ENC1101 **A**

11 Sept. 2006

The Burj al-Arab

John Milton, in his epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, wrote "Anon, out of the earth a fabric huge rose, like an exhalation" (Milton 35). It is very rare for a considerably new and emerging country to build something so glorious; it is even rarer for such a country to build a structure that would eventually become the only seven star hotel in the whole world. But for the promising country of the United Arab Emirates, innovation and advancement in architecture became a way for earning global recognition. Perhaps 'difficult' or 'impossible' does not exist in the Arab dictionary. And so in 1994, when UAE was still a country unheard of around the globe, construction began on the Burj al-Arab. Five years later, in the middle of the Persian Gulf, resting on a man-made island, the Burj al-Arab emerged as the "best hotel in the world" (qtd. in "Jumeirah" par.1). Some may disagree, but the luxury and the undeniable beauty of the Burj al-Arab undoubtedly proves and comes nothing short of its truly-deserved seven star rating.

First of all, the architectural structure, standing at an extraordinary height of 1,053 feet, has the highest-reaching atrium and is considered the tallest hotel in the world ("The Arabian Tower" par.1). But besides its towering height, Burj al-Arab features some of the most unique characteristics unusual to other hotels and ordinary buildings, which is most likely why it has earned its rather controversial "7-star" rating. Some people, particularly travel professionals, have

said that awarding the hotel seven stars is an exaggeration, considering the maximum hotel rating will not typically exceed five stars (par.6). But I for one am *not* one of those "travel professionals."

I am not one to argue with its prestigious award, perhaps because twelve years ago, when the building was nothing more than a flat island sitting in the middle of the ocean, my father would take the whole family to the beach every weekend. My brother, sister, and I very much enjoyed the warm water, unaware that we were swimming next to the then-future home of the structure that would become the only seven star hotel in the world. And although I have never been inside the building, it has sentimental value to me, particularly because my father was one of the civil engineers who help build the hotel. I remember him coming home with a different wound every week—a burn, a deep cut, or a bruise received from the daily hours of arduous and often hazardous work that had to be put into building this towering giant. Indeed, the Burj al-Arab was a daunting project, but the spectacular outcome (the *highest* rated hotel in the world!) has made all the obstacles and challenges encountered in the building process definitely worthwhile.

Essentially, the people who worked hard on the project will eventually just stand in awe of the magnificent masterpiece they have created. Furthermore, one of the unique features that the building flaunts is its anterior side covered in a Teflon-coated fiberglass cloth ("The Arabian Tower" par.2)! This element significantly adds a likeness to its main inspiration—a sail of a fishing vessel, which is an important symbol for the country that was practically founded on the

livelihood of fishermen. The hotel's own helipad has gained considerable worldwide attention after a number of celebrities were featured on the helipad 211 meters above the ocean. Tiger Woods playing golf and Andre Agassi playing tennis were among the stunts performed on the helipad that helped earn the hotel's international stardom (par.13-14). “Inside, [one will] encounter lavish [twenty first] century Arabic style and hospitality. An interior atrium, the world's tallest, draws the eye toward its peak far, far overhead” (“What a Hotel” par.1). The Burj al-Arab also showcases two breath-taking restaurants found in the oddest of places, one is sitting 200 meters above the Persian Gulf, sticking out from the hotel's side overlooking the ocean, and the other can be found underground, surrounded by an aquarium containing a thousand varieties of fish swimming in one million liters of water (“The Arabian Tower” par.7-8)! “The Burj al-Arab does not have ordinary rooms; rather it is divided into 202 duplex suites. The smallest suite occupies an area of 169 square meters, and the largest one covers 780 square meters. It is one of the most expensive hotels in the world to stay in. The cost of staying in a suite begins at $1,000 per night and increases to over $15,000 per night; the Royal Suite is the most expensive, at $28,000 per night! [In fact] the total cost to build and furnish the hotel has never been released” (par. 3). At night, guests and even residents who live nearby can experience the hotels extraordinary light show. "The building's external lighting scheme can vary from white to multicolored, changing every thirty minutes" (par. 9). Such beauty and magnificence in a young and developing Arab country cannot possibly be overlooked; therefore one should aim to, at least once in his

lifetime, visit this seven star masterpiece.

Consequently, when my father first told me that the Burj al-Arab had been rated the only seven star hotel in the world, I obviously asked, "I thought it only goes up to five stars?!" Nonetheless after countless magazine articles, television specials, and pamphlets exclusively advertising and portraying the wonders of such a unique architecture, I am now convinced that the Burj al-Arab truly deserves its stars. And regardless of what some “travel professionals” may still think, with its incredible stance, breathtaking design, and stunning features, the hotel that oddly resembles a sail can be considered nothing less than a grand seven star hotel.

Fig. 1. [Sunset on the] Burj al-Arab.

Fig. 2. The Burj al-Arab [at night].

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