

City University of New York (CUNY)

CUNY Academic Works

Publications and Research

City College of New York

2017

T. E. Lawrence's Seven Pillars of Wisdom and the Erotics of Literary History: Straddling Epic.

Václav Paris
CUNY City College

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

More information about this work at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cc_pubs/492

Discover additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu>

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).
Contact: AcademicWorks@cuny.edu

T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and the Erotics of Literary History: Straddling Epic

VÁCLAV PARIS
CUNY City College

FEW GENRES in English literary history are more marked by the revolution of modernism than the epic. Epic, around 1900, was chiefly an archaic form, material for antiquarians such as William Morris, Alfred Noyes, and Charles Doughty. By 1922, however, the dominant idea of epic had become more about “making it new” than making it old. For Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and T. S. Eliot it was a polyphonic, fragmentary, encyclopedic genre.¹ It was also, in contrast to its reactionary predecessor, an inclusive or cosmopolitan form. Where epic in the nineteenth century was conceived, as Pascale Casanova has suggested, to be a medium for national competition—serving to show the greater antiquity, larger claim to cultural capital, and superior progress of a given people²—*Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, and *The Cantos* rethink nationalism: attempting, among other things, to join traditions in a new transcultural *koiné*. *Ulysses* is, in this sense, “an epic of two races (Israelite-Irish)”³ where “Jewgreek is greekjew. Extremes meet.”⁴

In other genres, modernist studies has moved away from the theoretical model of a rift towards recognizing continuities between the modernists and their Victorian forebears. With epic, however, as Herbert Tucker has pointed out, a “drastic historical severance” remains in place, the Great War marking an insuperable watershed in the genre. Tucker himself has exhaustively studied the rich traditions of nineteenth-century and Edwardian epic as a corrective to this severance, aiming to show that modernism had a more complex, dialectical engagement with past epoists than previously imagined.⁵ This article attempts a related objective, not so much of smoothing over the rift, but of problematizing it. Instead of offering a survey of the genre in this period, this discussion focuses on a single text as a node in which

residual and emergent ideas of epic come together: T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph*.

Lawrence's book is a good candidate for this straddling of epic for a number of reasons. Although the earliest printed version dates to 1922 and the full text to 1926, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* reads—at least at first sight—much more like a heroic epic of the late nineteenth century. Indeed, although it is supposedly a historical account of the author's involvement in the Arab Revolt during the Great War, its plot can easily be interpreted, as David Lean interprets it in his 1962 adaptation *Lawrence of Arabia*, as a patriotic adventure story. It begins in 1916, with Lawrence in Cairo pondering the difficulties of creating an insurgency among the Arabs against the Ottoman Empire. Unable to endure headquarters, Lawrence sets out to meet Feisal, the third son of Hussein bin Ali, Grand Sharif of Mecca. Scouting Feisal as an ideal leader, Lawrence helps him establish a new guerrilla front. Dressing in Arab costume, he blows up supply lines on the Hejaz railway, hindering Turkish communications. He then rallies the tribal chiefs, including Auda ibu Tayi, to Feisal's cause. With them the Arabs capture Wejh and then, after a long voyage across the desert, they take Akaba. The book ends in September 1918, when Lawrence enters with Feisal's army into Damascus.

Nevertheless, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is not a straightforwardly jingoistic tale of imperial heroism. As numerous critics have noted, the "triumph" of its subtitle is ironic; the *telos* of the plot is marred by an immanent sense of betrayal and failure. Lawrence knew of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the deceitfulness of British geopolitical involvement in the Middle East and, having lost two brothers in the trenches, he was aware of the war's broader catastrophic effects. Like many of his generation, he suffered—at least partly—from a disillusionment with a literature of glory. Moreover, he also in the years when composing *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* came into contact with a different, more critical epic current emerging in English literature. In 1920 he solicited Ezra Pound for possible publication venues, and at that moment, if not before, he read Joyce's, Eliot's, and Pound's works in the little magazines. Although rarely included in studies of modernism, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is a highly complex and self-critical narrative exploring—as modernist epic does—new modes of possible community as well as a profound reconsideration of the figure of the hero.⁶

To be clear, the thesis here is not that Lawrence was a closet modernist. (He was not.)⁷ However, his book reveals and negotiates a revolu-

tion in thinking about epic from the late nineteenth century to modernism, helping us to understand the changing morphology of the genre in the transition period. The more specific and more adventurous claim is that this negotiation expresses itself not so much in terms of style or form, but rather affectively by means of a “sensual co-efficient”⁸ on the basis of Lawrence’s homoeroticism. This may seem like a bizarre thesis. When it comes to epic, it is precisely in the territory of gender and sexuality that the newer and older forming forces of the genre are most marked. Older ideas of epic were often bound up with “primitivism”;⁹ it was conceived as a patriarchal genre, telling of burly heroes, “fathers and founders of families.”¹⁰ Modernist epic, on the other hand, is often a much queerer affair.¹¹ That is not to say that there were no “queer epics” before modernism. Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, Melville’s *Moby Dick*, and Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* belie this opposition in their representation of male comradeship. The difference is that, as Eve Sedgwick argued in *Between Men*, the Greek ideal of “manly love” and concepts of epic chivalry were not in the 1850s legible on a “continuum” linking homosociality to homosexuality. Homophobia’s “crazing work on genre itself”¹² was yet to be done. By contrast, modernist epic turns consciously to non-normative figures, action, and temporalities to challenge patriarchal nationalism and refashion national narrative.

Moreover, if there is anything radical about the genre of Lawrence’s text, it is to be found primarily in the relationship between its erotic valence and its language. For it is Lawrence’s foregrounding of a nontraditionally masculine sexuality in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* that constitutes a large part of its “aesthetics,” inflecting both its status as a work of art (and not just a historical record) and its sensuality (its gothic imagery, contorted sentences, and dull plodding rhythms periodically lashed into sublime lyricism). *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is *avant-garde* in this one particular only: in contrast to the “texts of pleasure” that older epics represent, Lawrence’s book often appears closer to what Roland Barthes would have called a “text of bliss,” operating masochistically against its own heroics, “like a sudden obliteration of the warrior *value*, a momentary desquamation of the writer’s hackles, a suspension of the ‘heart.’”¹³ As such, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is wedged into a felt literary history, for it is on the relationship between texts of pleasure and bliss that the question of continuity or rift depends:

Is bliss merely a brutal, immediate (without mediation) pleasure? On the answer (yes or no) depends the way in which we shall write the history of our modernity. For if I say that between pleasure and bliss there is only difference of degree, I am also saying that the history is a pacified one:

the text of bliss is merely the logical, organic, historical development of the text of pleasure; the avant-garde is never anything but the progressive, emancipated form of past culture.... But if I believe on the contrary that pleasure and bliss are parallel forces, that they cannot meet, and that between them there is more than a struggle: an *incommunication*, then I must certainly believe that history, our history, is not peaceable and perhaps not even intelligent, that the text of bliss always rises out of it like a scandal.¹⁴

As we will see in the final part of this article, the erotics of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* coordinates pleasure and bliss in ways that at once uphold and deconstruct Barthes's "*incommunication*." *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* thus not only bridges older and newer ideas of epic in English literature, but also offers a locus for thinking about an erotics of literary-historical transition.

§ § §

The most compelling reading of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* in relation to epic and modernity appears in the "Coda" to Simon Dentith's masterful study *Epic and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. For Dentith, the book represents the twentieth-century afterlife of an imperial epic canon, in large part because Lawrence was deeply imbued with nineteenth-century ideas of epic, having spent his youth reading works such as *Sigurd the Volsung*. Charles Doughty, the author of numerous nationalistic epics (including *The Dawn in Britain*, 1906; *The Cliffs*, 1909; and *The Clouds*, 1912) as well as the earlier and more famous *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (1888) was—to some extent—a mentor to the young Lawrence, someone to whom Lawrence applied to prepare himself for his experience in the "East."¹⁵ There is, in this sense, a Don Quixote-like logic to *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. Historical reality is experienced, interpreted, and represented through the lens of older epic, becoming its simulacrum. This is something that Robert Graves recognized in an early description of Lawrence's calling:

Lawrence so logically pursued his romantic career, which began by putting his nose between the pages of Scott and Tennyson, and then between those of Morris and Malory, and then between those of the original mediaeval French and Latin romances, that at last he forced his whole head and shoulders between the pages of an epic in the making, and in the first book met Feisal, and in the second Auda.¹⁶

Yet, as Dentith points out, this description is unfair, for Lawrence is not naïve in the way he inherits the heuristics of epic. "What Graves's account ignores," explains Dentith, "and what makes Lawrence's writ-

ing interesting, is that this romantic delusion about himself, and projection of epic upon the Arabs, is realised in a text that sharply dramatizes its sense **of its own disjunction from these delusions and projections.**¹⁷ When Lawrence supposedly apprehends his own proximity to epic during the metanarrative reflections of chapters 99 and 100 of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, the realization is accompanied by a disavowal and self-distancing:

At last accident, with perverted humour, in casting me as a man of action had given me place in the Arab Revolt, a theme ready and epic to a direct eye and hand, thus offering me an outlet in literature, the technique-less art. Whereupon I became excited only over mechanism. The epic mode was alien to me, as to my generation. Memory gave me no clue to the heroic, so that I could not feel such men as Auda in myself. He seemed fantastic as the hills of Rumm, old as Malory. Among the Arabs I was the disillusioned, the sceptic, who envied their cheap belief. The unperceived sham looked so well-fitting and becoming a dress for shoddy man. The ignorant, the superficial, the deceived were the happy among us. By our swindle they were glorified. We paid for them our self-respect, and they gained the deepest feeling of their lives. The more we condemned and despised ourselves, the more we could cynically take pride in them, our creatures. It was so easy to overcredit others: so impossible to write down their motives to the level of our own uncharitable truth. They were our dupes, wholeheartedly fighting the enemy. They blew before our intentions like chaff, being not chaff, but the bravest, simplest and merriest of men.¹⁸

Lawrence begins here by saying that he had “epic” thrust upon him—a “perverse” contingency that allows him to write. Yet as the passage continues, this same epic force takes over, leaving Lawrence with only a mechanical and passive role. Indeed, Lawrence seems to become strangely excluded from his own composition in the succeeding sentences, claiming not only that his status in a new generation of writers prevents him from fully inhabiting the genre, but also that the idea of epic is ultimately a rhetorical one. It is a “cheap belief” that allows the British imperial agents (who apparently don’t suffer from it) to take advantage of the Arabs.

The conclusion that Dentith draws from this paragraph is that epic survives in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* only through its projection onto the Arabs, and only because of the work’s setting in “those pre-modern spaces where the heroic mode of life still persists.”¹⁹ Linking epic—as Lawrence does—with the Arabs and the desert landscape (“fantastic as the hills of Rumm, old as Malory”), Dentith argues that the work stages the opposition between the modern West (that buried epic in the trenches) and a world where such epic ideology still obtains. On the one

hand, Lawrence's heroic subject and its setting in the desert among the preindustrial Arabs permit the "survival" of a "primitivist" epic worldview, replete with plucky, masculine, nation-making actions.²⁰ On the other, Lawrence's awareness of his double-agency as a modern servant of the British Empire prevents him from accessing this possible genre. What *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* presents is thus "an agonised consciousness unhappily straddling two different social and historical states—the epitome of uneven development."²¹

For Dentith, as for a number of other critics,²² Lawrence's book is a fundamentally divided text, an anachronism confirming the expiration date of nineteenth-century epic. But does it do *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* justice to crack it open along fault lines extrapolated from the past century's idea of epic—an idea, moreover, dependent on the incompatibility of epic and modernity? Or is there a way to see epic as involving Lawrence and the Arabs on the same plane—a view in which Lawrence's separated, spectatorial, missionary position is not the only one he occupies? In other words, can we read Lawrence's "straddling" of two different locations (on a geographical axis), not as the inevitable failure of one anachronistic version of epic, but as an attempt to bring two different periods of the genre (on a literary historical axis) into a more intimate, albeit painful, contact? Can we read in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* a version of what Sedgwick called the "heroics of enjambment"?²³

Gilles Deleuze presents the unconventional grounds on which such a reading might be initiated in his own interpretation of the "accident with perverted humour" paragraph quoted above. For Deleuze, Lawrence's text is not about individual power, epic heroism or heroic authorship. Nor is it, conversely, about the loss of agency in modernity:

Lawrence does not hide the fact that he gives himself a very local role ... it is not some sort of contemptible individual mythomania that compels Lawrence to project grandiose images on his path, beyond his often modest undertakings. The projection machine is inseparable from the movement of the Revolt itself: it is subjective, but it refers to the subjectivity of the revolutionary group. And Lawrence's writing, his style, makes use of this machine in its own way, or rather acts as its relay: the subjective disposition, that is to say, the force through which the images are projected, is inseparably political, erotic, and artistic. Lawrence himself shows how his writing project is linked to the Arab movement: lacking a literary technique, he needs the mechanism of revolt and preaching to become a writer.²⁴

Deleuze's basic contention is that the composition of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is not simply autobiographical, but depends on a depersonali-

zation and “projection.” This projection, however, is not, as in Dentith’s reading, a projection of an anachronistic epic, but rather a synthetic genre translation where Lawrence and Auda (and Feisal and the other men) fuse as subject and object and author in a contingent, revolutionary, and nomadic group. For this group, heroic action is premised not on the Napoleonic control of history, but on a more intimate involvement with history’s currents. In this reading, which (in contrast to the paranoid questioning of “who is whose dupe?”) we might describe as reparative, the interest of Lawrence’s work is not its divisions but the active and passive “inseparably political, erotic, and artistic” aspects that constitute the composite writing “project.” In particular, it is the erotic that anchors the political and the artistic in Lawrence’s text, divesting his hero of the mantle of control and unmooring the epic.

The opening dedicatory poem of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* offers an entry into understanding this complex dynamic fusing sexual projection and composition. This poem’s structure, it has been suggested, marries the European medieval Courtly Love tradition with the Arabic genre of Udrite love.²⁵ It is addressed to a love object—a figure often identified as Lawrence’s beloved male companion Dahoum (a sobriquet for Selim Ahmed):

To S.A.

I loved you, so I drew these tides of men into my hands
and wrote my will across the sky in stars

To earn you Freedom, the seven-pillared worthy house,
that your eyes might be shining for me

When we came.²⁶

After the first stanza a barrier is presented between the lover and the beloved. Where in Udrite love poetry this is often the incompatibility between the attainment of the love object and the production of poetry, in Lawrence’s case it is the death of the beloved. The “seven-pillared house” is destroyed, only to be rebuilt as a mausoleum of sorts—that is, the textual space of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. Lawrence’s aims to produce a collective space are thus presented as inseparable from his libidinal investments in the collective. “I loved you, so I drew these tides of men into my hands” (italic mine). The inspiration for *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* both historically it seems, and in the metaphor of the author building a shared space (hence in the translation into a not merely personal literary genre), is “love”—a love which, however chivalric, Udrite, or Dantean, swerves into the profane suggestion of the final double entendre of the stanza: “When we came.”

While it would be a mistake to read the architecture of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* too literally for its reconstruction of a shelter for Lawrence's attachments (S.A. does not seem to reappear in the narrative itself), it is worth underlining the fact that Lawrence uses moments of eroticism to dissolve his own (British outsider) identity into that of the revolutionary group, or more generally into that of the desert. In a basic sense, Lawrence's text abounds with eroticized, often masochistic moments of contact between men set (not unlike Whitman's *Drum-Taps* or Proust's *Sodom and Gomorrah*) against the destructive background of war. These relations between the revolt and the union of same-sex eroticism are set up already in the astonishing opening paragraphs, which throb with a dried-out sensuality, both nostalgic and apathetic:

Some of the evil of my tale may have been inherent in our circumstances. For years we lived anyhow with one another in the naked desert, under the indifferent heaven.... Gusts of cruelty, perversions, lusts ran lightly over the surface without troubling us....

The men were young and sturdy; and hot flesh and blood unconsciously claimed a right in them and tormented their bellies with strange longings. Our privations and dangers fanned this virile heat, in a climate as racking as can be conceived. We had no shut places to be alone in, no thick clothes to hide our nature. Man in all things lived candidly with man....

The public women of the rare settlements we encountered in our months of wandering would have been nothing to our numbers, even had their raddled meat been palatable to a man of healthy parts. In horror of such sordid commerce our youths began indifferently to slake one another's few needs in their own clean bodies—a cold convenience that, by comparison, seemed sexless and even pure. Later, some began to justify this sterile process, and swore that friends quivering together in the yielding sand with intimate hot limbs in supreme embrace, found there hidden in the darkness a sensual co-efficient of the mental passion which was welding our souls and spirits in one flaming effort. Several, thirsting to punish appetites they could not wholly prevent, took a savage pride in degrading the body, and offered themselves fiercely in any habit which promised physical pain or filth.²⁷

In these passages, sex between men, while associated with degradation, fierceness, “physical pain” and “filth” is opposed in a virulently misogynic turn to the “raddled meat” of the “sordid” prostitute. Homosexuality is thus constructed at the outset as a purer way of being, which, like the vocabulary used to describe it, is abrasive, bare, and desert-like: a contrast to the bodies of the “public women” of the settlements. These doubly “sterile” relations, as Lawrence writes, provide “a sensual co-efficient” of the Arab Revolt in the face of imperial power

and history. They also, as Lawrence's description of their "welding our souls and spirits in one flaming effort," provide a form of solidarity between the author and the Arabs.²⁸

Cathected onto circumstance and the space of the desert, Lawrence's eroticism is largely atopic, spread like Barthes's pleasure and bliss across the length of his work. What Deleuze's optic on *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* allows is a reading of these aspects as a crucial part of the psychodynamic of the epic projection. Consider, for instance, the notorious scene of Lawrence's rape by the soldiers commanded by the Turkish Bey, in which the pleasure of the text is inextricable from its excruciating pain:

To keep my mind in control I numbered the blows [of a whip], but after twenty lost count, and could feel only the shapeless weight of pain, not tearing claws, for which I had prepared, but a gradual cracking apart of my whole being by some too-great force whose waves rolled up my spine till they were pent within my brain, to clash terribly together.²⁹

In the succeeding ultraviolet, lurid description, the style of the prose, echoing Lawrence's own loss of identity, is charged with a compounding lyricism—"a delicious warmth, probably sexual, was swelling through me"—that weaves different events, times, places and themes together.³⁰ As of de Sade or Jean Genet's works, we might suggest that the rebellious sexuality of this text is constitutive of the broader dissidence of the revolt (in those cases the French Revolution or the occupation in *Pompes Funèbres*), as well as the dissidence of Lawrence's divided loyalties. For example, Lawrence pictures the scars on his back as a "railway" (and railways are, of course, what he spends most of the book blowing up): "Always for the first of every new series, my head would be pulled round, to see how a hard white ridge, like a railway, darkening slowly into crimson, leaped over my skin at the instant of each stroke, with a bead of blood where two ridges crossed."³¹ The rape fuses all the other events, bringing out the psychosexual map behind the real geography of the revolt.

What is the significance of this dynamic fusing Lawrence, the Arabs and the desert into one sustained masochistic fantasy? Simon Dentith's treatment of Lawrence provides no answers, for it pays no attention to sexuality and therefore misses sexuality's relation to epic. However, in "White Skin, Brown Masks," Kaja Silverman offers a compelling clue. "If Lawrence is able to participate psychically in Arab nationalism," she writes, "that is in large part because his particular homosexuality promotes an erotic identification both with its leaders and with its

servants.”³² It is this sublimated sexual desire that allows Lawrence, she claims, to play the role that he does. Like a number of other critics, Silverman pays close attention in her reading to Lawrence’s cross-dressing—or what Dennis Porter calls “a cultural transvestism.”³³ She points out, for instance, that Lawrence and his young male companion Dahoum used to swap clothes, and draws attention to the moments in the text where Lawrence disguises himself as a woman, as well as to his sartorial relations to Feisal. At the beginning of chapter 20, we recall, Feisal “suddenly” asks Lawrence “if I would wear Arab clothes like his own while in the camp.”³⁴ Feisal’s justification is diplomatic: Lawrence should look like one of them. But Lawrence’s description intimates more:

If I wore Meccan clothes ... I might slip in and out of Feisal’s tent without making a sensation which he had to explain away each time to strangers. I agreed at once, very gladly; for army uniform was abominable when camel-riding or when sitting about on the ground; and the Arab things, which I had learned to manage before the war, were cleaner and more decent in the desert. Hejris was pleased, too, and exercised his fancy in fitting me out in splendid white silk and gold-embroidered wedding garments which had been sent to Feisal lately (was it a hint?) by his great-aunt in Mecca.³⁵

Was it a hint? Drawing out one of the implications of Lawrence’s parenthesis, Silverman comments: “It is crucial to remember ... that the garments which Feisal confers upon Lawrence have been given to the Arab ruler to wear on the occasion of his *wedding*, and that they consequently carry a powerful erotic resonance.”³⁶ It is as if Lawrence wants us to imagine his own alter ego as Feisal’s wife. More significantly, for the epic schema, Lawrence in this position of wife is no longer in control of the historical narrative: this has been passed into the hands of one of the very few women mentioned in his text—Feisal’s Meccan great-aunt.

Lawrence uses the metaphor of marriage a number of times in his book to model the connection between himself and the men, or between the men. It occurs again in the descriptions of his two young followers, “Daud the hasty and his love-fellow, Farraj; a beautiful, soft-framed, girlish creature, with innocent, smooth face and swimming eyes”: “They were an instance of the eastern boy and boy affection which the segregation of women made inevitable. Such friendships often led to manly loves of a depth and force beyond our flesh-steeped conceit. When innocent they were hot and unashamed. If sexuality entered, they passed into a give and take, unspiritual relation, like marriage.”³⁷ Of this passage, Donald Mengay has written that it “nostalgically evokes the

Western epic tradition of lover-warriors like Achilles and Patroclus.”³⁸ It is a suggestion that codes *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* within a familiar epic canon, where homosociality is unproblematically innocent—a suggestion supported somewhat by Lawrence’s diction, which has a degree of ethnological objectivity. Farraj and Daud are merely an “instance” of an “inevitable,” “unspiritual” “give and take.” But precisely in this declaration of their innocence, Lawrence betrays an alternative reading, namely, that this Hellenistic, anthropological view is on the other side of naivety, an explicit return to innocence after a less objective gaze (“soft-framed, girlish,” “hot and unashamed”). In this reading, Farraj and Daud’s homosexuality is not merely situational, but significant. “Marriage” here indicates an awareness of the homosocial “glue” in Lawrence’s new womanless rebel nation.³⁹ This is not just an “innocent” inhabiting of the older male communities of epic, but a “post-innocent” sketch of a fundamental underlying social structure for the all-male revolutionary group. It reveals the ground on which Lawrence shifts from observer to total somatic involvement.

Like Simon Dentith’s reading of Lawrence, Edward Said’s more influential treatment of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* in *Orientalism* neglects its eroticism. Said, however, does mention sexuality more generally in a causal relation to Orientalism in the conclusions to his book. “Why,” he asks, do we have an “endless series of works” on “the Arab Oriental”? “What grips the Orientalist, if it is not—as it certainly is not—love of Arab science, mind, society, achievement? In other words, what is the nature of Arab presence in mythic discourse about him?”⁴⁰ Said answers this question with “Two things: number and generative power”—qualities, he explains, that are ultimately reducible to each other:

If Arab society is represented in almost completely negative and generally passive terms, to be ravished and won by the Orientalist hero, we can assume that such a representation is a way of dealing with the great variety and potency of Arab diversity, whose source is, if not intellectual and social, then sexual and biological.... The Arab produces himself, endlessly, sexually, and little else. The Orientalist says nothing about this, although his argument depends on it: “But co-operation in the Near East is still largely a family affair and little of it is found outside the blood group or village.” Which is to say that the only way in which Arabs count is as mere biological beings; institutionally, politically, culturally they are nil, or next to nil. Numerically and as the producers of families, Arabs are actual.⁴¹

For Said, the Orientalist’s investment in the Arabs boils down to the neo-Malthusian parameters of reproductive heteronormativity. It is for this reason that we find the obsession among Orientalist texts with

families and family structure. The irony is that this family represents both the interest for the Orientalist in the Arabs (the very definition of who and what they are) but is also the barrier to their “modernization”: “A silent paradox immediately presents itself, for if the family is an institution for whose general failures the only remedy is the placebo of ‘modernization,’ we must acknowledge that the family continues to produce itself, is fertile, and is the source of Arab existence in the world, such as it is.”⁴²

But what happens when the Orientalist appears less interested in number, reproduction and family, and more interested in other forms of community? This seems to be the case in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. One example occurs when Lawrence, “full of vexation” enters Auda’s tent, catching him with his “latest wife”:

I began to jeer at the old man for being so old and yet so foolish like the rest of his race, who regarded our comic reproductive processes not as an unhygienic pleasure, but as a main business of life.

Auda retorted with his desire for heirs. I asked if he had found life good enough to thank his haphazard parents for bringing him into it? or selfishly to confer the doubtful gift upon an unborn spirit?⁴³

Lawrence’s irritation at the beginning of this scene is due to the fact that Auda is delaying the revolt and closing Lawrence and the other men out. Here we see an image of the attitude described by Said: Auda, stereotyped, is “like the rest of his race, who regarded our comic reproductive processes not as an unhygienic pleasure, but as a main business of life.” Yet in Said’s understanding, Auda’s premise is tacitly shared by the Orientalist. Here, however, reproduction is absurd and “unhygienic.”

In contrast, for Lawrence the “Arab epic”—which is forced to wait while Auda dallies with his wife—represents a different national ontogeny, one waiting to rise “from *birth* through weakness, pain and doubt, to red victory.”⁴⁴ If we link this ontogeny to Lawrence’s queer investments, we see that the grand narrative of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* may be understood as an attempt to rethink the East outside of traditional familial structures and an accompanying familial biopolitics. Lawrence is attempting to find a ground that would permit an imaginative depiction of the Arab nation as a space alive to restructuring and “modernization”—as available, in short, for a different, non-primitive kind of epic. We glimpse this goal shortly after the assault on Wejeh, when Lawrence describes arriving at an oasis: “We got off our camels and stretched ourselves, sat down or walked before supper to

the sea and bathed by hundreds, a splashing, screaming, mob of fish-like naked men of all earth's colours."⁴⁵

This set piece can be read as what would happen if the erotic fantasy of Lawrence's epic were fully realized: a multiracial movement of men, who are no longer quite human, but seem—escaping ordinary evolutionary drives—to have become their own, multicolored, “fish-like” species. It is a dream of cooperation premised on the escape from traditional lines of national kinship and its attendant reproductivist biopolitics.

Citing this passage in his essay, “*Orientalism* and Its Problems,” Dennis Porter claims that “it presents a vision of a mingling where all previous categories [of East and West] break down”: “a politically Utopian idea as well as a homoerotic phantasm ... an altogether unthinkable thought within the discourse of Orientalism as defined by Said.”⁴⁶ As such, this scene also introduces into *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* a different kind of epic possibility. For if Dentith's understanding of the irreconcilability of “Arab epic” with modernity relies on a reading of Lawrence's Orientalism within Said's terms (that is, as an agent interested in the Arab on a tacitly heteronormative, reproductive basis—as a space in which “epic primitivism” still obtains) then a close consideration of Lawrence's erotic “projections” in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* reveals a way in which this epic might not fail on exposure to twentieth-century modernity. Indeed, the scene at the oasis hints at a way in which one generic model of nationalist epic might have been replaced by another, whose potentials are more fully explored in modernist epic. In texts such as *Ulysses* or *In Search of Lost Time* or *The Making of Americans*, national narrative is divorced from the genealogical family and rediscovered in queer alternatives. This is appropriate, because after all, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is engaged in the question of trying to establish a settlement for the Middle East by reconceiving the units of nationality on affective rather than biological grounds. Lawrence's text can, thus, be seen to mediate on the level of sexuality between an older imperial epic and a newer ideology, one which imagines for the Arab peoples a kind of cosmopolitan nationhood dreamed of by Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations at the end of the First World War. That this vision does not appear clearly and unambiguously in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* testifies to the tension between two different epic possibilities, both coforming the autobiographical fabula of Lawrence's war experiences.

§ § §

Let us return to the original issue of an “erotics of literary history,” but less in terms of content, and more in relation to the metanarrative placing Lawrence’s composition into a literary-historical context. *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* occupies an eccentric position in literary history. Often it is treated with a degree of embarrassment. Partly this is because it seems so old-fashioned. Lawrence himself wrote that besides Joyce and Eliot, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is “an insult to modern letters,” a “hundred years” out of date, and that its retrograde prose “stinks of coffins and ancestors & armorial hatchments.”⁴⁷ But *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is also embarrassing and difficult for literary history because this datedness is bound up with and awkwardly compromised by its peculiar sexuality. Charles Doughty—who otherwise might have seen *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* as the loyal continuation of his epic agenda—was allegedly distressed, when he read it in 1924, precisely by the text’s “personal revelations.”⁴⁸ And indeed, it seems that accommodating Lawrence’s book into a narrative of the development of modernism involves confronting strange contortions of literary-historical descent. Consider, for example, Robert Graves’s description of Lawrence “putting his nose between the pages of Scott and Tennyson” and eventually “forc[ing] his whole head and shoulders between the pages of an epic in the making.”⁴⁹ This image is not that of an expected literary-historical inheritance from earlier writers, nor is it a Bloomian anxiety of influence; it is rather, an astonishingly anal vision of the parthenogenetic rebirth of epic. Likewise, when Lawrence describes how he ended up writing epic as the result of “accident with *perverted* humour,” the word “perverted” reads as a tacit acknowledgment that *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* departs from a straight developmental genealogy of the genre. What, then, is the significance of Lawrence’s text for our understanding of the transition in literary history?

Roland Barthes’s dyad again proves a helpful model. For Barthes, a “text of pleasure” relies on a familiar heritage: it “comes from culture and does not break with it.” This is the model of the line or genealogy. The “text of bliss,” on the other hand marks a departure. “Text of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader’s historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language.”⁵⁰ “Pleasure” and “bliss” for Barthes are rhetorically opposed, but—as the careful reader recognizes—Barthes never resolves the nature of this opposition. In fact, as phrased here, it is not a clear-cut binary, for one can,

presumably, depart from one's own cultural heritage and the production of the expected text of pleasure, losing a conventional sense of self, and forcing a crisis, without breaking with heritage or tradition altogether. This seems to be the case with Lawrence, who, through loss and self-dissolution constructs an alternative continuity guaranteed by his new, queer relation to the Arabs. Lawrence's work thus can be understood to fuse Barthes's pleasure and bliss by moving between traditions.

Crucial to this translation is the equation between Lawrence the hero and Lawrence the author. Both Lawrences are trying to achieve epic over the course of the text, but to do so both depart from their comfort zones. The author's use of other writers, and hence his formal engagement with literary history, can be argued, like the queer content of his book, to push against the established metanarratives of a patriarchal national canon. Although it is clear that a number of Western epic genealogies inform Lawrence's book (Homer, Virgil, Dante, Malory, Morris, Doughty, Melville, Whitman), *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* also makes use of Arabic forms. Most notably, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* draws on and imitates Arab oral epic. In this sense, Lawrence's intertextual relations model the multi-cultural reconciliation that *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* itself aims towards.

Lawrence alerts us to the informing presence of Arab oral epic at various moments in his book, highlighting, for instance, the part played by "tribal poets" and their long "war narratives."⁵¹ Indeed Auda—who we recall was compared to Malory when Lawrence explains the "perverted humour" of his relation to epic—is just such a "tribal poet": Auda "saw life as a saga. All the events in it were significant: all personages in contact with him heroic. His mind was stored with poems of old raids and epic tales of fights, and he overflowed with them on the nearest listener."⁵² In describing Auda's epic worldview and practices, Lawrence also reveals his proximity to the traditional oral epist. Both experience life through epic, authoring and inhabiting a projection. In this sense, Auda (epic hero and epic poet), we might say, "overflows" into Lawrence (epic hero and epic prosaist) and vice versa. This happens in a particularly marked way when Auda offends another man in the camp (Mohammed) by telling a fabricated story of "how Mohammed had bought publicly in the bazaar at Wejh a costly string of pearls, and had not given it to any of his wives, and so they were all at odds, except in their common rejection of him."⁵³ Unable to decide their differences, Mohammed turns to Lawrence for arbitration, asking him to confirm

that Auda lies. Instead, however, Lawrence begins to tell what appears to be an epic tale of their trip to the market, mimicking Auda's own oral-epic style—that is, becoming Auda.

Of course, in one sense, this scene is further testimony to Lawrence's Orientalizing treatment of his companions. Like the infantile "primitives" of the nineteenth-century racial stereotypes mentioned by Said,⁵⁴ they squabble, unable to make up their differences, until Lawrence distracts them with a "new art" of parody. In another sense, however, Lawrence's parody of Auda's epic is a deeply self-conscious moment—and the role of "con man" (a role often ascribed to the traditional Arab oral epic poet and familiar from *One Thousand and One Nights*) is central to it.⁵⁵ This is because the content of the narrative Lawrence tells, while apparently quite accurately rendering "the highly stylized quality of the verse language" of the *Sirat Bani Hilal* tradition including its "stock phrases, stereotyped diction, and repetitions,"⁵⁶ is also not radically different from how Lawrence describes the content of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*—"a narrative of daily life, mean happenings, little people ... filled with trivial things."⁵⁷ The scene thus presents itself as a cross-cultural example of a literary collaboration.⁵⁸ More broadly, by showing how epic can produce and be produced by a homosocial "Harmony" (Lawrence's section heading), Lawrence articulates an affective or erotic ingredient (a "sensual co-efficient") that punctures assumptions of the genre's development as based on national competition and a furthering of a mononational literary pedigree. *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* thus troubles a literary history modeled on combat and biological kinship, offering a potential stepping stone between the premises of, say, Thomas Hardy's *Dynasts* and Eliot's multilingual, "perverse" male collaboration, *The Waste Land*.⁵⁹

As Edward Said recognized in his later work, the idea of "affiliative" reading and the idea of modernism's encyclopedic forms are linked. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said "venture[d] the suggestion" that, "when European culture finally began to take due account of imperial delusions and discoveries ... it did so not oppositionally but ironically, and with a desperate attempt at a new inclusiveness."⁶⁰ Importing the foreign into European literature, "cultural texts" at the "beginning of the twentieth century" used these elements to convey an ironic sense of "how vulnerable Europe was, and how—in Conrad's great phrase—'this also has been one of the dark places on the earth.'" For Said, this recognition is one of the causes of modernist epic: "To deal with this [recognition], a new encyclopedic form became necessary." It is a form

that includes “*Ulysses, Heart of Darkness, A la recherche, The Waste Land, Cantos, To the Lighthouse*” and relies on the “strange juxtaposition” of fragments from “disparate locations, sources, cultures”—joining the “commonplace and exotic, familiar and alien.”⁶¹

Naturally, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is not in Said’s list of modernist encyclopedic works. What this article has sought to show, however, is that underlying Lawrence’s Orientalism was a libidinal investment that made possible a “strange juxtaposition” of East and West, offering an “ironic” affiliation or attempted “inclusiveness.” Lawrence’s lateral division, his “straddling of two different social and historical states,” testifies both to the irresolvable binary of Orientalism as well as to the enjambment of two different literary-historical moments. His is an uncomfortable epic of negotiation between nationalities, between bodies and texts cut off from their “natural” kinship and placed in new arrangements. Through this embattled straddling of periods and places, then, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* not only offers a bridge between older and newer social forces in the genre, but also gives us an insight into the surprising erotics, hovering between pleasure, bliss, and a compounding agony, of the literary-historical transition.

Notes

1. “Pace Bakhtin ... the polyphonic form of the modern West is not the novel, but if anything precisely the epic: which specializes in the heterogeneous space of the world-system, and must learn to provide a stage for its many different voices.” Franco Moretti, *Modern Epic* (London: Verso, 1996), 56.

2. See Pascale Casanova, “Combative Literatures,” in *New Left Review*, 72 (2011), 123–34, where this history is outlined with a focus on the Herderian ideology of the MacPherson’s Ossian poems (125–26). See also David Quint’s chapter “From Ossian to Eisenstein,” where the literary debates over the superiority of the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Chanson de Roland* in the 1870s are understood as academic versions of the Franco-Prussian War. *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 356–59.

3. James Joyce, *Letters of James Joyce*, Richard Ellmann, ed. (New York: Viking Press, 1966), I: 146.

4. James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Hans Walter Gabler, ed. (New York: Vintage, 1993), 411.

5. See Herbert Tucker, *Epic: Britain’s Heroic Muse 1790–1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), and “Doughty’s *The Dawn in Britain* and the Modernist Eclipse of the Victorian,” *RaVoN*, 1 (2007), 7, 549–51.

6. As Keith Hull in “The Secret Contestable Documentary,” *The T. E. Lawrence Puzzle*, Stephen E. Tabachnick, ed. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 96–114, and Steven Tabachnick in “The Waste Land in *Seven Pillars Of Wisdom*,” *Ibid.*, 115–23, have argued, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is, in fact, as overdetermined, ambivalent, and polytropic as many more admittedly modernist texts. So for example, Hull compares Lawrence’s book to *Ulysses* and *Gravity’s Rainbow*, encyclopedic texts in which “vast intangible forces” have taken over the epic role; in which the connections are lost (98).

Similarly, Hannah Arendt's reading of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966) sees it as exemplifying a new impossibility of individual historic action in the face of a bureaucratic machinery. Lawrence, in Arendt's view, knew perfectly

that it was not he who had been big, but only the role he had aptly assumed, that his bigness had been the result of the Game and not a product of himself... This, then, is the end of the real pride of Western man who no longer counts as an end in himself, no longer does "a thing of himself nor a thing so clean as to be his own" by giving laws to the world, but has a chance only "if he pushes the right way," in alliance with the secret forces of history and necessity of which he is but a function. (219, 220–21)

If *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is an epic then, it is an epic not of old-fashioned heroes, but of the geopolitical "Great Game." Like a number of modernist epics, it is less about individual romantic action than about what Stephen Dedalus calls the "nightmare of history."

7. Lawrence's correspondence with Pound is a case in point. In response to his 1920 solicitation for publication venues, Lawrence received a response addressed "My dear Hadji ben Abt el Bakshish, Prince de Meque, Two-Sworded Samurai," which suggested that Lawrence might contribute to the *Dial*. "Can you 'write'?" asked Pound. "Of course, having vortex'd a large section of Arabia you are fed up with vortices; but why reprove me." Ezra Pound, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907–1941*, D. D. Paige, ed. (New York: New Directions, 1971), 152. Lawrence in turn responded that Pound's letter had "confused" him and that although he would "very much like to write," he hadn't even "a wish to feel the existence of a vortex" and feared that the *Dial* was "likely to resemble *Blast*." T. E. Lawrence, *The Selected Letters*, Malcolm Brown, ed. (London: Dent, 1988), 178. A few months later Lawrence wrote again: "each day I read a new name of a contributor to *The Dial*: but there is surely no place for me in that galaxy?... I'm academic idyllic, romantic: you breathe commas and exclamation marks. We ought not to exist together on one earth, but the earth is so broad-minded that she doesn't care" (*The Selected Letters*, 181). To this statement of uneven literary development, Pound responded that he didn't see a problem with their terrestrial cohabitation, but that "doubtless you have very bad taste" (*The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound, 1907–1941*, 154).

8. T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (London: Cape, 1973), 28.

9. For a full discussion of this concept, see the introduction to Simon Dentith's *Epic and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

10. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Michael Holquist, ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 13. As such epic was also presumptively heterosexual. The belief is helpfully summed up by E. M. W. Tillyard, in *The English Epic and Its Background* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954), 8. "No pronounced homosexual," writes Tillyard, "could succeed in the epic, not so much for being one as for what his being one cuts him off from." More generally, as Bernard Schweizer writes, "epic and masculinity appear to be almost coterminous." *Approaches to the Anglo and American Female Epic, 1621–1982* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 390. And as Eve Sedgwick pointed out, "obligatory heterosexuality" is usually theorized as "built into male-dominated kinship systems," *Between Men* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 3.

11. For an insight into this quality of modernist epic, see Catherine Davies, *Whitman's Queer Children: America's Homosexual Epics* (New York: Continuum, 2012); Wayne Koestenbaum, *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration* (New York: Routledge, 1989); Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Purple Passages: Pound, Eliot, Zukofsky, and the Ends of Patriarchal Poetry* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012); Barry McCrea's chapters on Joyce and Proust in *In the Company of Strangers: Family and Narrative in Dickens, Conan Doyle, Joyce, and Proust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); and Joseph Allen Boone's chapters on epic ambition in modernist writing about Egypt in *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

12. Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 133.

13. Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 30.

14. *Ibid.*, 20.

15. For Lawrence's applications to Doughty as a "spiritual forebear" see John E. Mack, *Prince of our Disorder: The Life of T. E. Lawrence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998) 94–95. For the "epic resonances" of *Travels in Arabia Deserta* and their relation to Lawrence's text, see Tabachnick, "Two 'Arabian' Romantics: T. E. Lawrence and Charles Doughty," *ELT*, 16.1 (1973), 11–25, 15–23.

16. Quoted in Dentith, *Epic and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 204.

17. *Ibid.*, 204.

18. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, 565.
19. Dentith, *Epic and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 204.
20. "The conditions of the survival of epic in this text," writes Dentith:

are twofold—or perhaps this is the same condition stated in two different ways. First, epic must be situated beyond the borders of modernity, in those pre-modern spaces where the heroic mode of life still persists. And second, insofar as this is a war memoir, its capacity to understand warfare in epic terms is clearly related to the kind of war that was fought in the Arabian peninsula, as opposed to the Western Front. "Is Achilles possible with powder and lead?" Marx asked. Perhaps not. But while the Arab Revolt produced no Achilles, it did occur in a situation where the heroic virtues could still flourish, because the mode of warfare in which it was conducted was a development of a social world which might still plausibly be described as epic.

Dentith, *Epic and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 204.

21. *Ibid.*, 213.
22. These readings include R. P. Blackmur's claim that "A breach exists between the two sides," Albert Cook's suggestion that "the corresponding breach in his writings is the failure to integrate," Thomas J. O'Donnell's argument that *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* "fails to link the introspective to the epic, the unconscious self to the social self, the subjective to the objective, emotion and intellect to act," and E. M. Forster's assertion that "something has gone wrong here." All quoted in Keith Hull, "The Secret Contestable Documentary," in *The T. E. Lawrence Puzzle*, 97.
23. Sedgwick, "A Poem Is Being Written," in *Tendencies* (London: Routledge, 1994), 175–210. For Sedgwick, "enjambment" is both "the poetic gesture of *straddling* lines *together* syntactically" as well as a sadomasochistic principle: a "thrusting up out of the picture plane in protest by the poem's body of a syntactic thigh or shank that would intercept, would retard the numbered blows: would momentarily wedge apart with sense the hammering iteration of rhythm" (183). It provides a highly suggestive description of the stylistic movement between pleasure and bliss in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.
24. Gilles Deleuze, "The Shame and the Glory: T. E. Lawrence," in *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 118.
25. For this suggestion see Clare A. Brandabur and Nasser Al-Hassan Athamneh, "Problems of Genre in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph*," *Comparative Literature*, 52.4 (2000), 321–38. My reading of Lawrence's poem is based on theirs.
26. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, 9.
27. *Ibid.*, 27–28.
28. *Ibid.*, 28.
29. *Ibid.*, 454.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.* I owe this observation to Victoria Carchidi's dissertation, "Creation out of the Void: The Making of a Hero, an Epic, a World, T. E. Lawrence" (University of Pennsylvania, 1987).
32. Kaja Silverman, "White Skin, Brown Masks: The Double Mimesis, or With Lawrence in Arabia," in *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 304–305.
33. Dennis Porter, "Orientalism and Its Problems," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, Patrick Williams, ed. (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 157.
34. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, 129.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Silverman, "White Skin, Brown Masks: The Double Mimesis, or With Lawrence in Arabia," 318; Silverman's emphasis.
37. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, 244.
38. Donald G. Mengay, "Arabian Rites: T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and the Erotics of Empire," *Genre*, 27.4 (Winter 1994), 409.
39. Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 2.
40. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 311.

41. Ibid., 311–12.
42. Ibid., 311.
43. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, 356.
44. Ibid., 53. My emphasis.
45. Ibid., 158–59.
46. Porter, “*Orientalism* and Its Problems,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, 160.
47. T. E. Lawrence, *The Letters of T. E. Lawrence*, David Garnett, ed. (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1939), 488.
48. See Tabachnick, “Two ‘Arabian’ Romantics,” 20.
49. Robert Graves, *Lawrence and the Arabs* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1927), 159, quoted in Dentith, *Epic and Empire*, 204.
50. Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, 14.
51. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, 128.
52. Ibid., 230.
53. Ibid., 285.
54. “The Arabs’ are made to rejoin the very broad designation, common to modern anthropological thought, of ‘the childish primitive’” (*Orientalism*, 247).
55. See, for example, Susan Slymowics, “The Arabic Epic Poet as Outcast, Trickster, and Con Man,” in *Epic Traditions in the Contemporary World: The Poetics of Community*, Margaret Beissinger, Jane Tylus, and Susanne Wofford, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 54–68.
56. Bridget Connelly, *Arab Folk Epic and Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 45.
57. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, 22.
58. In particular, Lawrence and Auda’s authorial relationship resonates with those described Wayne Koestenbaum in *fin-de-siècle* romances in *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration*.
59. For the perversity of *The Waste Land* in terms of literary history see Colleen Lamos *Deviant Modernism: Sexual and Textual Errancy in T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Marcel Proust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For an account of the male collaboration between Pound and Eliot as a metaphorical homosexuality see Koestenbaum, *Double Talk*.
60. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, Vintage Books, 1993), 189.
61. Ibid., 189.