Chivalry, Romance, Heroism, World War I

Öz: Thomas Edward Lawrence, daha iyi bilinen adıyla Arabistanlı Lawrence, Şarkiyat alanındaki çalışmalarda adı geçen en tartışmalı figürlerden biridir. Bazıları Lawrence'ı Türklere karşı Arapları kıskırtan epik bir kahraman olarak överken, bazıları ise onu savaşta sadece yan bir rol oynayan, benmerkezci bir yalancı olarak yermiştir. Gerek spekülative temsiller vasıtasıyla tanımlanan popüler bir kahraman olarak, gerekse biyografisini yazan yazarlar tarafından iyi bir şekilde kayıt altına alınmış tarihi bir figür olarak, Lawrence alanda sıra dışı bir üne sahiptir. Bu nedenle, hem destansı ünü ile ilgili hem de detaylı savaş anıları ile ilgili pek çok akademik çalışma yapılmıştır. Bu çalışma, söz konusu destansı kahramanlığın T. E. Lawrence tarafından kendi kitabı olan *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*'da (1921-2) nasıl anlatıldığını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Kitaba dair detaylı bir edebi analiz yapılarak, Lawrence'ın kendini nasıl romantik bir şövalye olarak yansıtmaya çalıştığı ortaya konulmaya çalışılacaktır. Bu bağlamda, çalışmada ilk olarak Lawrence'ın aristokratik geçmişi ve Orta Çağ çalışmalarına olan ilgisi ele alınacaktır. Ayrıca, Lawrence'ın Araplarla tanışmasından sonra ortaya çıkan kimlik çatışması yeni bir kahramansı kimlik arayışını göstermek adına detaylı olarak incelenecektir. Daha sonra, Lawrence'ın anlatıcı olarak güvenilirliği tartışmaya açılacaktır. Kitabında geçen bazı kurgusal olayların, kendisini gizemli ve romantik bir kahraman olarak gösterme amacına hizmet etmesi adına Lawrence tarafından nasıl manipüle edildiği ortaya çıkarılmaya çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arabistanlı Lawrence, Şövalyelik, Romans, Kahramanlık, 1. Dünya Savaşı

Introduction

As reflected in his semi-autobiographical book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Lawrence has deep interests in archaeology, mediaeval history, Middle East politics, war studies and English Literature. However, the majority of academic studies, such as Robert Graves' *Lawrence and the Arabs* (1927) and Lawrence James' *The Golden Warrior, the Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia* (1995), have focused on checking the historical facts and accounts that Lawrence includes in his book. In other words, the legendary myth of a war hero created with glamour by American journalist Lowell Thomas in 1921 was constantly attacked via denigration by many scholars in subsequent decades until the 1970s when the embargo on the public availability of Lawrence's secret files was lifted by the Bodleian Library (TEL Studies, 2013.). As a result, literary criticism of T. E. Lawrence and his desert romance in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* was generally restricted to the extent of historical realism until the 1970s (Meyers, 1973: 11).

However, Lawrence was a passionate man of letters. He mentions three major literary projects in his private letters (Wilson, 1989: 45). He wishes to write a massive history of the Crusaders, a sociological study of life among the nomadic tribes of the Orient, and a travelogue through the seven great cities of the East (TEL Studies, 2013). Due to the outbreak of war in 1914, Lawrence could not pursue those literary aims. Nevertheless, the war provided a promising opportunity for Lawrence as an author. Lawrence claims that "the story I have to tell is one of the most splendid ever given a man for writing" (Lawrence, 1976: 107). Thus, with the aim of combining the three afore-mentioned major works into one, Lawrence included mediaeval history, long descriptions of the Bedouin and their way of life and detailed narrations of major cities such as Aleppo, Damascus and Cairo in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. According to Graves, the title, Seven Pillars, refers to "the seven cities – Cairo, Smyrna, Constantinople, Beirut, Aleppo, Damascus and Medina" which Lawrence wished to travel through in his Carchemish days (1927: 18).

In these contexts, it is important to review Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* through the perspectives of Orientalism and postmodern literary theories. Therefore, the present study will mainly analyse *Seven Pillars* within a framework of some fundamental discussions in Oriental and postmodern studies such as noble savage, identity quest, heroism and chivalry, reliability, gender and sexuality, and desert fantasies.

A Chivalrous Identity Search in the Middle of the Wilderness

Thomas Edward Lawrence was born the illegitimate son of a baronet called Sir Thomas Robert Chapman in Wales in 1888 (Graves, 1927: 2). His mother, Sarah Junner, was a strict Calvinist Christian and had a profound influence on Lawrence's early boyhood interests in mediaeval Christianity (Aldington, 1955: 25). Although Lawrence was proud of being born to an aristocrat father, the notoriety of being illegitimate distorted Lawrence's early character and consequently made him develop personal independence and loneliness. He therefore preferred to be "a prig [rather] than be sociable" (Graves, 1927: 7). The religious atmosphere that surrounded him at home and his miserable solitude due to his familial shame caused Lawrence to "live in a world of old things, castles, churches, memorial brasses, pottery and books-books-books" (Richards, 1964: 40). These antiquarian and aesthetic interests were strengthened by short trips to historical and monumental churches across the country and France and finally enabled Lawrence to be awarded a history exhibition by Jesus College, Oxford.

From a Freudian approach, it can be claimed that Lawrence compensated for the bitter resentment at his social inferiority through some great achievement. In his childhood, this was overcome by a propensity to make up embellished stories about himself and his doings (Aldington, 1955: 53). This subliminal phantom of heroism was intensified by his readings and observations during his youth at Oxford. The influence of this subconscious chivalrous ambition on Lawrence's identity was so intense that he felt compelled to do something noble and heroic. Therefore, before World War One, Lawrence was lured at working as an aetiologist in the British Museum's excavations in Syria. Similarly, during the War, he came back into the desert where he could personally look for an epic success in the middle of the wilderness.

There are many reasons for men to leave his home. According to Anderson "the reasons why men leave home seem to fall under several heads: seasonal work and unemployment, industrial inadequacy, defects of personality, crisis in the life of the person, racial or national discrimination and wanderlust" (1923: 61). Lawrence regarded his illegitimacy as a 'defect of personality' and when he learned this shocking news at the age of twelve (Hart, 1935: 38), it probably caused an identity crisis. Moreover, Lawrence's passion for early modern religious studies and history during his youth created an adventurous wanderlust in his character. Consequently, he wished to travel as much as possible since this would provide the opportunity to run away from his past that he

detested. During his journeys, Lawrence did not only escape from what he disliked back at home, but also searched for a new identity through which he could overcome it.

Lawrence's pious mother regarded her illegitimate intercourse as a great sin and therefore inspired all her five sons to adopt religious attitudes. Lawrence felt he should find a new identity, either a reverend clergyman like two of his brothers or a kind of heroic cavalier thanks to his mediaeval enthusiasm. Lawrence chose the latter. In the search of such a new chivalrous identity, Lawrence attended the World War One that broke out in late 1914. Moreover, Lawrence participated into some secret preparations for the upcoming war as well. According to Aldington, as a young archaeologist, he carried out the Sinai survey scheduled by Lord Kitchener at the War Office (1955: 118). The maps and military reports that Lawrence provided soon enabled him to be enlisted in the ranks at the Arab front as an Artillery Officer and a Staff Officer, respectively.

When Lawrence stepped into the Arab Bureau in Cairo as a result of these overt and secret preliminary actions, he observed two different types of Englishman military identity:

"The Englishmen in the Middle East divided into two classes. Class one, subtle and insinuating, caught the characteristics of the people about him, their speech, their conventions of thought, almost their manner. He directed men secretly, guiding them as he would. In such frictionless habit of influence his own nature lay hid, unnoticed.

Class two, the John Bull of the books, became the more rampantly English the longer he was away from England. He invented an Old Country for himself, a home of all remembered virtues, so splendid in the distance that, on return, he often found reality a sad falling off and withdrew his muddle-headed self into fractious advocacy of the good old times. Abroad, through his armoured certainty, he was a rounded sample of our traits. He showed the complete Englishman. There was friction in his track, and his direction was less smooth than that of the intellectual type: yet his stout example cut wider swathe" (Lawrence, 1921-2: 337).

Of course, Lawrence chose the former as it best suited his personal chivalrous purposes. His practice of fraud and deceit among the Arabs enabled him to secretly direct men and guide them as he wished. He believed that was the only way to handle Arab men. However, Lawrence's patriotism seemed to be self-assertive rather than self-sacrificing. His

omniscient manner and air of being at the very centre of things, with private knowledge of top-secret policies were not welcomed by his colleagues. Initially, Lawrence seemed to enjoy this isolation. He believed "in the place of consequence it set freedom, power to be alone, to slip the escort of our manufactured selves; a rest and forgetfulness of the chains of being" (Lawrence, 1921-2: 388). However, he later felt the loneliness that he hated when he was a kid.

In this respect, Lawrence assumed that mimicking Arabs might become both a personal and patriotic purpose. Consequently, he copied the Bedouin during his stay in the desert. Through such a disguise, Lawrence both helped sustain his home country and find a nation that worshipped him as a hero. Although he escaped serious dangers including death by rifle shot and survived severe sufferings such as dysentery and starvation, Lawrence regarded these evils as self-degradation for the perfection he sought through a new identity.

At the end of the war, Lawrence gained worldwide fame as an epic military hero. However, his disguise behind a new Arab identity did not prove to be as straightforward as he planned. While he was trying to build a new self that would also liberate his own soul, he nearly lost the English identity that he once was proud of. Lawrence elaborates on this spiritual in-between identity crisis:

"In my case, the effort for these years to live in the dress of Arabs, and to imitate their mental foundation, quitted me of my English self, and let me look at the West and its conventions with new eyes: they destroyed it all for me. At the same time I could not sincerely take on the Arab skin: it was an affectation only. Easily was a man made an infidel, but hardly might he be converted to another faith. I had dropped one form and not taken on the other, and was become like Mohammed's coffin in our legend, with a resultant feeling of intense loneliness in life, and a contempt, not for other men, but for all they do. Such detachment came at times to a man exhausted by prolonged physical effort and isolation. His body plodded on mechanically, while his reasonable mind left him, and from without looked down critically on him, wondering what that futile lumber did and why" (Lawrence, 1921-2: 304).

As Lawrence suggested above, when he decided to drop his English identity, the intent to wear a new one was in fact only an affectation. He needed such a shift as a disguise in order to convince the men around him. However, during prolonged physical effort and isolation, his mind

started to develop contempt for all he did. Lawrence "was continually and bitterly ashamed of" and felt guilty about risking his comrade's lives on a fraud (Lawrence, 1921-2: 267). At those times, with patriotic feelings, he wanted to thrust his English identity to the forefront, but did not receive any positive feedback from his fellow countrymen who thought his wearing of Bedouin robes was histrionic and melodramatic (Dowson, 1937: 138). Therefore, insanity was often very close when Lawrence shuttled between these two distinct identities. He could not wear the one while dropping the other. As a result, although he wished to detach himself off his own body through a chivalrous appearance in Arab dress, Lawrence was trapped in a clash between these two selves.

In short, Lawrence thought that his aim to become a Roman knight could be accomplished through abolishing his introvert self that stemmed from shameful illegitimacy. According to him, that would annihilate his inborn disgrace imposed by maternal oppression and bring him the heroic fame that he actually sought via his ostentatious manners throughout his whole life. As will be clarified in the next chapter, the Bedouin provided a perfect match for such an epic identity. For, it required pureness, primitiveness, manliness, self-denigration and endurance which were characteristics of heroes in the Augustan age. Moreover, they looked up to him as a prophet-like heroic leader that would free a suffering nation. Therefore, Lawrence initially tried to exactly copy them but then gave up his enthusiasm when he was struck with the clash between his original identity and Bedouin disguise.

Lawrence, the Arabian Knight

Although Lawrence identified his private position on the Arab front as "Staff Captain under Clayton in Sir Archibald Murray's Intelligence Section", who was in charge of "the 'distribution' of the Turkish Army and the preparation of maps" (1921-2: 45), his real aim in returning to the Middle East in wartime was "to be a general and knighted" (1921-2: 444). As discussed above, during the war, Lawrence sought to realize his chivalrous fantasies by adhering to the legendary disguise of an Arabian knight behind which he could both serve his homeland's patriotic purposes and liberate the Arabs in lordly fashion. Thus, he represented these mythic ideals in the form of certain heroic mediaeval attributes such as self-denial, redemption, fairness and benevolence in his epic book *Seven Pillars*.

Hughes claims that "the least of the muscular Christians has hold of the old chivalrous and Christian belief that a man's body is given him to

be trained and brought into subjection, and then used for the protection of the weak, the advancement of all righteous causes, and the subduing of the earth which God has given to the children of men" (1861: 99). Although Lawrence was short and thin and not relatively a muscular Christian man, he still held those old chivalrous beliefs and regarded the Arab cause as a righteous struggle that aimed at realizing the ideal of freedom. He therefore acted as the saviour of a weak race, as identified in Hughes' remarks above.

Unlike the muddy trenches of the Western front on which the machinery of the modern era replaced manly power in specified combat zones, the Arab front provided man-to-man fighting on the limitless battle fields of vast desert. This irregular kind of fighting, which is better known as guerrilla-type war in martial arts, required physical endurance, personal contact, courage, self-depreciation and knightly heroism, which were constantly observed in mediaeval times. Lowell Thomas, the American war correspondent on the Arab front, found Lawrence and his cause he carried out with the irregular Sherifean army to be truly epic, involving "a feat beyond the scope of unheroic twentieth-century soldiering" (1924: 83). He accordingly created a Lawrence of Arabia legend after the war, through which he made a great deal of money (TEL Studies, 2013). However, money was not the only stimulant for creating such a myth. Macphail claims that the war fiction of the United States sought to construct a type of soldier hero who would "refuse to salute his officers, be careless in his dress; contemptuous of rules, regulations and orders; smart, impudent or insolent in his answers" (1929: 207). Considering the hero-worshipping public of the period, this was vital in encouraging the U.S.A. to go to war with the allied forces.

Lawrence best suited this heroic typification and he was quite happy about the fame that Thomas brought to him through his entertaining travelogues across the country. He greatly helped this epic reputation spread by circulating through his friends and biographers exaggerated or wholly invented stories that were always to his advantage (Aldington, 1955: 160). In contrast to those who claim that the Arab cause was just a sideshow of World War One, Lawrence portrayed it as a highly important historic event. In his *Seven Pillars* and other memoirs and letters to various friends, Lawrence always sought to illustrate his passion and enthusiasm for the freedom of the Arabs as well as the significance of the role he and his irregulars played during this one-wild-man show.

Lawrence believed that "when he raised the Arab flag, the pan-Islamic supra-national State, for which Abdul Hamid had massacred and

worked and died, and the German hope of the co-operation of Islam in the world-plans of the Kaiser, passed into the realm of dreams" (1921-2: 35). According to him, "by the mere fact of his rebellion the Sherif had closed these two fantastic chapters of history" (1921-2: 36). The reason why Lawrence attached such great importance to the Arab revolt was not only the exalted interests of Great Britain and France in the Middle East. His personal chivalrous fantasies glamorized by a mediaeval passion for epic fame were also instrumental in leading his Arab cause. Freeing the allegedly noble Arabs from Turkish oppression was the most remarkable of these delusive dreams.

As suggested earlier, Lawrence was interested in reading books on medieval chivalry. One of the most significant parts of this literature was "Super flumina Babylonis" that he read as a boy. This left Lawrence a longing for "the node of a national movement" and "hustling to form the new Asia" (Lawrence, 1921-2: 657). Therefore, it is important to look at the content of this Biblical psalm in order to understand the motive that stimulated the mediaeval interests of Lawrence in the Middle East.

Psalm 137

1. By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.
2. There on the poplars we hung our harps,
3. for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
4. How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?
5. If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget [its skill].
6. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.
7. Remember, O LORD, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell. "Tear it down," they cried, "tear it down to its foundations!"
8. O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us
9. he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks (Holy Bible, 2013).

As seen above, the psalm is a kind of hymn that expresses the desires of the Jews in exile after the Babylonian defeat of Jerusalem in 586 BC (Bell, 1993: 148). The rivers of Babylon referred to in the psalm

are the Euphrates and Tigris situated in south-eastern Turkey. Apart from the nostalgic longing for Jerusalem, the psalm also reflects the dislike for the Holy City's foes with sometimes aggressive imagery. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the area was dominated by the Ottoman Turks although the people dwelling in those Biblical lands were mostly Arabs. In Jerusalem, there were native Arab Jews and a small populace of German Jewish occupants (Aldington, 1955: 136). Lawrence regarded the whole Arab race as the Muslim equivalent of the Jews in Babylonian times, and the Turks were the hated enemies of the Holy Land. Consequently he wished to bring salvation to the Arabs in the lordly fashion of Roman legionaries.

Thus, on the battle-fields of the revolt, Lawrence wished to simulate a modern version of an epic chivalrous character, known as Saladin by the Western world who led the Islamic opposition against the European Crusaders in the Levant. Nevertheless, the boot was on the other foot now. The Christian Lawrence was trying hard to get back the Biblical lands from Muslim Turks, supposedly for the Bedouin's sake. However, he was not as tender-hearted as Saladin who refused to harm any of his Christian prisoners at Merj Ayun (Besant and Palmer, 2011: 116). Lawrence ordered, in a so-called chivalrous fashion, the massacre of a Turkish battalion near the village of Tafas and consented to the Arabs "fighting like devils, the sweat blurring their eyes, dust parching their throats; while the flame of cruelty and revenge which was burning in their bodies so twisted them, that their hands could hardly shoot" (1921-2: 614).

Eventually, when the Holy City fell Lawrence was "ready to enter in the official manner which the Catholic imagination of Mark Sykes had devised" (1921-2: 444). Although Lawrence did nothing to contribute to the success, he was present at the ceremony at the Jaffa gate as the staff officer of Clayton, which he describes as the supreme moment of the war for him (1921-2: 444). This melodramatic moment, which represents the joy and cheer of the victorious commanders, also had deep symbolic meaning for Lawrence. Performed through 'the Catholic imagination' of Sykes, Doughty, Burton et. al, the scenery was exactly similar to what Lawrence had dreamed of throughout his life.

This dream fed by mediaeval passion was still so prevalent in his character after the war that Lawrence entitled his book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, being inspired from a clause in the Bible: "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars" (Holy Bible, 2013). Lawrence built his own house of wisdom in the Biblical lands above seven righteous pillars that the Arab cause provided. Those were knowledge,

courage, prudence, protection, chivalry, pureness and peace-making. Lawrence explained those heroic purposes at the gathering in the Town Hall of Damascus after they entered the city.

“We passed to work. Our aim was an Arab Government, with foundations large and native enough to employ the enthusiasm and self-sacrifice of the rebellion, translated into terms of peace. We had to save some of the old prophetic personality upon a substructure to carry that ninety per cent of the population who had been too solid to rebel, and on whose solidity the new State must rest” (1921-2: 647).

At the end of the bloody battles that he and his irregular Bedouins fought with courage, chivalry and pureness, they captured Damascus. Lawrence set up an Arab Government with knowledge and prudence that would bring peace and protection to the majority of Arabs. As a result, like a Romantic cavalier, he constructed his own house of wisdom in the old Biblical lands.

Another significant emphasis in *Seven Pillars* was on the physical suffering of the men. By including the hardships and harshness that require manly physical endurance in an expansive desert in his book, Lawrence intended to illustrate how his meagre body was trained, and then used for the salvation of the weak. He claims that

“For a year and a half I had been in motion, riding a thousand miles each month upon camels: with added nervous hours in crazy aeroplanes, or rushing across country in powerful cars. In my last five actions I had been hit, and my body so dreaded further pain that now I had to force myself under fire. Generally I had been hungry: lately always cold: and frost and dirt had poisoned my hurts into a festering mass of sores” (1921-2: 403).

In *Le Morte d'Arthur*, considered to be a handbook of chivalry in mediaeval times, Thomas Malory argues that the perfect knight should be pure and chaste. In order to attain such knightly pureness, one must be separated from earthly and bodily pleasures (Malory, 1485: 216). Suffering and bodily endurance are another ways of purifying oneself (Malory, 1485: 278). In other words, hunger, thirst, cold and fatigue are manly challenges that a perfect knight should overcome so as to train his body and bring it into subjection for the protection of the oppressed. Therefore, these sufferings enabled Lawrence to disconnect from his 'lumber' body and motivated him to take on a heroic identity. Acting as a modern knight, Lawrence exaggerated the pain and suffering to prove the

legitimacy of his role as the romantic Arabian knight that he played during the revolt.

Another significant attribute of chivalry is to be loved by the people that you save. Undoubtedly, Lawrence was one of the most beloved Englishman on the Arab peninsula during wartime. He claims "they [the Arabs] would listen to no word but mine, and brought me their troubles for judgement" (1921-2: 368). It is true that the Arabs as a nation adore victorious warriors. Hence, the more battles Lawrence won, the more popular he became among the Arabs. However, many of Lawrence's colleagues at the Arab Bureau – especially Dowson – claimed that the real reason why the Arabs loved Lawrence was the gold so lavishly put at his disposal (Aldington, 1955: 209). Aldington argues that the real stimulant for many Arab soldiers participating in actions was the hope of looting and the service fee that they would eventually get from their sheiks (1955: 210). Therefore, although Lawrence claims that money was just confirmation and not the real base of interest for his followers, it is clear that, with this money, he bought not only some irregular soldiery for his military causes but also love and fame for his chivalric identity.

Lawrence, the Liar

The Lawrence of Arabia legend was mostly debunked by Richard Aldington (*Lawrence of Arabia: A Biographical Enquiry*, 1955) and later by James Barr (*Setting the Desert on Fire: T. E. Lawrence and Britain's Secret War in Arabia, 1916-1918*, 2006) after contemporary evidence revealed that many of the accounts that Lawrence included in his book did not actually reflect the truth. Aldington even claims that the whole trend and assertiveness of *Seven Pillars* which highlights that the fighting on the Arab front was very important and that the most significant contribution to that war came from Lawrence and the Arabs is abusive (1955: 247). In fact, it would be optimistic to expect Lawrence, whose fraudulences made even other British officers at the Arab Bureau suspect his reliability, to reflect the truth. For, that would mean relinquishing his potential chance to represent himself as a modern Arab knight. Therefore, Lawrence either wholly fabricated some epic fantasy tales that never happened or exaggerated half-truths with embellishing narratives in *Seven Pillars*.

Lawrence suggested that "I began in my reports to conceal the true stories of things, and to persuade the few Arabs who knew to an equal reticence. In this book also, for the last time, I mean to be my own judge of what to say" (*Seven Pillars* 8). By concealing the true stories of things and being his own judge, Lawrence used deceit and falsity as a conscious

act to make the reader believe his heroic delusions, thus making him as an unreliable narrator. Wilson informs us that an early draft of *Seven Pillars* was stolen from Lawrence at Reading Station (1989: 183). The loss was reported in the press, but nothing was ever found. Only the early chapters survived and Lawrence set about rewriting the rest from memory (Wilson, 1989: 248). As it was miraculous to rewrite an approximately 700-page book from memory, Lawrence purposely manipulated the truth so as to portray himself as a modern simile of a Roman knight.

In this respect, there are many inaccurate accounts in *Seven Pillars*. Actually, the most remarkable of these is the one that Lawrence told to the whole Arab nation. Lawrence deceived the Arabs and made them believe in Arab freedom by endorsing so-called promises of the British government. Acting as a liaison officer between the Arabs and the British, he had the Sharifean family believing him on the one hand, and some British officers such as Allenby and Clayton trusting him on the other. By not explaining to Allenby the whole Arab situation, nor disclosing the full British plan to Feisal, Lawrence convinced himself, the Arabs and British that they could change history in the Near East (Lawrence, 1938: 258). Changing history would of course be an epic success, and Lawrence wished to play the chief part in that heroic game. Therefore, throughout his whole book, he often emphasized that it was him who was leading the rebellion. He wanted to portray himself as a splendid Anglo-Semitic chieftain who originated the whole idea of the Arab revolt and an authentic principal of the Revolt who raised the Arabs in Wejh, Aqaba and Damascus campaigns.

However, Aldington claims that "all preliminaries, which led to the rebellion, occurred before Lawrence ever reached Cairo, as did Hussein's refusal to endorse the Holy war" (1955: 146). After studying Arab evidence about the revolt, Antonius also asserts that the plan to capture Aqaba was first suggested to Feisal by Auda, and not Lawrence at their first meeting at Wejh. Moreover, the plan was executed by Auda and his tribesmen independently, without any foreign help (1939: 322). In his book about T. E Lawrence and Britain's secret war in Arabia, James Barr does not even mention Lawrence in the preliminary stages of the revolt. It was Wilson and Storrs who initiated the action and pursued it until, later on, Allenby took command of the Arab front (Barr, 2006: 33). Lawrence's reasoning behind his effort to portray himself as the originator and natural leader of the rebellion was his desire to accomplish something great and increase his epic fame in order to spread his chivalrous fantasies throughout the whole nation. Therefore, he pretended to be the hero

knight who brought freedom and the right of self-government to the weak Arabs and endeavoured to pursue a chivalrous dream although he half-despairingly knew that the Arab revolt would never perform its last stage (Lawrence, 1938: 258).

The most controversial account that Lawrence reported in *Seven Pillars* is his claim that he was tortured and raped by a Turkish pasha in Deraa (1921-2: 433). He provides the reader with every single detail of the incident so convincingly that it is barely possible to deny it without further exploration. However, after carrying out comprehensive scientific research, Barr informs us that there is no corroboration of Lawrence's story (2006: 193). He claims that "the relevant page of Lawrence's pocket diary, covering the period 15-21 November, when these events allegedly took place, is missing" (2006: 195). It is also weird that it was "the only missing page in either of his diaries for 1917 and 1918, both of which he gave in 1926 to his confidante, Charlotte Shaw" (2006: 197). In order to reveal what was written on that missing page, Barr implemented a technique called Electrostatic Data Analysis which was developed by forensic scientists. Conducted with the consent of the British Library, the experiment revealed that on 18 November Lawrence wrote in his diary that he still was in Azraq although he claims in *Seven Pillars* that he left Azraq for Hauran, a fertile region east of Deraa, on 14 November. Moreover, the scientific research also showed that the words "To Hauran" written in the diary turned out to be added later on by Lawrence himself (Barr, 2006: 198). Given that Lawrence could not have left Azraq before 19 November and he also took another few days to do reconnaissance with Talal, it was not possible for him to be at Deraa on the night of 20 November, when he alleged that the rape incident took place. Furthermore, in a letter dated 14 November to his mother, Lawrence describes Azraq castle and informs his parents that he will be "staying here a few days" (2005: 138). In another letter dated 14 December to his parents, Lawrence reports to them that he "stayed for ten days or so there" (2005: 139).

Another scholar, Lawrence James, also claims that "Lawrence concocted the story of rape and torture at Deraa" (1995: 213). According to James, "the service diary of the 10th Motor Section of the Royal Field Artillery, a British unit at Akaba, records that on 21 November 1917 (the *Seven Pillars* date for the Deraa incident) Lawrence and Colonel Joyce were taking part in armoured car reconnaissance up Wadi Itm, many miles from Deraa" (1995: 214). All these recent evidence clearly illustrate that Lawrence was certainly not in Deraa on the 20 or 21 November, when

he claims that he was arrested, tortured and raped by Turkish soldiers. As a result, it seems that Lawrence, being aware of the situation after the war, deliberately tore the page including the week 15-21 November from his pocket diary and subtly added the words "To Hauran" in order to convince his circle that the fictional rape scenario had really happened.

In fact, it is also possible for reader to conclude from the subtexts of *Seven Pillars* that the accounts Lawrence narrated about the Deraa incident are mostly controversial. Firstly, Lawrence claims that "as rumour gradually magnified my importance, while after we blew up Jemal Pasha they put Ali and me at the head of their list; worth twenty thousand pounds alive or ten thousand dead" (1921-2: 453). Therefore, it is weird that none of the military personnel in the entire Turkish garrison recognized Lawrence who was so popular in the region and just let him escape through a broken window although he was down-at-heel. It is also surprising that no townspeople betrayed Lawrence for whom such a huge amount of prize was promised in an area which was notorious for its locals' love of money. Moreover, Lawrence reports that he introduced himself as "Ahmed ibn Bagr, a Circassian from Kuneitra" when he was arrested (1921-2: 453). Nevertheless, he does not disclose how he convinced the Turkish pasha with his imperfect Arabic accent that he was a Circassian. It is also contradictory that Lawrence does not mention any kind of pain after he flees from the dungeon cell he is incarcerated in. He carries on narrating his own epic story as if he was miraculously healed by a magic touch although he claims to have been terribly tortured and flogged in Deraa.

In this context, it is important to explore why Lawrence lied about such a significant subject that might affect his personal and familial life. There are two explanations for Lawrence's inclination to include rape incident in his book. Firstly, since Lawrence viewed the Turks as the enemy of the holy Biblical lands, his hatred for them might have caused him to portray the Turks as a degenerated and pederast nation. Moreover, Lawrence claims that "beyond anything calculable in figures, we had let loose a passion of anti-Turkish feeling which, embittered as it had been by generations of subjection, might die very hard" (1921-2: 91). Hence, Lawrence claimed that he was raped by the Turks in order to embitter anti-Turkish feelings among Muslim Arabs. For, that would contribute to Lawrence's hope that this anti-Turkish feeling would not disappear soon.

Secondly, as suggested above, Lawrence regards suffering as a requirement for pureness, which he believes is a chivalrous attribute of Arthurian knights. Since flagellation and self-torment were masochist acts

in mediaeval Christian culture, Lawrence wished to fabricate a similar story so as to back up his aim of representing himself as a modern chivalrous hero. In *Le Morte d'Arthur*, the Christian ideal of redemption provides strong motivations throughout the heroes. While some of them do penance for their sins, others enter an abbey in atonement for their evil acts. In his *New Biography*, Stewart asserts that Lawrence attended flogging parties in Chelsea "conducted by an underworld figure known as Bluebeard" after the war (1977: 195). This biographical knowledge illustrates that mediaeval Christian masochism was always an ideal illusion for Lawrence to satisfy his innate enthusiasm for chivalrous suffering. In a similar fashion, Lawrence portrayed the alleged torture and rape incident at Deraa as a kind of knightly redemption for his inborn shame, laid on him by his parents. By making up a sheer lie about bitter pain and agony, he also sought to convince post-war readers of his fantasies that included medieval heroism and chivalry.

Lawrence, the Romantic Hero

Lawrence was generally known as a romantic figure throughout his life and he kept the same attitude during wartime, as well. His story was praised by some newspaper reports after the war as "one of the outstanding romances of the war" (Barr, 2006: 306). In fact, this was what distinguished him as a hero from his peers on the Western Front. The desert, where Lawrence fiercely fought the enemy in man-to-man combat, also provided romantic sceneries that inspired his chivalrous imagination. Therefore, Lawrence adopted a lyric narrative style as a symbolic act in order to produce, carry on and naturalise his heroic character throughout his book.

Describing the things around him to be unreal, Lawrence adorned his dramatic illusion with romantic desert fantasies in *Seven Pillars*. Although the setting was foreign, he familiarizes himself and the reader with it through long and detailed descriptions of the desert. For instance, he depicts one of the war zones in the desert in a very plain and smooth way.

"Meanwhile we had only to wait in the Atatir, which to our joy were really green, with every hollow a standing pool, and the valley beds of tall grass prinked with flowers. The chalky ridges, sterile with salt, framed the water-channels delightfully. From their tallest point we could look north and south, and see how the rain, running down, had painted the valleys across the white in broad stripes of green, sharp and firm like brush-strokes. Everything was growing, and

daily the picture was fuller and brighter till the desert became like a rank water-meadow. Playful packs of winds came crossing and tumbling over one another, their wide, brief gusts surging through the grass, to lay it momentarily in swathes of dark and light satin, like young corn after the roller. On the hill we sat and shivered before these sweeping shadows, expecting a heavy blast—and there would come into our faces a warm and perfumed breath, very gentle, which passed away behind us as a silver-grey light down the plain of green. Our fastidious camels grazed an hour or so, and then lay down to digest, bringing up stomach-load after stomach-load of butter-smelling green cud, and chewing weightily” (1921-2: 508).

By adopting a Romantic approach in these descriptions, Lawrence intends to reflect the pureness and naturalness of the setting in which his dramatic cause takes place. In his romantic delusion, the desert is like a vast water-meadow. The open valleys are bedecked with flowers. Hygienic ridges pleasantly encircle tiny water-pools and the winds soften the scorching desert heat. However, the sun in the open sky is “fierce, stimulant, and barbaric; reviving the colours of the desert like a draught” (1938: 269). As Lawrence aims to become a noble knight rather than a sanguine epic hero, he deliberately employs lyric language to illustrate how he still preserves pure lordly attributes of mediaeval heroes. Although he might be involved in the brutal act of fighting, he still demonstrates his love for nature and emphasizes inner feelings in a romanticized manner.

Another significant allegorical narrative signifier in Lawrence’s chivalrous romanticism is old-style historical romance. As clarified in the previous chapters, Lawrence views the Arab peninsula as an archaic Christian region situated across Biblical lands. Therefore, he searches for traces of spiritual liberation along his journeys throughout the desert and sometimes reflects his findings in *Seven Pillars*.

“It was to be Ali’s first view of Azrak, and we hurried up the stony ridge in high excitement, talking of the wars and songs and passions of the early shepherd kings, with names like music, who had loved this place; and of the Roman legionaries who languished here as garrison in yet earlier times. Then the blue fort on its rock above the rustling palms, with the fresh meadows and shining springs of water, broke on our sight. Of Azrak, as of Rumm, one said ‘NUMEN INEST’. Both were magically haunted: but whereas Rumm was vast and echoing and God-like, Azrak’s unfathomable silence was steeped in knowledge of wandering poets, champions, lost kingdoms, all the crime and chivalry and dead magnificence of Hira and Ghassan.

Each stone or blade of it was radiant with half-memory of the luminous, silky Eden, which had passed so long ago" (1921-2: 406).

While wandering across unfathomable deserts, Lawrence clearly observes flamboyant memories of lonely bards, bold cavaliers and shepherd kings. He is haunted by the holy souls of champion warriors or saddened by the grief of overthrown kingdoms. As the Latin term *numen inest* suggests, he finds a spirit there, echoing an archaic ballad of liberty (Barr, 2006: 186). In fact, he is only too glad to behave like a Christian, and he wishes to share his joy with the people he has bestowed freedom on in a romantic fashion.

On the other hand, reading the manual of chivalry, Lawrence was aware of the discussion about whether Lancelot, the undoubted champion warrior, was the best knight in the world or his son Galahad, who rejected earthly love and glory in favour of all things spiritual, was the ideal knight. Lawrence would certainly vote for the younger hero who preserved his pureness and chastity by refraining from dire consequences of illicit, sexual love. Galahad knows that his father and Guinevere's illegitimate love affair contributed to the collapse of the kingdom. Therefore, he should look for a love that helps the fellowship among Knights of the Round Table remain strong. That would lead him to the Holy Grail, the cup from which Jesus drank at the Last Supper, thus possessing miraculous powers. This kind of love is also ideal for Lawrence's chivalrous illusions. For, he is aware that in the search for the Holy Grail at the end of the legendary story, only Galahad, Percyvale, and Bors – the knights who were chaste and pure, after all – are able to see it although all the knights long for even just a glimpse of the Holy Grail.

In a similar fashion, Lawrence made a journey inwards, into himself, to find purity. Rather than libidinal gratification, he welcomed the preliminary isolation of sexual experience, which enabled his constitutive heroic features to carry a wider symbolic meaning. Like Arthurian knights, he often emphasized pureness, chastity and comradeship in his semi-autobiographical book.

Conclusion

After examining Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* in the light of Christian medievalism and chivalrous heroism and critically analysing Aldington, Barr, Thomas, and Wilson's studies about T. E. Lawrence, it can be argued that Lawrence stepped into the Biblical lands in order to be revered as a romantic British hero whose unorthodox methods brought victory via a distinctive political and military practice. Therefore, he

bedecked his book with delirious chivalry fantasies and epic mediaeval similes, always to his advantage, in order to publish his heroic fame across his homeland and abroad.

Lawrence's boyhood tendency to be a hero was intensified by his visits to the Middle East thanks to his personal interests in medievalism. When the war broke out, Lawrence thought he should exert his bodily power to liberate the weak Arabs who were repressed by the allegedly cruel Turks. That would bring him religious redemption and chivalrous fame through which he could compensate for his notorious familial disgrace. However, he was aware that he could not achieve these heroic fantasies with his Christian identity in a Muslim-dominated area. So he dropped his English identity and unsuccessfully tried to adopt a new one by exactly copying the Bedouin's way of life, which also gave him a mediaeval appearance. Lawrence seemed to enjoy donning such a disguise and mimicry in the first place. For, this provided him with an escape from the reality that he detested. However, this unreal publicity combined with his craving to be self-assertive annoyed his co-patriots and caused Lawrence to be in complete desolation afterwards. As a result, even though Lawrence wished that the regularity of his disguise would provide him freedom, this dualism resulted in a kind of self-destructing loneliness stemming from psychosocial anxieties.

Lawrence's wanderlust to visit and explore Biblical lands as a result of his spiritual interest in archaism also tempted him to go to Arabia where he wished to find the noble attributes of mediaeval Roman nomads among the Bedouin tribesmen. This lust to seek freedom in anonymity was mainly caused by his readings of the travelogues by master Arabians such as Doughty, Burton and Blunt. His long pre-war stay on the Arab peninsula gave Lawrence the opportunity to establish intimate contacts with the nomadic Bedouins. He truly believed that these noble savages deserved self-government and liberty. However, after the outbreak of war, his personal aim for chivalrous glory and the patriotic influence of Doughty, Blunt and Sykes dramatically changed Lawrence's mind about the Bedouin. He set to work looking for proper ways to sacrifice them for British interests in the Middle East and he abused their militant power for his own personal heroic success at the Arab front.

As suggested earlier, Lawrence actually returned to the Biblical lands to be knighted. By upholding the code of chivalrous ethics, he used his body for the advancement of a righteous cause that aimed at regaining freedom. He saw himself as an immortal knight who had been sent from heaven to deliver the wild sons of Ishmael from their oppressors. Like the

sacred Knights of the Round Table within the Le Morte d'Arthur legend, Lawrence had a powerful lust to seek adventure, do chivalrous acts, and discover honour in the most difficult situations. He associated the effects of an armed uprising in Mecca with fourteenth-century papal schism. His profound knowledge of the history, the people and the language, and his authority on war enabled Lawrence to endure guerrilla warfare in the Middle East. This type of warfare, that required physical endurance, personal contact, courage, self-degrading and knightly heroism, gave Lawrence the opportunity to reflect himself as a modern equivalent of mediaeval heroes who suffered hunger, thirst, bodily pain and other serious hazards, but still saw service life as some kind of haven, a monastery. In order to exactly copy them, Lawrence slept the night on his stomach to ward off the cramp of hunger, rode thousands of miles with a meagre water supply and suffered cold and heat in the harsh weather conditions of the desert. However, Lawrence enjoyed these hardships. For, he believed one should avoid earthly pleasures so as to attain chivalrous purity and heroism.

However, this heroic fame was later debunked when it was revealed that Lawrence's narrations were mostly untrue. After contemporary evidence has been made open to public access, it is clearly seen that Lawrence, who was seeking attention through distributing false stories among his friends, deliberately used deceit and falsity in a conscious act to make the reader believe his heroic fantasies. He first kept claiming that it was him who originated the whole idea of Arab freedom through which he would change history in the Near East. However, he "was too junior to have been part of the inner circle of officials directing British involvement in the revolt" (Storrs, 1937: 200). Lawrence also exaggerated his sufferings which he saw as natural attributes of epic heroism. He even accused the Turks of torturing and raping him in Deraa, a tiny town near Syria. Nevertheless, it was scientifically proven by Barr and James that Lawrence was not even in Deraa on the date when he claimed the rape incident happened. Lawrence's purpose in using fabricating and exaggeration as a narrative act was to express his proclivities in a way which would avoid censorship, inspire pity and smear a hatred opponent. He also illustrated his strong motivation for the Christian ideal of knightly redemption since he knew that flagellation and torment were masochist acts of mediaeval Christian culture. As a result, Lawrence fabricated a similar story to represent himself as the modern representative of epic chivalry.

Lawrence's romantic narrative style in *Seven Pillars* helped to spread his heroic fame, as well. Although Doughty's writing was an acquired taste for Lawrence, he avoided using Doughty's archaic style and instead employed a modern form of lyricism. For, he viewed the happenings around him as a romantic drama and therefore wished to manifest himself as an epic protagonist who was acting like a brave Roman cavalier. As a result, he adorned his desert fantasies with picturesque literary descriptions and old-fashioned historical romance. Moreover, Lawrence's romanticism also regarded purity and chastity as noble attributes of a mediaeval knight. This was best pursued by refraining from bodily pleasures. Like Galahad, one of the most remarkable Knights of the Round Table, Lawrence adopted isolation from sexual experience in order to enable his heroic character to carry broader symbolic meanings. Since chivalry is much more an objective for knights to endeavour than an easily accomplished merit, Lawrence welcomed pain and suffering rather than earthly joys so as to pursue his aim of finding spiritual gratification.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT: Being considered as one of the most controversial figures in the field of Oriental studies, Thomas Edward Lawrence, also known as Lawrence of Arabia, has often been included in the discussions regarding Middle Eastern politics and the history of war. In Turkey, too, he is a prominent character for those interested in history, politics and literature. In many studies on Lawrence's early life, interests and adventures in the World War I, he is either accomplished as a popular hero who is referred to as the king of the desert, or denigrated as a liar who embellishes his military mission in the Eastern front through fake stories and untrue narrations in his book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1921-22). In this context, this study sets out to examine how, in his semi-autobiographical book, T. E. Lawrence demonstrates himself as a romantic cavalier who played a great role in the War by encouraging the Arabs revolt against the Ottoman Empire. To do so, the present study first refers to Lawrence's early boyhood to understand why he wishes to look for a new identity

in the desert. Through some biographical studies on Lawrence, it is illustrated that due to the shame imposed on him by his parents' illegitimate course, Lawrence would like to change his identity to overcome his inner crisis stemming from familial disgrace. Secondly, the study hopes to reveal how Lawrence's interests in medieval literature, Christianity and Biblical history encourage him to find an identity in the form of knights and cavaliers in ancient Greek and Rome. It is clearly shown that by establishing a simile to the lives, glories and even sufferings of Roman knights in his *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence aims to represent himself as a modern cavalier who brings grandeur and splendour to the Biblical lands yet again via epic victories against the Turks. However, it is also illustrated in the present study that Lawrence fabricates some stories in order to embellish his war memoirs so that he could be acknowledged as a romantic cavalier in modern times. By reviewing some scientific research conducted on his diaries and reading the letters sent by Lawrence to his family members and confidantes, it is revealed that Lawrence has made up the rape incidence in Deraa. Hoping to liken his suffering to that of Roman knights, Lawrence intends to increase the effect of the simile that he associates with chivalric tradition in the medieval era. Finally, by showing how the language adopted by Lawrence while penning his semi-autobiographical book *Seven Pillars* resembles romantic narratives of epic heroes in the Biblical history, this study illustrates that Lawrence seeks to gain not only an epic success but also a heroic fame out of the war that he fought with his Arab comrades against the Ottoman Empire in 1914-18. In brief, in line with the literary analyses of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and review of literature on T. E. Lawrence and his war memoirs, it can be concluded that the main reason why Lawrence came to the former Biblical lands is his desire to be a knight and gain reputation and glory as a modern simile of medieval cavaliers. Attempting to accomplish these ideals, Lawrence seeks to disguise a new identity, which shall be nobler and more virtuous than the previous one, to eliminate the disgrace arising out of his illegitimacy. Thanks to his interests in medievalism, Christianity and Biblical history, he is attracted by the lure of Middle East and the Bedouin – local tribesmen of the desert. To restore former Biblical lands – Jerusalem, in particular – into their past glory and reinstate the sons of the desert their former splendour, Lawrence takes on a divine mission of provoking the Arabs against the Ottoman Empire. By doing so, he hopes to acquire fame, similar to that of Roman knights, who helped oppressed people gain freedom in medieval era. As suggested earlier, to persuade his circle and readers that his simile is most real, Lawrence employs many literary and political tricks, including fabricated stories, lies, and exaggeration. In addition, by using a romanticized language that bears many similarities to that of medieval literature and referring in many occasions to masterpieces of this literature, he implies that his semi-autobiographical book is actually a pastiche of medieval romances.

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET: Şarkiyat çalışmalarındaki en tartışmalı figürlerden biri olarak kabul edilen Thomas Edward Lawrence, ya da daha iyi bilinen adıyla Arabistanlı Lawrence, pek çok kez Orta Doğu politikaları ve savaş tarihi gibi

alanlarda yapılan bilimsel tartışmaların içine dahil edilmiştir. Türkiye’de de tarih, siyaset ve edebiyat alanlarında çalışmalar yapan kimseler için Lawrence önemli bir karakterdir. Lawrence’ın çocukluk ve gençlik dönemleri, ilgi alanları ve 1. Dünya Savaşı’ndaki maceralarına dair yapılan pek çok akademik çalışmada, Lawrence ya ‘çölün kralı’ olarak görülen popüler bir kahraman olarak övülmüş ya da Doğu cephesindeki askeri görevlerini, *Hikmetin Yedi Sütunu* (1921-22) adlı kitabında yalan hikayeler ve doğru olmayan anlatılar ile süsleyen bir yalancı olarak eleştirilmiştir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma T. E. Lawrence’ın yarı otobiyografik kitabında, kendisini nasıl Arapları Osmanlı’ya karşı kışkırtarak savaşta büyük bir rol oynayan bir Romantik şövalye gibi gösterdiğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla, mevcut çalışma ilk olarak Lawrence’ın çölde neden yeni bir kimlik arayışına girdiğini anlamak için onun çocukluk dönemini ele alacaktır. Lawrence ile ilgili yapılan bazı biyografik çalışmalara atıfta bulunarak, anne-babasının yasa dışı ilişkisi neticesinde ortaya çıkan ailevi utançtan ötürü Lawrence’ın içinde hissettiği krizi aşmak için nasıl kimlik değiştirmek istediği gösterilecektir. İkinci olarak, çalışmada, Lawrence’ın Orta Çağ edebiyatı, Hıristiyanlık ve İncil tarihine olan ilgisinin onu nasıl antik Yunan ve Roma şövalyelerine benzer bir kimlik bulmaya ittiği gösterilmeye çalışılacaktır. Kitabına, Romalı şövalyelerin hayatları, zaferleri ve hatta acılarına benzer hikayeler ekleyerek, Lawrence’ın kendini Türklere karşı epik zaferler kazanan ve böylece İncil’de geçen bölgelere yeniden görkem ve ihtişam getiren modern bir şövalye gibi göstermeye çalıştığı ortaya çıkarılacaktır. Ancak, bu çalışmada, ayrıca Lawrence’ın kendini modern zamanlarda romantik bir şövalye gibi kabul ettirebilmek için savaş anılarını uydurulmuş hikayelerle nasıl süslediği de gösterilmeye çalışılacaktır. Günlükleri üzerine yapılan bilimsel çalışmalara atıfta bulunularak ve Lawrence’ın aile üyelerine ve sırdaşlarına gönderdikleri mektuplarda yazan ifadeler vurgulanarak, Lawrence’ın Deraa’daki tecavüz iddiasını aslında kendisinin uydurduğu ortaya çıkarılacaktır. Romalı şövalyelerinkine benzer bir acının kendisinin de başına geldiğini iddia ederek, Lawrence’ın Orta Çağdaki şövalyelik geleneği ile kendisi arasında kurduğu benzerliği güçlendirmeğe çalıştığı vurgulanacaktır. Son olarak, çalışmada, Lawrence’ın yarı otobiyografik kitabını kaleme alırken kullandığı dilin, Hıristiyanlık tarihinde geçen destansı kahramanların romantik anlatıları ile nasıl bir benzerlik gösterdiği vurgulanarak, Lawrence’ın Arap yoldaşları ile 1914-1918 yılları arasında Osmanlı İmparatorluğuna karşı yürüttüğü savaşta sadece destansı bir zafer değil aynı zamanda kahramanlara ait bir ün de kazanmaya çalıştığı ortaya konulacaktır. Kısaca ifade etmek gerekirse, Lawrence’ın hayatı, savaş hatıraları ve *Hikmetin Yedi Sütunu* adlı kitabı ile ilgili yapılan edebi çalışmalar ışığında, bu çalışmada Lawrence’ın eski Hıristiyan topraklara gelmesinin ana sebebinin şövalye olmak ve Orta Çağda yaşamış şövalyelerin modern bir temsilcisi olarak zafer ve ün kazanmak olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Bu hayallerini gerçekleştirmek uğruna, Lawrence gayri meşru çocukluğunun utancını ortadan kaldırmak için, öncekinden daha asil ve erdemli olan, yeni bir kimlik arayışına girmiştir. Orta Çağ, Hıristiyanlık ve İncil tarihine olan ilgisi sayesinde, Orta Doğunun ve çölün yerel kabileleri olan Bedevilerin cazibesine kapılıp bu bölgeye

gelmek istemiştir. Eski Hıristiyan topraklarını –özellikle Kudüs– geçmişteki görkemine geri kavuşturmak ve çölün çocuklarına eski ihtişamlarını geri getirmek adına, Lawrence Arapları Osmanlı İmparatorluğuna karşı kışkırtmak gibi ilahi bir göreve soyunmuştur. Bunu yaparken de, Orta Çağ'da ezilmiş halkların özgürlüklerini kazanmasına yardım eden Romalı şövalyelerinkine benzer bir ün kazanmayı ummuştur. Daha önce belirtildiği üzere, çevresindeki insanlara ve okuyucularına söz konusu şövalyelere benzerliğinin gerçek olduğunu ispatlamak adına, Lawrence uydurma hikayeler, yalanlar ve abartı gibi pek çok edebi ve siyasi oyunlara meyletmiştir. Ayrıca, kitabında Orta Çağ'da yazılan eserle benzer şekilde romantik bir dil kullanarak ve sürekli olarak bu edebiyatın şaheserlerine atıfta bulunarak, Lawrence *Hikmetin Yedi Sütunu* adlı yarı otobiyografik kitabının aslında Orta Çağda yazılan romanların bir öykünmesi olduğunu göstermeye çalışmaktadır.